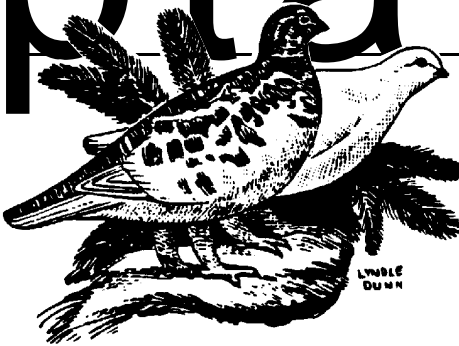


APRIL 2005

# ptarmigan

Volume 36 Issue 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.*

## Paul Hellmund Reports On Trip To Achiote, Panama

*Sponsored by the Panamanian Center for Research & Social Action (CEASPA)  
and the Fort Collins Audubon Society (FCAS), March 11 - 20, 2005*

As I write - two dozen (mas o menos) CSU students, FCAS members, and others are providing volunteer assistance to the village of Achiote, Panama located in the buffer zone of the San Lorenzo Protected Area. Achiote is located along a world-renowned birding site, where the famous Atlantic Christmas Bird Count is held by the Panama Audubon Society every year. The number of species in this area consistently exceeds three hundred in a 24-hour period, which makes it either the Number One or Two birding spot worldwide.

Unfortunately, most visitors to the area stop just short of the village, at the forest's edge, giving the community little financial benefit. CEASPA is working to help the villagers attract eco-tourists. CEASPA purchased a small parcel of land where Centro El Tucan, a community center, had been built,

which also can double as an eco-tourist center. At Centro El Tucan visitors can get a meal, use the facilities, and make some purchases.

Two design workshops have been held, one at Colorado State University and a second in Panama. They resulted in the consensus that a lookout deck on the Centro El Tucan property should be built. The trip to Achiote allowed volunteers time to prepare landscaping and gardens at El Tucan and construct the lookout deck.




Paul Hellmund, Assistant Professor in the Dept. of Horticulture & Landscape Architecture at CSU will give an up-to-date account of this Spring 2005 trip. Be there to hear how Fort Collins and Panamanian citizens worked together on Centro El Tucan.

**THURSDAY EVENING PROGRAM — April 14, 2005**  
**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](http://www.fortnet.org/Audubon)

Printed on  
recycled paper 



# APRIL - MAY 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. Contact the field trip leader of the field trip you are interested in for signup and trip details or the Field Trip Coordinator, Gary Lefko, at [lefkogt@greatpikespeakbirdingtrail.org](mailto:lefkogt@greatpikespeakbirdingtrail.org). or 970-897-2454.

**4/2/2005 Saturday – Bobcat Ridge Natural Area Bird Survey.** Leader: Cole Wild at [birdingwild1@yahoo.com](mailto:birdingwild1@yahoo.com) or 970-310-3735. Fort Collin's 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. **Participation limited.**

**4/9/2005 Saturday - Spring Migrants.** Leader: Bill Miller at (970) 493-7693 or [5mcorp@verinet.com](mailto:5mcorp@verinet.com). Looking for early spring arrivals in Larimer County. **Participation limited.**

**4/16/2005 Saturday. 8:30 AM-1:00 PM. Ducks and Raptors of Northern Larimer County.** Leader: Phil Friedman at [phifri@frii.com](mailto:phifri@frii.com) or 970-493-2959. Northern Larimer County lakes and agricultural/grasslands will uncover waterfowl in pre-mating season plumage and lingering wintering raptors before they head north. **Participation limited.**

**4/24/2005 Sunday - Fossil Creek Reservoir Bird Survey.** Contact Gary Lefko at [lefkogt@greatpikespeakbirdingtrail.org](mailto:lefkogt@greatpikespeakbirdingtrail.org) or call 970-897-2454. Leader: Nick Komar. Fort Collins Audubon performs a monthly bird census for the county. **Participation limited to five plus leader.**

**4/30/2005 Saturday - "Where do I find birds in my**

**town?" (Sterling, Logan County).** Leader: Gary Lefko at 970-897-2454 or [lefkogt@greatpikespeakbirdingtrail.org](mailto:lefkogt@greatpikespeakbirdingtrail.org). Visit Logan County hotspots ([http://www.greatpikespeakbirdingtrail.org/display\\_county.php?County=22](http://www.greatpikespeakbirdingtrail.org/display_county.php?County=22)) like Tamarack Ranch and Red Lion State Wildlife Areas, Sterling State Park and Jumbo Reservoir.

