

November 2005

Volume 37, Issue 3

## Bird Coloration and the Fascinating Case of Whitey, the Steller's Jay

Join bird photographer and science teacher Bill Schmoker for a discussion of bird coloration, aberrant plumages, and the story of a unique, white Steller's Jay. Dozens of photos illustrate the diversity of color in birds. Gain an understanding of the role of pigments and feather structure in bird coloration, and see what happens when something goes wrong. After this talk you can astound your birding friends by discussing carotenoid pigments or dropping terms like xanthochroism and leucism when you are birding!

Bill is active in the Colorado birding



community, currently serving as the Vice President of the Colorado Field Ornithologists and as one of the Colorado/Wyoming regional editors for *North American Birds*. His ever-growing bird photo website (<http://schmoker.org/BirdPics>) now has images of 525 North American bird species, many of which have appeared in publications such as *Birding*, *WildBird*, *North American Birds*, *Winging It*, and *Colorado Birds*. Bill's work has also been featured in photographic field guides, visitor center interpretive signs, newspaper articles, conservation organization websites, and as reference material for student and professional artists.

**THURSDAY EVENING PROGRAM — November 10, 2005**  
**Ludlow Room, Fort Collins Lincoln Center, 417 W. Magnolia Street**  
**Social Gathering - 7:00 PM, Program - 7:30 PM**

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

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# NOVEMBER-DECEMBER FIELD TRIPS

All field trips are free of charge and open to the public. All experience levels are welcome. 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. For all field trips and surveys, please contact the trip leader for signup and trip details, or contact the Field Trip Coordinator, Gary Lefko, at [lefkogt@greatpikespeakbirdingtrail.org](mailto:lefkogt@greatpikespeakbirdingtrail.org) or 970-897-2454.

**10/29/2005 Saturday, 7:30-9:45 AM – Wild Birds Unlimited Beginner Field Trip to Fossil Creek Regional Park.** Leader: Joe LaFleur. Contact Wild Birds Unlimited at (970) 225-2557. Meet at 7:30 AM at Wild Birds Unlimited store at 248 E. Monroe Drive in Ft. Collins. **Minimum participation of five required for trip, maximum 15.** Please contact leader for signup and trip details. Fossil Creek provides the opportunity to view birds in habitats like grassland, riparian woodland and lake with waterfowl viewing being a highlight of this trip. Please bring a scope if you have one. Joe LaFleur is a wildlife biologist from Loveland and author of DVDs and software for identifying birds.

**Wild Pueblo Reservoir State Park and surrounding areas.** Contact Nick Komar at [quetzal65@comcast.net](mailto:quetzal65@comcast.net) or (970) 416-7527. Focus will be on identification challenges in winter waterfowl such as grebes and loons. **Participation limited to 10.** Contact leader for meeting time and location, carpooling and overnight lodging arrangements in Pueblo.

**11/5/2005 Saturday – Bobcat Ridge Natural Area Bird Survey.** Leader: Cole Wild at [birdingwild1@yahoo.com](mailto:birdingwild1@yahoo.com) or 970-310-3735. Fort Collins' newest natural area, Bobcat Ridge Natural Area, is projected to be open in 2006. Fort Collins Audubon performs a monthly bird census for the city. All levels welcomed. **Participation limited.** Please contact leader for signup and trip details.

**11/19/2005 Saturday - "Where do I find birds in my town?" (Greeley Area Lakes).** Leader: Gary Lefko at [lefkogt@greatpikespeakbirdingtrail.org](mailto:lefkogt@greatpikespeakbirdingtrail.org) or (970) 897-2454. Visit Greeley area lakes in search of raptors, waterfowl and gulls. Milton Reservoir access being discussed.

**11/6/2005 Sunday - Birding for Beginners.** Leader: Beth Dillon at 970-490-2610. Look around Fort Collins for migrant species. **Limited to 8 participants.** Call leader to sign up and learn meeting location.

**11/20/2005 Sunday - Fossil Creek Reservoir Bird Survey.** Contact Nick Komar at [quetzal65@comcast.net](mailto:quetzal65@comcast.net) or (970) 416-7527. Fort Collins Audubon performs a monthly bird census for the county. All levels welcomed. **Participation limited to five plus leader.** Please contact leader for signup and trip details.

