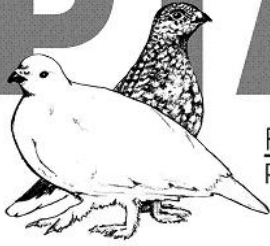


# PTARMIGAN



F O R T C O L L I N S A U D U B O N S O C I E T Y  
P.O. Box 271968 • Fort Collins, CO 80527-1968 • [www.fortnet.org/Audubon](http://www.fortnet.org/Audubon)

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

September 2008

Volume 40, Issue 1

## Biology and Conservation of the Gunnison Sage-Grouse

Can too much sex cause extinction? Dr. Jessica Young, Associate Vice President for Academic affairs, Western State College, has worked with Gunnison Sage-grouse for 20 years and was the lead author on the publication that led to its recognition as a newly designated species in 2000. Jessica's talk will focus on the role that the species amazing mating system has in causing not only the unique characteristics of the bird, but also may be a factor in its conservation struggles. She will also explore some of the biological and political challenges the species faces in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



Dr. Young received her Ph.D. in ecology, behavior and population genetics from Purdue University and is currently a member of the biology faculty at Western State College in Gunnison, Colorado.

Learn more about the Gunnison Sage Grouse. Join us Thursday, September 11 at the Fort Collins Lincoln Center, Columbine Room

starting with refreshments and social time at 7:00 p.m. followed by the presentation beginning at 7:30.

**THURSDAY EVENING PROGRAM — September 11, 2008**

**Columbine Room, Fort Collins Lincoln Center, 417 W. Magnolia Street**

**Social Gathering: 7:00 p.m., Program: 7:30 p.m.**

### *Looking Ahead: Upcoming Programs*

**October 9, 2008-** *Prairie Thunder* – book signing and sale with author and photographer, Dave Showalter. *Prairie Thunder*, is a recently published book of stunning photography of Colorado's prairie lands, and also an alert of threats to these endangered landscapes. Visit Dave Showalter's website at: [www.daveshowalter.com](http://www.daveshowalter.com) to learn more about Dave's photography and natural history interests.

**November 13, 2008** – "Global Climate Change" – presented by Gary Graham, Executive Director of Audubon Colorado.

Watch for more details in upcoming newsletters.

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

Visit our website at [www.fortnet.org/Audubon](http://www.fortnet.org/Audubon) or call 970-490-BIRD.

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## Field Trips, Programs, Classes, and Events



September 2008

October 2008

### 9/13/08, Saturday. Second Saturday Natural Area Tour. 8:00 - 10:00 a.m. Riverbend Ponds.

Exploring nature continues with a new schedule of 2nd Saturday adventures. This year we will explore twelve of Fort Collins' natural areas. Each tour will be led by a master naturalist who will explain "What's special about this place?" All tours are from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. For further information, contact Joann Thomas at 970/482-7125 or email at [jthomas91@aol.com](mailto:jthomas91@aol.com).

### 9/14/08, Sunday. Weather Walk, 4:00-6:00 p.m., Nix Natural Area, Fort Collins.

Leader: Eric DeFonso ([yoericd@yahoo.com](mailto:yoericd@yahoo.com) or 970-472-1761). Note the unusual start time. If you've wanted to try one of my weather walks, here's your chance! Come along as we interpret the sky conditions that afternoon during a pleasant walk on the paved trail at Nix Natural Area. We'll also explore what makes Colorado weather and climate the way it is, and I'll do my best to answer all your sky-related questions! I plan on offering these walks several times throughout the coming year, but at varying times and days of the week, to accommodate your schedules and allow us to observe a wide variety of weather conditions.

### 9/21/08, Sunday. Beginning Birding, Riverbend Ponds Natural Area. 8:00-11:00 a.m.

Leader: Eric DeFonso ([yoericd@yahoo.com](mailto:yoericd@yahoo.com) or 970-472-1761). If you've been interested in learning more about local area birds, but haven't been sure where to start, then this outing is for you. We'll keep it simple and get you oriented on where to go here in Fort Collins and what to look for. All levels and ages welcome, but emphasis will be placed on the basics, and helping beginners get excited about birdwatching. Contact me if you need directions or have any other questions.

### 9/27/08, Saturday. 4th Annual Northern Colorado Birding Fair. Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space, Larimer County. 7:00-1:00.

For more information visit [www.larimer.org/parks/birding\\_fair.htm](http://www.larimer.org/parks/birding_fair.htm).