**5/1/2005 Sunday – Bobcat Ridge Natural Area Bird Survey.** Leader: Cole Wild at [birdingwild1@yahoo.com](mailto:birdingwild1@yahoo.com) or 970-310-3735. Fort Collin's 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. **Participation limited.**

**5/13 - 5/14/2005 Friday-Saturday - Annual Birdathon Event.** Leader: Phil Friedman at [phifri@frii.com](mailto:phifri@frii.com) or call 970-493-2959. The Birdathon is Fort Collins Audubon annual spring FUNdraiser. It is also a great birding and social get together that is an enjoyable—if exhausting—24-hour day for those participating. This year the Birdathon will take place on the second weekend in May during a 24-hour period beginning on Friday, May 13 lasting through Saturday, May 14. This should be the beginning of peak spring migration on the plains and the foothills. More details at: <http://www.fortnet.com/Audubon/birdathon.htm>.

## **VOLUNTEER'S CORNER - Ellen Wride, Volunteer Coordinator**

Welcome to a new aspect of FCAS, which will open opportunities for you to volunteer your time and talents to Audubon Society events and projects, whether it is for an hour at one event or for a season-long project. Opportunities to work with other area organizations as well as with your Fort Collins chapter will include fund raising, helping with mailings, helping wildlife while enjoying the outdoors, or building bird houses. You can decide what event and times you are available to spend...the wildlife need you.

\*\*Currently, the *Ptarmigan* needs a volunteer to aid in recruiting appropriate advertisers for future issues. Please contact Ellen Wride at [evw9609@aol.com](mailto:evw9609@aol.com) or by phone at 970-215-0056.

## 2005 FCAS Birdathon Friday & Saturday, May 13-14, 2005

The Birdathon is Fort Collins Audubon annual spring FUNdraiser. It is also a great birding and social get together that is an enjoyable—if exhausting—24-hour day for those participating. This year the Birdathon will take place on the second weekend in May during a 24-hour period beginning on Friday, May 13 lasting through Saturday, May 14. This should be the beginning of peak spring migration on the plains and the foothills.

### **NEW THIS YEAR**

A portion of the Birdathon proceeds will be dedicated to the new Fort Collins Audubon Scholarship Fund.

Some places are exceptionally important—even essential—for bird conservation and this year the FCAS Birdathon effort hopes to promote Important Bird Areas (IBA) by celebrating the opening of the Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space—a statewide IBA. Fossil Creek Reservoir is a mixture of grasslands, riparian, and water habitats make this open space unique in the semi-desert climate of the Colorado Front Range. Identified as an Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society, Fossil Creek Reservoir Open Space is a crucial spot for many different bird species. Directing protection and management efforts towards these sites, many crucial and viable species populations will have greater chances of long-term survival. Conservationists have long understood this fact, but only in recent years has a program emerged to recognize these sites formally.

Birdathon teams will be formed in May. 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 or more for the most skilled teams—more than 250 species are possible). Team members will obtain pledges based on the total number of birds a team sees. Those who want to commit to a pledge, but are not on a team or associated with a team member may also pledge.

### **There are 4 ways to participate in the FCAS Birdathon**

- \* Team Leader (lead a Birdathon team near and far in Larimer and Weld counties)
- \* Team member (be on a team and help spot birds and get pledges)
- \* Pledge giver (provide a pledge to a team member on a per species basis)
- \* Business donor (provide a pledge to a team member or a team)

Beginning at the March meeting, clipboards will be passed around for the above categories. We especially need team leaders: we hope to field at least 7 teams this year.