**11/13/2005 Sunday - Advanced Birding at**

**12/3/2005 Saturday – Bobcat Ridge Natural Area Bird Survey.** Leader: Cole Wild at [birdingwild1@yahoo.com](mailto:birdingwild1@yahoo.com) or 970-310-3735. Fort Collins' newest natural area, Bobcat Ridge Natural Area, is projected to be open in 2006. Fort Collins Audubon performs a monthly bird census for the city. All levels welcomed. **Participation limited.** Please contact leader for signup and trip details.

**Note: Occasionally, new field trips may be announced or details may be finalized between issues of the *Ptarmigan*. Please visit our website and click on "Field Trips" to check for updated field trip information.**

## How to Lead a Field Trip



Have you ever considered the benefits of learning to how to lead field trips? You can learn more by teaching others. You can sharpen your skills of observation and identification. You can experience the joy of sharing your interests with a group of like-minded folks. Fort Collins Audubon is offering a workshop for would-be, future, novice, and experienced field trip leaders. The Field Trip Leaders Seminar will help you discover a whole new perspective on birds and birding by training you to help other people catch the fire! This day-long seminar will focus on such topics as planning and logistics, group dynamics and special populations, instruction and interpretation, timing and pacing, and a whole

lot more. And of course, the seminar has a flip side: learning what makes a good field trip can help you enjoy future field trips as a participant even if you never lead one!

### Fort Collins Audubon Society Field Trip Leaders Seminar

**Instructor:** Kevin J. Cook

**Date and Time:** Saturday, November 19, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

**Location:** Rocky Mountain Field Seminars facility, 1895 Fall River Road, Estes Park.

**Cost:** \$20. Participants will receive a \$20 rebate in return for leading two field trips for FCAS.

**To Register:** Call Kevin Cook at 223-8392 afternoons or evenings.

### 2006 Nominating Committee

The nominating committee for the 2006 FCAS officers and directors was selected at the October Board meeting. Diann Johnston will head the committee with help from Carol Fiore. If you are interested in participating or making a nomination, call Diann at 970-207-1766 or [diannj@gmail.com](mailto:diannj@gmail.com)

### FCAS Adopts Fossil Creek IBA

Fort Collins Audubon has officially adopted the Fossil Creek Important Bird Area (IBA) as part of the new Colorado Adopt-An-IBA Program, administered by Audubon of Colorado. Fort Collins Audubon already has an ongoing, supportive relationship with Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space – conducting monthly bird surveys, providing a bird checklist, and participating on the Resource Improvement Plan Scoping Committee. Formalizing this relationship through official “adoption” affirms our long-term commitment to the IBA, and opens opportunities for additional financial support coordinated by Audubon of Colorado. FCAS will work cooperatively with site managers in the areas of citizen science, citizen stewardship, habitat restoration and management, environmental education, and advocacy. Phil Friedman has agreed to be the FCAS contact person for Adopt-An-IBA activities. For more information on Colorado’s IBAs, visit [http://www.auduboncolorado.org/birdcon\\_iba.html](http://www.auduboncolorado.org/birdcon_iba.html)



### Birds of Prey Course

The Rocky Mountain Raptor Program (RMRP) and the Colorado Division of Wildlife’s Watchable Wildlife Program are offering a Birds of Prey course on three consecutive Saturdays in November. Judy Scherpelz, director of RMRP, will teach the class scheduled from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on November 5, 12, and 19. Topics include anatomy, physiology, courtship and breeding, population trends, migration, environmental issues, and identification tips. Live bird demonstrations and a field trip to view local birds of prey are also planned. The cost is \$50 per session or \$125 for all three sessions, and the proceeds support RMRP. The class will be held at the CSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital, 300 W. Drake Rd. For additional information or to register, call 970-297-0398 or visit <http://www.rmrp.org/prey.htm>