### 10/11/08, Saturday. Second Saturday Natural Area Tour. 8:00 - 10:00 a.m. Gateway Park.

Exploring nature continues with a new schedule of 2nd Saturday adventures. This year we will explore twelve of Fort Collins' natural areas. Each tour will be led by a master naturalist who will explain "What's special about this place?" All tours are from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. For further information, contact Joann Thomas at 970/482-7125 or email at [jthomas91@aol.com](mailto:jthomas91@aol.com).

## Birdathon! 2008 May 9-10

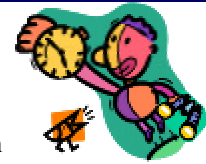
### Results Are In!



Four teams of birdathoners braved wind, rain and sleet on May 9th and 10th. The top team found 149 species. This number should be the model for per species pledgers in determining their total pledge. The four teams saw a total of 166 species. Each team saw more than one species that the other three teams did not see. All species seen are listed on page 3.

The number after each entry indicates the number of teams who saw the species. From the discussion in our get together after the birdathon finished it is apparent teams went to the same places but at different times of day. As a result had different findings at each place. For example, the McKown's Longspur was found in abundance in the morning at Pawnee Grassland but by afternoon was difficult to see. Success on a birdathon requires skill and a bit of luck with emphasis on the former.

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](http://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, [yoericd@yahoo.com](mailto:yoericd@yahoo.com) or 970-472-1761.



Canada Goose	4	Least Sandpiper	1	House Wren	3
Wood Duck	3	Short-billed Dowitcher	1	Marsh Wren	1
Gadwall	4	Long-billed Dowitcher	2	Golden-crowned Kinglet	1
American Widgeon	4	Wilson's Phalarope	4	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	2
Mallard	4	Red-necked Phalarope	1	Blue-grey Gnatcatcher	4
Blue-winged Teal	4	Franklin's Gull	2	Western Bluebird	4
Cinnamon Teal	4	Bonaparte's Gull	1	Mountain Bluebird	3
Northern Shoveler	4	Ring-billed Gull	4	Townsend's Solitaire	3
Northern Pintail	1	California Gull	2	Hermit Thrush	1
Green-winged Teal	4	Herring Gull	1	American Robin	4
Redhead	4	Forster's Tern	2	Gray Catbird	1
Lesser Scaup	4	Rock Pigeon	4	Northern Mockingbird	4
Bufflehead	1	Eurasian Collard Dove	4	Brown Thrasher	2
Common Merganser	2	Mourning Dove	4	European Starling	4
Ruddy Duck	2	Barn Owl	2	Cedar Waxwing	1
Ring-necked pheasant	2	Eastern Screech-Owl	1	Orange-crowned Warbler	4
Pied-billed Grebe	1	Great Horned Owl	4	Virginia Warbler	1
Eared Grebe	2	Northern Pygmy -Owl	2	Yellow Warbler	4
Western Grebe	4	Burrowing Owl	4	Yellow-rumped Warbler	4
Clark's Grebe	1	Common Nighthawk	1	Myrtle form	2
Double-crested Cormorant	2	White-throated Swift	3	Audubon form	3
American Bittern	1	Broad-tailed Hummingbird	4	Black-throated grey Warbler	3
Great Blue Heron	4	Belted Kingfisher	3	Ovenbird	2
Great Egret	1	Williamson's Sapsucker	1	Northern Waterthrush	2
Snowy Egret	2	Red-naped Sapsucker	2	Common Yellowthroat	2
Cattle Egret	1	Downy Woodpecker	4	Yellow-breast Chat	2
Green Heron	1	Hairy Woodpecker	2	Western Tanager	1
Black-crowned Night Heron	4	Northern Flicker	4	Green-tailed Towhee	2
White-faced Ibis	4	Cordilleran Flycatcher	2	Spotted Towhee	4
Glossy Ibis	2	Western Kingbird	3	Chipping Sparrow	4
Turkey Vulture	4	Eastern Kingbird	1	Brewer's Sparrow	1
Black Vulture	1	Loggerhead Shrike	1	Vesper Sparrow	2
Osprey	4	Bell's Vireo	1	Lark Sparrow	1
Bald Eagle	3	Plumbeous Vireo	1	Lark Bunting	3
Northern Harrier	4	Warbling Vireo	2	Song Sparrow	3
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2	Steller's Jay	2	Lincoln's Sparrow	1
Coopers Hawk	1	Blue Jay	4	White-crowned Sparrow	4
Broad-winged Hawk	1	Western Scrub-Jay	4	Dark-eyed Junco	2
Swainson's Hawk	3	Clark's Nutcracker	1	McCown's Longspur	3
Red-tailed Hawk	4	Black-billed Magpie	4	Black-headed Grosbeak	2
Golden Eagle	4	American Crow	4	Lazuli Bunting	3
American Kestrel	4	Common Raven	4	Red-wing Blackbird	4
Prairie Falcon	3	Horned Lark	4	Western Meadowlark	4
Virginia Rail	3	Tree Swallow	3	Yellow-headed Blackbird	3
Sora	2	Violet-green Swallow	4	Brewer's Blackbird	4
American Coot	4	N. Rough-winged Swallow	2	Common Grackle	4
Semipalmated Plover	2	Bank Swallow	4	Great-tailed Grackle	3
Killdeer	4	Cliff Swallow	4	Brown-headed Cowbird	3
Mountain Plover	1	Barn Swallow	4	Bullock's Oriole	3
Black-necked Stilt	4	Black-capped Chickadee	3	Cassin's Finch	2
American Avocet	4	Mountain Chickadee	3	House Finch	4
Lesser Yellowlegs	1	Red-breasted Nuthatch	1	Red Crossbill	2
Willet	2	White-breasted Nuthatch	3	Pine Siskin	3
Spotted Sandpiper	2	Pygmy Nuthatch	2	Lesser Goldfinch	1
Long-billed Curlew	1	Rock Wren	1	American Goldfinch	4
Marbled Godwit	1	Canyon Wren	1	House Sparrow	4