### **Important Bird Areas**

From its start in Europe in the 1980s, the Important Bird Areas concept has been a success, leading to the recognition and protection of some 3,500 sites worldwide. Many kinds of sites are represented: national wildlife Refuges, national parks and forests, state lands, conservation organization lands, and private lands. Some of these sites are important because they are links along a migratory pathway. Other sites are important quite independent of any other site, and some support species found nowhere else on earth.

### **Birdathon & Important Bird Areas Websites:**

#### ***Fort Collins Audubon Birdathon***

<http://www.fortnet.org/Audubon/activities/calendar.htm#birdathon>

#### ***National Audubon Birdathon***

<http://www.audubon.org/bird/birdathon/>

#### ***Audubon IBA Program***

<http://www.audubon.org/bird/iba/co.html>

#### ***American Bird Conservancy Important Bird Areas of the United States***

<http://www.abcbirds.org/iba/>

#### ***Colorado's Important Bird Areas Program***

<http://www.audubon.org/bird/iba/co.html>

<http://www.abcbirds.org/iba/colorado.htm>

#### ***Canada IBA Program***

<http://www.ibacanada.com/>

Please watch for more information about this and other Birdathon events in the *Ptarmigan*, our website and at program meetings.

# Fort Collins Audubon Society Scholarship Fund

The Fort Collins Audubon Society is committed to providing opportunities for environmental education, in accordance with our mission to “promote the appreciation, conservation, and restoration of ecosystems, focusing on birds and other wildlife.” In 2004, the society established a scholarship fund to provide financial assistance to worthy applicants from the Fort Collins Audubon geographical membership area. Fort Collins Audubon Society scholarships are offered in two categories:

- Child and Youth Scholarships
- Educator Scholarships

Child and Youth Scholarships provide assistance for young people, age 6 to 17, who desire to attend a summer camp, workshop, or class that focuses on environmental study. Applicants must reside in Larimer County or the surrounding area. Funding assistance covers the tuition fee, and may also support costs for transportation and necessary equipment or supplies. Selection of applicants is based on merit and level of interest.

Educator Scholarships provide assistance for teachers in public or private schools in Larimer County or the surrounding area, who desire to attend a workshop or class that focuses on environmental study or environmental education. Funding assistance covers the tuition fee, and may also support costs for transportation and necessary equipment or supplies. Selection of applicants is based on merit, level of interest, and anticipated value of the experience.

**For 2005, the Fort Collins Audubon Society is offering scholarships for:**

- Rocky Mountain Field Seminars ([www.rmna.org](http://www.rmna.org), 800-748-7002)
- Courses and workshops sponsored by the Fort Collins Audubon Society ([www.fortnet.org/Audubon/classes.htm](http://www.fortnet.org/Audubon/classes.htm))

Scholarship application forms are available at our monthly program meetings and on our website, [www.fortnet.org/Audubon/scholarship/](http://www.fortnet.org/Audubon/scholarship/).

The Fort Collins Audubon Society Scholarship Fund is supported by donations from its members, gifts from sponsors, and pledges from the Society’s annual birdathon. To donate to the Fort Collins Audubon Society Scholarship Fund, visit our website donation page, [www.fortnet.org/Audubon/donate.htm](http://www.fortnet.org/Audubon/donate.htm), or send your check to Fort Collins Audubon Society, P.O. Box 271968, Fort Collins, CO 80527-1968

## CONSERVATION CORNER

### **Unlikely Allies: Birds and Wolves**

*Written by Dr. Todd Ringler, a member of the Conservation Committee*

Rocky Mountain National Park is a jewel. Living so close to so many majestic mountains is what keeps many of us here in Colorado. These same mountains beckon more people each year to put down roots here. While we would think, and hope, that places like Rocky Mountain National Park would be immune from the ill-effects of rampant growth in Colorado, a closer look suggests that this is not necessarily the case.

