

MARCH 2004

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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.

Declining Numbers of Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse *A presentation by avian researcher Rick Hoffman*

MARCH PROGRAM & APRIL FIELD TRIP

GROUSE, perhaps more than any other birds, are icons of our nation's wild, native landscapes. Native Americans emulated grouse breeding rituals in their dances, incorporated grouse feathers in their clothing, and relied on grouse for their food. Today grouse are still enjoyed by hunters and birdwatchers alike.

However, opportunities to hunt and view grouse are quickly disappearing.

The Columbian sharp-tailed grouse is the smallest of the 6 recognized subspecies of sharp-tailed grouse in North America. It was once considered the most abundant upland game bird in the intermountain west, but currently occupies less than 10% of its historical range.

Numerous factors have been implicated in the decline of Columbian sharp-tails. Foremost are the loss, degradation, and fragmentation of its habitat.

Despite the precipitous decline in Columbian sharp-tailed grouse populations throughout its range, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service ruled in 2000 that the petition to list the Columbian sharp-tailed grouse as a federally threatened subspecies was not warranted.

Come learn more about the life history and status of this unique member of the grouse family. Where does it occur in Colorado and how well is it doing? What is being done to recover populations?

The program will be presented by Rick Hoffman, avian researcher of grouse and wild turkeys for the Colorado Division of Wildlife for over 30 years.

To enlighten birders further, Rick has graciously agreed to lead an early morning field trip to the sharp-tail's "leks", or breeding grounds, near Hayden, CO, on the weekend of April 17 - 18, 2004. More details will be provided in the April issue of the Ptarmigan.



THURSDAY EVENING PROGRAM — March 11, 2004
Ludlow Room, Fort Collins Lincoln Center, 417 W. Magnolia Street
Social Gathering - 7:00 PM, Program - 7:30 PM

FORT COLLINS AUDUBON SOCIETY PROGRAMS AND FIELD TRIPS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.
Visit our website at www.fortnet.org/Audubon



MARCH/APRIL 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 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 or 970-897-2454.

03/13/2004 Saturday - The Language of the Chickadee and Field Trip. Leader: Dave Gammon at 970-491-5770 or email degammon@lamar.colostate.edu. Learn about bird "language." Gammon, a CSU graduate student has been studying how black-capped chickadee song evolves. Fort Collins chickadee populations have evolved a new dialect of three different kinds of 'fee-bee' song. Dave has been trying to figure out how and why. First 30 minutes will be background on bird vocal communication and the evolution of chickadee song, followed by a field trip. Best time is about 15 minutes before sunrise, meet 6:30 am at the Division of Wildlife building on West Prospect Road.

03/20/2004 Saturday - Birding for Beginners. Leader: Beth Dillon at 970-490-2610. Introductory trip for birdwatching. All levels welcome.

03/21/2004 Sunday - Fossil Creek Reservoir Bird Survey. Leader: Nick Komar at quetzal65@comcast.net. Monthly bird survey led by FCAS. All levels welcomed. Fossil Creek Reservoir is a Colorado Important Birding Area. Learn more at <http://www.greatpikespeakbirdingtrail.org/site.php?County=7&Site=73>.

03/27/2004 Saturday - PUEBLO RESERVOIR/CANYON CITY AREA. Leader: Nick Komar at quetzal65@comcast.net. All day birding in the upper Arkansas River Valley. Meet 8 am in the parking area of the Best Western Motel in Pueblo West. Contact leader Nick Komar for car-pooling plans and group rate arrangements at the Best Western. Limit 10.

03/28/2004 Sunday - Duck Digiscoping (From Beginner to Advanced). Leader: Bryan Guarente at (970) 506-9897 or email dafekt1ve@yahoo.com. We will discuss problems (and most of their fixes) encountered while digiscoping. We will concentrate mainly on the slightly cooperative and relatively large ducks at Loloff Reservoir and Lower Latham Reservoir. Suggested things to bring: walkie-talkies, lunch, layered clothing, camera & its manual, telescope, extra batteries. Trip should last from half to all day. Room may be limited. Call as soon as possible to get on the list. Meet at King Soopers parking lot at Hwy 34 Bypass and 11th Ave. at 8 am.

04/03/2004 Saturday - Sharp-Tailed Grouse (Early morning trip). Leader: Art Anderson (Cheyenne WY Area) at (307) 638-1286. Leave at 5:30 a.m. from Cheyenne Travel Plaza, 8020 Campstool Rd. (I-80 Exit 367). Carpooling is a must. We will return to the truck stop about 8 a.m., unless we need to drive farther than Hillsdale to find a lek.

04/03/2004 Saturday - Larimer County Owling (Evening trip). Leader: Jason Beason at jason.beason@rmbo.org. Bundle up, bring a good flash-light or headlamp, binoculars and your night-vision. We will search for at least 2 species of owls. Lee Martinez Park and Watson Lake Fish Hatchery for Eastern Screech-Owl. Then, Lory State Park for Northern Pygmy-Owl. We may also find another species. Meet 8 pm at Wal-Mart parking lot on Mulberry (southwest corner).

2004 Birdathon — An annual spring FUNdraiser for Fort Collins Audubon, this year's Birdathon will occur in the 24-hour period beginning Friday, May 14th through Saturday May 15th. This should be the peak of spring migration on the plains and foothills.

Birdathon teams will be formed in early May. On Birdathon day, teams 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 teams—more than 250 species are possible).

Team members obtain pledges based on the total number of species a team sees. Those not on a team or associated with a team member may also pledge.