### The Sierra Club, Poudre Canyon Group to Host John Fielder

In 1998, acclaimed Colorado nature photographer John Fielder drove 25,000 miles and backpacked another 500 in order to stand exactly where his 19th-century equivalent, William Henry Jackson, stood. From 300 different photo locations, Fielder pointed his camera in the same direction as Jackson’s in order to manifest the change in Colorado’s landscape over a century in time. Fielder and Westcliffe Publishers have recently published Part II of the Colorado Then and Now series, containing 108 photographs not included in the first volume. Proceeds from the sale of **Colorado 1870-2000 II** go to the Colorado Historical Society, archivist of the Jackson portfolio. John Fielder will present a slide show based on his new book in Fort Collins at the Lincoln Center on November 29th at 7:00 pm in the Columbine Room. Doors will open at 6:30 pm. Tickets are available at the Lincoln Center box office, The Mountain Shop in Fort Collins, Anthology Books in Loveland, and <http://purchase.tickets.com/buy/TicketPurchase>. Advance ticket purchases are \$5 and same day purchases are \$7.50. For information: visit [www.johnfielder.com](http://www.johnfielder.com) or contact: Jodi Radke at (970) 214-4808.



## New Service Provided to FCAS Members

Fort Collins Audubon Society (FCAS) is providing a new service to all members: the *fcaudubon* Yahoo! Group. The Yahoo! Group was created to supplement information available in the *Ptarmigan* and on the Fort Collins Audubon Society website. The group serves as an email listserv, chat room, and more! You can use *fcaudubon* to:

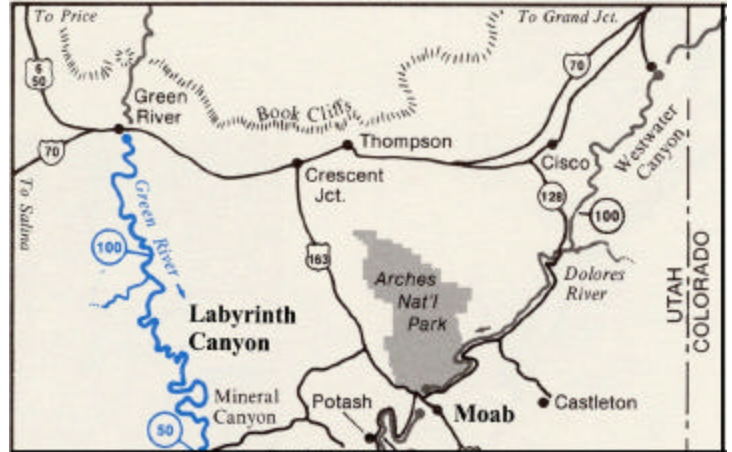
- ✓ Receive e-mail reminders about FCAS program meetings and events.
- ✓ Be the first to hear news on conservation alerts, calls for volunteers, and other timely information such as last-minute opportunities and changes in field trips.
- ✓ Share sightings of unusual birds in Larimer County and surrounding areas.
- ✓ Inform other members of interesting news and events related to the mission of Fort Collins Audubon Society.
- ✓ Discuss issues of interest to FCAS members.

To respect the privacy of our members, FCAS will not automatically subscribe anyone to the new Yahoo! Group. All members are encouraged to check out this new service by visiting the FCAS website at <http://www.fortnet.org/Audubon> and clicking on the link for *fcaudubon* Yahoo! Group. If you decide that you'd like to join the group and receive regular email news updates, just follow the easy online subscription instructions.

Take advantage of this new way to keep in touch with the Fort Collins Audubon Society and your fellow members. Visit the *fcaudubon* Yahoo! Group and subscribe today!