After years of lobbying by Enos Mills, President Wilson designated this land as Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) in January of 1915. Most of the 265,000 acres that now make up RMNP were in the original designation. While the mountains and wildlife may have been the primary reason for designation as a National Park, RMNP has always been a vital refuge for birds. This importance has been recognized by its recent designation as a globally Important Bird Area (IBA) by the American Bird Conservancy and as an Audubon IBA. As we all know, RMNP is more than just pretty mountains.

The desire to create a wildlife refuge in RMNP was brought on by over harvesting of big game. Around 1900, elk were eliminated from the RMNP area due to over-hunting and had to be reintroduced from the Yellowstone elk herd. Wolves and grizzlies had also been eliminated, but the thought of reintroducing predators would have been considered preposterous at the time. Without predators, the elk population grew rapidly and as early as 1930 the Park Service noted a deterioration of vegetation due to overgrazing on the elk's winter range. The ecosystems contained in Beaver Meadows, Moraine Park, Horseshoe Park, and Estes Park bore the brunt of the elk's overgrazing.

The adverse impacts of this overgrazing have been felt through the entire ecosystem, right down to the birds. These wide riparian areas supported active beaver dams which held water in meadows and helped produce intermittent flooding. Since the elk prevented willows and aspen from gaining a mature size, the beavers had no mature growth to harvest. The beaver were the first casualties of the elk overgrazing and are now largely absent from RMNP. Without beavers to regulate the water flow through these riparian areas, the water table dropped, the meadows dried considerably, and the amount and structure of the vegetation dropped substantially. The higher stream flow rates led to bank erosion and, as a result, the streams in RMNP straightened and are now 50% shorter today than they were in 1946.

The loss of these willows and aspen communities has a profound effect on avian biodiversity. Control studies in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem have shown a 50% reduction in the density of avian migrants due to ungulate overgrazing. RMNP would be much healthier (and would be much better birding habitat!) if the impacts of elk overgrazing could be reduced. The Park officials have long recognized this and are ready to act. Now we are faced with the following question: what means should we use to reduce the elk overgrazing?

Many options are still under consideration: culling, birth control, fencing out riparian areas, hazing, and wolf reintroduction. All of these methods have their strengths and weaknesses, but studies emerging from Yellowstone are tipping the balance in favor of the wolves. While wolves generally reduce elk numbers, we are beginning to realize that the impact wolves have on elk behavior might be more profound than their impact on elk numbers. This "ecology of fear" keeps elk out of dangerous areas that have poor escape routes, such as riparian zones. Simply knowing wolves are in the area modifies the way elk behave and leads to riparian rejuvenation.

We are committed to protecting the habitat contained in Important Bird Areas; these areas are the last best refuges for bird species that are having an increasingly hard time adapting to our continual growth. The natural way to restore the balance and ecosystem function in RMNP is to reintroduce wolves, and the only real impediment to this reintroduction is the growth outside the Park. When we look closely, the natural world continues to teach us new and exciting lessons, and in this case it seems to be teaching us that, in some places, birds need wolves.

**Birding with Kevin Cook**  
**Sponsored by**  
**Fort Collins Audubon Society**

A class presented in five sessions with two supporting field trips.

Each class session presents a two-part program of instruction. The first part addresses a specific aspect of cultivating personal interest in birds and birding, and the second part explains how to find and identify specific birds associated with a particular kind of landscape.