Four ways to participate in this year's Birdathon:

Personal Pledge—You will CONTRIBUTE per species to support a team; or pledge a fixed amount.

Team Leader—Be a TEAM LEADER to count birds and raise pledges. We especially need Team Leaders to be able to field 7-10 teams.

Team Member—Be a TEAM MEMBER to count birds and raise pledges. Team leaders and members will receive detailed information prior to the count.

Business Pledge—Your BUSINESS pledges based on the average count tally; or a fixed amount.

Clipboards will be passed around for each category at the March, April, and May program meetings. PLEASE sign up where you can. We are planning a connection to International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD), on May 8th. There will be IMBD T-shirts for team members, posters and two special Birdathon/IMBD-themed field trips on May 8th and 9th.

CONSERVATION CORNER - Carol Fiore

Bill Miller and I both attended the very informative Legislative Workshop on Saturday, February 7th, hosted by Audubon Society of Denver and the Denver chapter of the Sierra Club. I'd like to pass on a few tidbits and let you know that our Audubon Colorado lobbyist Jen Boulton is doing a fabulous job of keeping our Colorado legislators on the correct environmental track. If you don't know who your representatives in the State legislature are, find out at www.vote-smart.org/index.phtml

Audubon of Colorado is supporting the following bills: SB101 which involves disclosure of a household nonrenewable water supply, HB1233 and SB104 water conservation bills, HB1135 authorizing wildlife sanctuaries, as well as several other bills. Check out www.capitolconnect.com/audubon for more information on these and other bills. If you don't like what's going on, start writing letters or making phone calls, and email those representatives! Need me to get involved in an issue? Then email me at rockyzoo@earthlink.net

PRESIDENT'S CORNER: Bill Miller

ANNUAL MEETING RECAP – Jan. 8, 2004

We had another successful Annual Meeting. 198 people attended the program, featuring Jerry Craig, retired raptor biologist with the Colorado Division of Wildlife. The Silent Auction that preceded Jerry's program grossed about \$1300 with expenses less than half of that. The final accounting is still pending.

I also had the privilege of recognizing eight Board members, six of which have resigned from the Board. Their times of service ranged from three years to over twenty years. Collectively they have contributed over 95 years of service to FCAS. The names of the "retiring" recipients of the President's Service Awards, their last position, and their length of service are:

Ann Molison – Membership Chair – 3 years; Laurie Zuckerman – Ptarmigan Graphic Designer – 5 years; Rick Harness – Immediate Past President – 5 years; Barb Turnbull – Hospitality chair – 8 years; Dale Agger – Ptarmigan Editor – 12 years; and Rick Schroeder – Publicity chair – 20 years.

Two other recipients of the President's Service Awards and who remain active with the FCAS Board are: Cynthia Melcher – Education Chair – 13 years; and Ron Harden – Chapter Delegate to Audubon Colorado – in excess of 30 years.

I wish to express my deep gratitude for the collective efforts of these volunteer leaders. They represent some of the best parts of the organization which could not function without their dedication and effort.

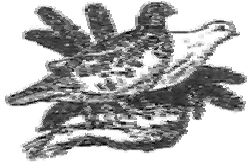
STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION – Feb. 8, 2004

Twelve members of the FCAS Board gave up five hours of their time on a Sunday afternoon to discuss where FCAS currently is at, where it should be headed, and how we will get there. We validated our current mission statement that appears in the masthead of the Ptarmigan. Then we examined how we are performing with respect to the elements within the mission statement as well as our relationship with other chapters, Audubon Colorado, and the National Audubon Society. Chapter issues that were identified included our publicity efforts, chapter-only memberships, an electronic newsletter, a chapter name change, and others.

The face of FCAS will be changing over the next year or so, reflecting changes in how we conduct our business. We will keep you posted as the changes are developed and implemented.

FCAS CHAPTER CONTACTS:

President: Bill Miller 970-493-7693 5mcorp@verinet.com
Conservation: Carol Fiore 970-461-8760 rockyzoo@earthlink.net
Membership: Kate Bolster 720-840-7706 klb@riverside.com
Field Trips: Gary Lefko 970-897-2454 lefkogt@greatpikespeakbirdingtrail.org
Birdathon: Phil Friedman 970-493-2959 phifri@frii.com



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**VOLUNTEER WITH THE CITY'S
 NATURAL AREAS PROGRAM!**

BECOME A MASTER NATURALIST THIS SPRING!

Master Naturalists are volunteers who teach others about the natural areas around Fort Collins. If you have some spare time and love nature, this free program may be for you. Volunteers accepted into the program receive more than 50 hours of high quality training about local natural areas, and then participate in outreach to the community. Volunteer outreach opportunities are many and varied, and designed to fit all schedules.

When: Application deadline is March 19. Please see application packet for training times and details.

Where: Natural Areas Program Offices and local natural areas

Who: Volunteers must be able to walk on soft-surface trails. Those accepted into the program must undergo a background check.

Contact: Sue Kenney, 224-6118, or skenney@fcgov.com

BUILD ARTIFICIAL HABITAT FOR BATS & FLICKERS

When: At your convenience.

Where: At your home.

Who: Anyone with the skills to follow provided plans, and who has tools to cut, drill and assemble the structures.

Contact: Donna Dees, 217-6683, or ddees@fcgov.com

Visit www.fcgov.com/naturalareas/ and click on "Volunteer Opportunities" for many more opportunities.

**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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