## FCAS Canoe Trip 2006 on the Green River, Utah

Join us May 21-25, 2006 (Sunday – Thursday -- a 5-day trip this year!), paddling the spectacular 60-mile section of the Green River from Crystal Geyser south of Green River, Utah, as it winds toward Mineral Bottom, just north of Canyonlands National Park. This is one of the longest stretches of quiet wilderness water in the lower 48 states. The twisting, looping river winds its way between sheer, colorful sandstone walls, hundreds of feet high. Vast canyon systems and water channels branch in all directions, inviting hiking and exploring as well as providing excellent camping. Highlights may include hiking to Bow Knot Bend, the canyons of Trin-Alcove, plus Horseshoe Canyon. Old settler's cabins, abandoned mines, historic outlaw hideouts, caves, ancient Fremont Indian petroglyphs (rock art panels AD 500-1200), and lush hidden springs await those who pass this way. One layover day will be built into the trip for hiking. As you retrace Major John Wesley Powell's 1869 route when he first floated this river and documented the area, remember his words describing his mission: "...to fill in the last white space on the map..." Centennial Canoe Outfitters (<http://www.centennialcanoe.com>) will provide all safety equipment, canoes and great food. Our guides from the 2005 trip, Randy and Becca, will lead us again this year. Cost of the trip is \$475, of which \$55 is donated back to FCAS. You will need to bring a sleeping bag, tent and basic personal supplies. The trip is limited to 22 participants, so sign up early to reserve your place. A deposit of \$100 per person must accompany your reservation request, and the balance is due by April 30. For further details and to register for the trip, contact Centennial Canoe Outfitters, 1-877-353-1850 (toll free) and be sure to tell them you heard about it from Fort Collins Audubon Society.



## Habitat Protection Gets a Boost in Colorado

We all know that habitat is the key to diverse and abundant wildlife populations. We also know that increasing population pressure in Colorado is putting the squeeze on much of our state's prime wildlife habitat.

The new Division of Wildlife Habitat Stamp program is designed to provide revenue to purchase and otherwise protect wildlife habitat in Colorado. These funds will supplement the DOW Game Cash funds (70% of the DOW budget from the sales of hunting and fishing licenses), GOCO funds (currently decreasing) and allow the DOW to leverage funding from a broad spectrum of sources. The program also provides an opportunity for those who don't purchase hunting and fishing licenses to contribute to wildlife habitat protection in Colorado.

Initiated by the DOW Sportsman's Advisory Group and endorsed by a broad coalition of sportsmen's and environmental groups, the stamp was passed in the 2005 legislative session. It provides that beginning January 1, 2006, anyone using a State Wildlife Area (SWA) must have a stamp.

Stamps are free for youth (18 and under) and seniors (65 and older). Stamps are also free for the mobility impaired and some military

personnel. For the rest of SWA users, the stamp is \$10 if purchased without a hunting or fishing license. When purchased with a license, it is \$5 and required on the first two licenses purchased in a calendar year. A lifetime stamp is available for \$200.

It is estimated that annual revenue will be \$2.3 million. In adopting the stamp, the legislature expressed a strong desire to prevent habitat loss and fragmentation in Colorado's sagebrush communities. Prior to 2010, 60% of the revenue must be spent on big game winter range and migration corridors.

Governor Owens will be appointing a citizen committee to review projects and make funding recommendations. The committee will consist of four sportsmen/women, two conservation organization representatives, two landowners actively engaged in agriculture, one citizen at-large, and two non-voting representatives from the DOW.

The law authorizing this program sunsets in 5 years, so the DOW and supporters are anxious to get some significant habitat protection projects on the ground as soon as possible.

For more information, please visit the DOW website at: [www.wildlife.state.co.us/habitat](http://www.wildlife.state.co.us/habitat)

### Board Votes on Scholarship Funding from 2005 Birdathon Proceeds



At the October board meeting, a unanimous vote was cast to support the FCAS Scholarship Fund from this year's Birdathon proceeds. The May 2005 Birdathon raised more than \$3,000 and had expenses of approximately \$400. The Scholarship Fund support level for this year was set at 20% of net proceeds, or approximately \$520. The board also voted to review the support level on an annual basis.

Watch for information on the 2006 Birdathon and Scholarship Fund activities starting in February.



**Fort Collins Audubon Message Center**

FCAS now has a telephone number you can call to hear a recording about upcoming events. You can also leave messages with suggestions or questions for FCAS. Call 970-490-BIRD.