**Thursday, May 5 – Developing Personal Birding Knowledge**

How to acquire then apply relevant information first to find birds, then to identify them, and ultimately to understand them. Explains what you need to know, and why, to get good at birding. **Focus Group: Wetland Birds**

**Tuesday, May 10 – Developing Personal Birding Skills**

How to find birds on purpose, how to observe birds productively, and how to identify them with certainty. Explains what you need to do to get good at birding. **Focus Group: Grassland Birds**

**Tuesday, May 17 – Developing Personal Birding Accomplishment**

Not all little green birds are related because color is not a criterion of relatedness, and not all people who enjoy birds are the same because birding interests differ. Explains how to assess your own connection to birds as a necessary condition for experiencing optimum life-time satisfaction with birds. **Focus Group: Shrubland Birds**

**Tuesday, May 24 – Birding Equipment: Matching Need with Ambition**

What to buy and not buy; what to upgrade and what to replace, and when; what to carry afield and what to leave in your car or at home. Explains the difference between what equipment you need and what you think you need. **Focus Group: Treeland Birds**

**Tuesday, May 31 – The Connection between Birds and Place**

Birds associate with certain landscapes for reasons of food and nesting, which explains why not all birds occur in all places. Explains how to use natural history and geography information to find birds deliberately with high success. **Focus Group: Colorado Specialties**

Field Trip Dates are planned for the first two weekends in May, and will be announced at the first class session.

**Field Trip Details**

The first field trip will be either to the Denver Zoo or to the Denver Museum of Nature and Science: nice weather we go outdoors to the zoo; harsh weather we go inside to the museum. This will be a work session of intensive directed study. Participants will be guided in observing specific details of bird anatomy plus size and shape of vital features. The museum dioramas and the zoo flight cages offer unexcelled opportunity for bird enthusiasts to see aspects of birds that can be very difficult to comprehend in a field setting without prior experience. The second field trip will be to a setting where participants will be challenged to find and identify wild birds.

**Class Meeting Time and Place**

Class Time: 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Location: JAX, 1200 N. College Ave., in the conference room

Cost: Class

Per session paid separately: \$7 for Fort Collins Audubon Society members, \$8 for nonmembers

Entire class paid at once: \$33 for Fort Collins Audubon Society members, \$38 for nonmembers

Cost: Field Trips

Each field trip is \$20 for members, \$22 for nonmembers

Museum or zoo entrance fee is extra. Carpooling will be arranged

Registration:

Call Kevin Cook at 223-8392 during afternoon or evenings for full details.

---

## Sylvan Dale Sponsors Loveland CBC - Nick Komar

The Loveland Christmas Bird Count is growing, with 32 volunteers participating this past January 2 (part of the 105<sup>th</sup> National Audubon Society CBC). As a result, the species list is growing too. In 2005, 95 species were recorded (record high) bringing to 117 the species total since the count was resurrected 5 years ago. The increased participation (from 20 volunteers in 2004) led to a large increase in the number of individual birds recorded, from 19,084 to 25,265 birds. However, the number of birds per party-hour decreased from 2004 by about 16%. The reason for this decrease is unknown; however this change is within the range of changes seen each year for the past 5 years, so this decrease may not be significant.

This year's bird highlights included Trumpeter Swans (second year in a row!), and unusually large numbers of Northern Shoveler, Ruddy Duck, Canvasback, Greater Scaup, Hooded Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Bald Eagle, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, American Kestrel, Wild Turkey, American Coot, Wilson's Snipe, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Rock Pigeon, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Mourning Dove, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Bushtit, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Canyon Wren, Townsend's Solitaire, European Starling, Bohemian Waxwing (2,532!!), Cedar Waxwing, Spotted Towhee, American Tree Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, House Finch, Cassin's Finch, and American Goldfinch. 5-year lows were noted for Horned Lark and American Robin. The Turkeys and a rare Northern Pygmy-Owl were found on property of the Sylvan Dale Guest Ranch along the Big Thompson River.

Sylvan Dale management stepped forward this year to sponsor the event, hosting a wonderful evening tally at the end of the count day, and paying the participants' fees to National Audubon Society. FCAS thanks Sylvan Dale Guest Ranch for their sponsorship of this important census in Larimer County. Full results of the census are posted at <http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/index.html>. To get on the mailing list for next year's Loveland CBC, email compiler Nick Komar at [quetzal65@comcast.net](mailto:quetzal65@comcast.net).