# Conservation Corner

By Bill Miller - Conservation Chair

**"In the end we will conserve only what we love. We love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught."**

The quote itself is derived from a 1968 speech made in New Delhi, India by the Senegalese environmentalist, Baba Dioum, to the general assembly of the International Union for Conservation of Nature. Mr. Dioum was born in Dahra, Senegal on October 15, 1937. [http://everything2.com/index.pl?node\\_id=1482909](http://everything2.com/index.pl?node_id=1482909)

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## **"WE HAVE MET THE ENEMY, AND HE IS US!"**

This quotation appeared, circa 1970, in the cartoon strip, Pogo, by Walt Kelly. It was even rendered on the 1971 Earth Day poster. Hindsight always being 20-20, this statement is even more ominous today than it was thirty-eight years ago. In 1970 the U.S. was still embroiled in the Vietnam War, and the Cold War was showing no signs of abating. And the environmental movement was just getting under way.

Today we still have wars around the world. But now we recognize that we, the human race, are our own worst enemy, speaking from an ecological view. It is becoming more and more evident that the human race is the agent that is bringing about drastic changes from which the world as we have known it for many centuries may never recover. At least, not in our lifetimes.

One may ask, "How serious are the changes that we are bringing about?"

About six decades ago I can remember being told, in school, that the oceans of the world represented a limitless supply of food. At the time, in 1950, the world population was a little over 2.5 billion people. Today we are over 6 billion people and the world's ocean fisheries are collapsing from over-fishing.

Today we are cutting the forests of the world at an unprecedented and unsustainable rate, to the tune of some 13 million hectares (~50,200 sq. miles) per year. That rate of deforestation is being driven by two principal causes – the demand for timber products and the need for increased area of crop cultivation to feed an ever-increasing human population.

The world's supply of fresh water for drinking and crop irrigation is shrinking. This is partly being caused by pollution from industrial and agricultural discharges into ground water aquifers and surface waters. But also it is now recognized that global climate disruption is causing large areas of once arable lands to be converted to non-productive desert as well as changing the patterns of rainfall.

Perhaps the most ominous specter facing us are the changes anticipated to occur as a result of climate disruption, formerly referred to as global warming or global climate change. The use of the term, "disruption," is perhaps a more realistic expectation of climatic changes than the more uniform and evenly-spread warming of the world. Weather patterns are anticipated to be erratic, with temperatures increasing in some regions and decreasing in others, and the occurrences of weather patterns, such as hurricanes and tornadoes, will be more numerous and more severe than historical averages. Thus year, the continental U.S. has already experienced the most severe tornado season in recorded history and, as the temperatures of the world's oceans increase, the frequency and severity of hurricanes and typhoons are expected to rise dramatically.

Furthermore, as the earth's atmospheric temperatures continue to rise, the melting of the great ice sheets that cover Greenland and Antarctica will accelerate. The addition of this fresh water to the oceans will produce a drastic rise in sea levels, resulting in the flooding of the earth's coastal areas and a displacement of 10% or more of the human population and the invasion of salt water into ground water aquifers. The addition of the cold ice melt waters might even disrupt the "conveyer belt" of the currents that circulate throughout the earth's oceans, resulting in not only major disruptions of climatic patterns but also the flow of nutrients in the oceans upon which marine life is dependent.