**Better Birding, Better Living - Lynne Hull, Education Committee Chair**

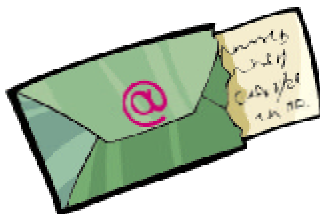
Why do we feel an endangered species should be protected? Why does Congress feel it can quietly overturn and rewrite one of the most cherished and widely supported laws in our country, the Endangered Species Act? Are we so distracted with the media attention on wars, hurricanes and earthquakes — all tragic events — that we close our eyes to back-room congressional maneuvers and let the species at risk slip away, along with the long-fought-over drilling for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge?

To answer the first question, to provoke conversation with those who do not see the value in protecting a small fish in Tennessee, a toad in Wyoming, or even a successfully returning bald eagle, I offer the metaphor of flying in an airplane: As we are flying, we hear odd popping sounds. We realize that some of the small rivets holding the plane together are popping out of their holes. Well, maybe they are not important. Maybe we don't know which ones are vital to holding the whole system together. (pop, pop) Do we really want to risk the whole vehicle of our survival to our lack of specific knowledge? (pop, pop) Wyoming toad. (pop, pop) Grizzly bear. (pop, pop) Peregrine falcon. I remember Aldo Leopold's "first law of tinkering": "Until you know exactly what it does, don't throw away any of the parts."

It's the second question which we must urgently address right now. The House of Representatives is busy gutting the Endangered Species Act and removing habitat protection for many species.

Which leads to the third question. Once again, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is in the drill sights of the oil corporations and their handmaidens in Congress. It is attached as a rider to the budget bill, so your representatives and senators can tell you they can't vote against the whole budget bill! That is, of course, not true. They *can* vote it down and remove the rider. Then they can vote to pass the rest of the budget. And while they are at it, they could restore the funding for developing alternative energy, and require auto manufacturers to raise MPG ratings on their cars. A mere 3 mile-per-gallon increase in fuel efficiency would make the oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge unnecessary. All the millions of birds who nest there would live on, along with the caribou, Arctic fox, and many others.

You can contact your representatives via phone, email or (most powerfully) with an old-fashioned letter. If you care about these wildlife protections, please let them know.



**Fort Collins Audubon Society Members!  
Free! Email News Service Now Available!**

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

Visit [www.fortnet.org/Audubon/](http://www.fortnet.org/Audubon/) to learn more and to subscribe to this new members-only service.



**Conservation Corner**  
**By Carol Fiore, Conservation Chair**

What is one of the best things you can do for the environment? VOTE! Be an educated voter and learn about the issues. There are a slew of resources available to you on the internet. Look up a candidate, read about their voting record. Are they environmental advocates? If your representative votes in a way that you disagree with, call him or her! I do it all the time. How will they know you don't approve if you don't tell them? You can also email or write, but a phone call is quick, fast, and does matter. You can find phone numbers and addresses on the internet quite easily. For example, try <http://www.congress.org>.

Feel free to come to one of our monthly conservation committee meetings where we talk about various bills in both the state and U.S. Congress. We love to see new faces! Our last Conservation Committee meeting of the year will be held on Thursday November 10 at 6:15 just before the regular program meeting in the Lincoln Center's Ludlow room. Can't make it on time? No problem! Bring your dinner and join us when you can!

**Take Action**

September 29th was the day the U.S. House voted to pass HR 3824. This legislation undermines the protection of habitat critical to endangered and threatened wildlife by gutting the Endangered Species Act. It is vital that this legislation does NOT make it through the Senate. Call your Senator IMMEDIATELY and tell them you are opposed to this legislation.

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**Kudos and Raspberries**



Major raspberries (the biggest of the year!) go to California Congressman Richard Pombo. Congratulations to the congressman for introducing the worst piece of legislation in years—HR 3824, the “Extinction Bill.” Mr. Pombo has certainly been a busy man lately! He has also formed a task force to review NEPA—the National Environmental Policy Act. This act, signed 35 years ago, requires federal agencies to study and disclose the environmental effects of federally funded projects on the community and public. It is considered the Magna Carta of environmental protection. But Congressman Pombo thinks it needs to be overhauled! The National Audubon Society, along with a host of other groups, wants you to call the NEPA Task Force. Log on to [www.capitolconnect.com/audubon](http://www.capitolconnect.com/audubon) and get the facts.



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### 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**