---

### Better Living, Better Birders Lynne Hull, Education Director

Skill building opportunities—those who would like to become better birders will want to take advantage of the classes Audubon is sponsoring by local naturalist Kevin Cook. Also, we have negotiated a FCAS members discount for the Rocky Mountain Field Seminars summer program, take 2 (people and classes) and save big! Some scholarships are now available for youth and educators! Further classes by Kevin and by some of our other advanced birders will follow later in the year.

In the news lately: Estimates on the coming extensive population loss and extinctions of birds due to global warming. Do we want to lose birds? Noooo! So, what do we do? Start with the joy of bicycling or walking and birding your way to get groceries, or doing errands. We'll have healthier birders as well as birds!

Other suggestions: Explore Fort Collins' extensive bus system; they will even take your bike. Combine a week's worth of errands into one trip to save gas. Turn your thermostat up 2 degrees in the summer and down 2 degrees in the winter. Do regular tune-ups and maintain your car to reduce fuel consumption. If you still maintain a lawn, mow early or late, mow when the sun is low, it reduces toxic fume output. Carpool, to work and especially when going birding—take some friends! These steps will contribute to cleaner air and better living for all species.

**TRIVIA QUESTION:** (Answer at the program meeting and win a door prize, not to mention our admiration!)

This bird is seen regularly but only in certain places. (S)he is often recognized by a loud, almost raucous cry and "oversized" head. This bird is a year-round resident of our area but in winter you'll only see the adult males! Who is it?

---

## New Features!!!

### Take Action

Call members of the state Agricultural Committee expressing your support for HB1266. This bill (among other things) creates a mandatory habitat stamp on hunting and fishing licenses and is supported by the National Audubon Society. The money from the stamp will be dedicated to habitat issues including acquisition and access. Go to the Colorado State homepage at <http://www.state.co.us> for the legislative directory.



### Kudos and Raspberries



This month, raspberries go to members of Congress who executed a sneak attack on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge by attaching a gas and oil drilling measure to budget legislation. Contact your representatives and senators and tell them you are **opposed** to drilling in this protected ecosystem, which is home to millions of migratory birds. Time is critical so don't wait!



Fort Collins Audubon Society  
 PO Box 271968  
 Fort Collins, CO 80527-1968

NON PROFIT  
 ORGANIZATION  
 US Postage PAID  
 Fort Collins, CO  
 Permit Number 184

## FCAS CHAPTER CONTACTS

**President:** Joel Hurmence  
 970-481-2124  
*jhurmence@hotmail.com*

**Conservation:** Carol Fiore  
 970-461-8760  
*rockyzoo@earthlink.net*

**Membership:** Kate Bolster  
 970-377-9281  
*katebolster@netscape.net*

**Field Trips:** Gary Lefko  
 970-897-2454  
*lefkogt@greatpikespeakbirdingtrail.org*

**Birdathon:** Phil Friedman  
 970-493-2959  
*phifri@frii.com*

**Address Changes:** John Waddell  
 970-226-5917  
*jwaddell@lamar.colostate.edu*

### Audubon Society Membership Application

Support FCAS by paying your National Audubon Society (NAS) and/or Chapter (FCAS) dues through your chapter:

- ف New Member (NAS & FCAS) \$20  
 (Receive *Audubon* magazine and *Ptarmigan*)
- ف Renewing Member (NAS & FCAS) \$35  
 (Receive *Audubon* magazine and *Ptarmigan*)
- ف FCAS Chapter Member only \$15  
 (Receive *Ptarmigan* only)
- ف FCAS may share my name with NAS

ف Additional donation to FCAS of: \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Total enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: No.: \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

ف I prefer to receive the *Ptarmigan* via the FCAS website, [www.fortnet.org/Audubon](http://www.fortnet.org/Audubon). Please e-mail me when posted.

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

FCAS  
 PO Box 271968  
 Fort Collins, CO 80527-1968

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)

Printed on  
 recycled paper