*Continued on next page*



Continued from previous page

A report has recently been released that suggests we are officially entering a geologic period in which humanity may simply outrun history itself. It appears that the current geologic period referred to as the Holocene will be replaced by a period called the "Anthropocene" -- an Earth epoch defined by the emergence of urban-industrial society as a geological force. For more information, please read the article found at <http://www.alternet.org/environment/89940/?page=entire>, titled "The Era of Catastrophe? Geologists Name New Era After Human Influence on the Planet."

Unfortunately our government has, for the past few administrations, refused to acknowledge the seriousness of the situation brought about by the emission of greenhouse gases and to drive the changes and sacrifices needed to curb the effects of the increasing accumulation of greenhouse gasses on the world's climate. We may have already passed the tipping point where it is now impossible to rein in the rising temperatures brought about by the heat-trapping effects of carbon dioxide and methane.

To me, it makes no sense to wage countless battles against corporate interests that are unsustainably exploiting the earth's resources in the name of economic profit while the looming disaster of global climate disruption remains unchallenged. It is like trying to paint the lifeboats as the Titanic is sinking.

I can only encourage each of you to (a) become more informed about global climate disruption, (b) change your habits of consumption to reduce your carbon footprint, (c) insist that industry and governments take steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and (d) consider very carefully who will be elected to our state and national governments and who will have the responsibility to make the very hard choices between short-term economic gains and the long-term survival of the human race as well as many other life forms on Spaceship Earth.



## Cache La Poudre River Tours

The Cache La Poudre River has been in the news a lot, but how much do you know about the nature of the river? Master Naturalists leading river tours have discovered that knowledge of the river is low and interest is high. Participants have great questions!

Tour leaders cover plant identification, lore, and native/alien species. They point out signs of wildlife and share information about wildlife management such as the painted trees that repel beavers and the eastern screech owl boxes at Salyer Natural Area.

Tour participants learn how they can help the river and discover that the water from our streets goes directly into the river, not to a water treatment plant. The interactive "dance" between the plants, wildlife, and water in the river is also revealed.

Tour dates and times include 9/5 at 1 pm, 9/11 at 8 am, 9/19 at 1pm, 9/20 at 9 am, 9/24 at 9 am, 10/3 at 1 pm, 10/14 at 8 am, 10/17 at 1 pm, 10/25 at 9am, 11/15 at 10 am.

Every Tuesday in September and October, Joann Thomas, Audubon's Education Chair, will guide tours from 3:30pm to 5:30pm.

No reservations are necessary. Meet at the parking lot in Lee Martinez Park. Don't forget sun protection, insect repellent, and rain gear, if necessary. For more information about the Tuesday tours, call Joann Thomas at 970/482-7125 or e-mail at [jthomas91@aol.com](mailto:jthomas91@aol.com).



## Education Corner

By Joann Thomas - Education Chair



### What's in a Name?

Did you know that a flock of Coots is called a cooter? A little bit of trivia I picked up researching the bird for a program. The obsession for learning the name of a thing sometimes inhibits our discovering more about it. The curiosity behind the question "What is it?" often stops with learning the name. If I can name it, I know it.

I recently led a river tour sponsored by the city. It was my first, and I leapt in on short notice subbing for a friend. No problem I thought...got this covered! Leading my group along the river, I found myself repeating "What is that?" about plants, insects, bird sounds, and on and on. It was an adventure right along the Poudre River in Lee Martinez Park.

One insect caught my eye because of its beauty. A half inch long beetle that was a beautiful shade of red with black spots and the longest antennae. Obviously a beetle, I thought, but what kind? I had to admit to my group I did not know what it was...what was its name?

At home I consulted my new book, *Guide to Colorado Insects*, authored by Whitney Cranshaw and Boris Kondratieff, both professors at CSU. This wonderful resource begins with an explanation of where beetles fit in the scope of creepy, crawly things.

First, they are part of a class called Hexapoda which are part of a phylum called Arthropoda. Insects comprise the largest subclass of hexapods and beetles are insects in the order Coleoptera. Now you know some names, but what else do you know?

Well, all hexapods have three distinct body parts—the head, the thorax, and the

abdomen. They have three pairs of legs which are attached to the abdomen. They also go through a process called metamorphosis. Aha! I know more about what I saw...but, "What is it?"

The book groups insects according to behavior. Great chapter titles include "Blood Suckers," or "The Clean-up Crew," or "Water Lovers." I found my beetle in "Wood Chiselers" described as insects whose adult form "chews on leaves or twig bark. Larvae feed by tunneling through stalks, branches, and trunks of plants."

What did I remember about where I found the beetle and what was it doing? I found it on a large milkweed plant along the river eating the leaves. Aha! Here it is. A name at last--*Milkweed longhorn*—called longhorn because the antennae are as long as the body and milkweed because it spends its entire life associated with milkweeds.

That's when I knew I had the essence of this tiny creature. It has a one to one relationship with the milkweed plant. As a larva, this beetle bores into the stem or into the roots of milkweed plants. There it metamorphoses and as an adult spends its time eating the leaves of the plant. I imagine it's kind of like living your entire life in one neighborhood of Fort Collins.

Could be boring (ouch!), but also very dangerous. If a disease wiped out milkweeds, what would happen to this stunning beetle? Extinction! That's living life on the edge!

I now have an appreciation and respect for this simple, yet complex, life form. My beetle--check it out on the web; there are some great pictures. When I name it now to a tour group, my perspective on *Milkweed longhorn* is deeper and wider, at least as deep and wide as the milkweed plant.





# Welcome new and renewing members!

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

- |                      |                     |                         |
|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Mary Dodd            | Kevin Creede        | Bob & Rosemary Berstrom |
| Mike Eger            | Greg Koch           | Jack Cermak             |
| Debbie Wensman       | Kenneth L. Callaway | Mr. and Mrs. Ted Pratt  |
| Frances T. Davis     | Donna Dees          | Elizabeth M. Bauer      |
| Richard A. Moss      | Terry Opgenorth     | Joe Morton              |
| Phyllis Berwick      | Monica Engle        | Joy Mc Blair            |
| Mari Hein            | George Dischinger   | Barbara Carson          |
| Douglas K. Swatz     | David Pettus        | Susan Shriner           |
| Judith Christy       | Douglas Edmondson   | Miriam S. Freeman       |
| William & Sue Miller | Cindy Reynolds      | Tim Hudnall             |
| Carolyn Farrar       | Michael Kinney      | Nancy Burditt           |
| Gabrielle David      | Ms. R Latona        | Gail Yant               |
| Eric L. Defonso      | Marilyn E. Krogh    | William Irons           |
| Eileen Lebsack       | Mary Jane Hall      |                         |
| James Collins        | Mildred A. King     |                         |



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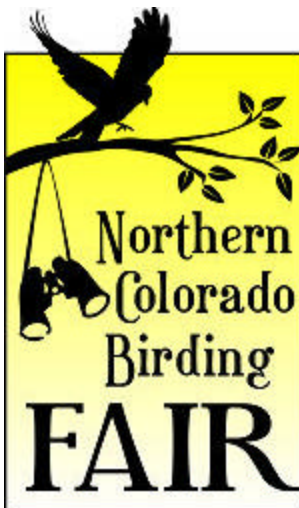
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[www.fortnet.org/audubon/leadership.htm](http://www.fortnet.org/audubon/leadership.htm)



Crazy about birds or just curious? Join us for a **FREE** day of fun and learning for the entire family at the 4th Annual Northern Colorado Birding Fair at Larimer County's Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space on September 27, 2008.

### Birding Fair Details:

**Saturday, September 27, 2008 at Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space**  
**Guided birding walks starting at 7 a.m., ongoing hands-on activities 8:00 - 1:00,**  
**Raptor releases at 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. and**  
**Hourly presentations from 9:30, 10:30 and 11:30 a.m.**

Compete in the Bird Olympics or other birding activities, go on an intermediate or beginner bird walk and scavenger hunt or listen to presentations from experts in the field. No matter what tickles your fancy, birders young and old, beginner to experienced, will find something at this exciting event to fit the bill. Event sponsors will discuss and sell the latest in bird viewing equipment and resource materials.

**Did you say free?** Entry to this event is free for everyone. Prizes will be available for children 12 years of age or under who complete their Birding Fair Passport and numerous door prizes (compliments of event sponsors) will be given away hourly.

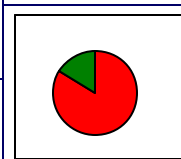
**Directions and more information:** Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space is located on Carpenter Road, 1-mile west of the I-25/Hwy 392 Windsor exit. Contact Windy Kelley at Larimer County Department of Natural Resources for more information, 679-4534 or [wkelley@larimer.org](mailto:wkelley@larimer.org).

## Want less paper mail? Get your newsletter online!

The current issue of the newsletter is available online to members only. 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 e-mail only or both e-mail and paper.

### Monthly Newsletter Distribution

**Paper: 722 (84.3%)**  
**E-mail: 134 (15.7%)**



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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**