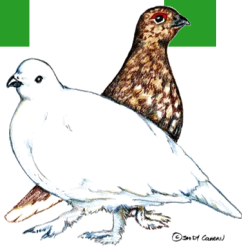


# PTARMIGAN



Northern Colorado Bird Alliance

(formerly Fort Collins Audubon Society)

P.O. Box 271968·Fort Collins, CO·80527-1968·[www.nocobirdalliance.org](http://www.nocobirdalliance.org)

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

October 2025

Volume 57, Issue 7

**Northern Colorado Bird Alliance Hosts Dr. Richard Knight presenting:  
“The Wisdom of the Sierra Madre: Apache, Leopold, and the Land Ethic”**

**Thursday, October 9**

**Social time with Refreshments: 7 p.m.; Announcements: 7:20; Presentation: 7:30**

**Fort Collins Senior Center, 1200 Raintree Dr.**

**This program will be online via Zoom. Enter the following at 7 p.m. to join the meeting:**

**<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89340703429>**

Aldo Leopold once wrote, “for the first time in my life I was seeing land in perfect aboriginal health.” How could Leopold, a land doctor, create the land ethic if he had not heretofore seen land as it looked in “perfect” health. The answer lies in two bow-hunting trips he took to the Rio Gavilan Watershed in Mexico’s northern Sierra Madre in the mid-1930s. Unbeknownst to the outside world, not all Apache surrendered to General Miles in 1886. The presence of these indigenous people still living in the Sierra Madre had kept the miners, loggers, ranchers, and hunters out of this part of the Sierras. These experiences provided Leopold with the final ingredient to complete his land ethic.

Richard Knight works at the intersection of land use and land health in the American West. A professor of wildlife conservation at Colorado State University, he



**Corrales de los Indios (Geronimo's hideout in the Sierra Madre). Photo by Richard Knight.**

sits on a number of boards including the Colorado Cattlemen’s Agricultural Land Trust, the Science Board of the Malpai Borderlands Group, The Partnership of Rangeland Trusts, The Land Conservation Assistance Network, and the Colorado Land Library. He was formerly on the Board of Editors for both *Conservation Biology* and *Ecological Applications*. In 2007, CSU honored him with the Board of Governors Excellence in Teaching award. He is a five-time recipient of the Student’s Choice for Favorite Faculty

Member in the Warner College of Natural Resources. His most recent book (2020) is *Twenty-five Years of Keeping Working Lands in Working Hands: The Story of the Colorado Cattlemen’s Agricultural Land Trust*.

Join us on October 9 for this informative program that is free and open to the public.

**Northern Colorado Bird Alliance welcomes new National Audubon Society members** by sending one complimentary copy of our newsletter. Join us at our monthly programs on the second Thursday of the month to find out more about Northern Colorado Bird Alliance. National dues do not cover the cost of printing and mailing the newsletter, so if you’d like to keep receiving it, please support your local chapter and subscribe. See details on the last page of the newsletter or on our website at [www.nocobirdalliance.org](http://www.nocobirdalliance.org).

## President's Corner

by John Shenot

Northern Colorado Bird Alliance has no paid employees, instead relying on volunteers to lead every aspect of the organization. Every year, at our annual meeting in January, members elect four officers and up to six directors-at-large to serve on the Board of Directors for a one-year term. Every other year, members also elect a President to serve a two-year term. The President, with approval from the Board, then appoints chairpersons to lead our standing committees. Each committee chairperson is also a member of the Board of Directors.

As we all know, there are many steps that must happen before any election, and ours is no different. The first step we take every year, in early October, is to form a nominations committee to identify candidates for serving on the Board of Directors. I want to encourage any Bird Alliance member who might entertain the idea of serving on the nominations committee to contact me immediately. We will announce the members of the committee at our chapter meeting on October 9, so time is of the essence! The committee's work will begin immediately thereafter and continue into January, but the time commitment is not at all demanding.

I also want to speed up the nominations process by inviting anyone who might want to serve as a Board member in 2026, or is just curious about it, or knows someone who might be a good candidate, to contact me at your earliest convenience. Candidates do not have to be expert birders or have experience leading any type of organiza-

tion; new board members will get a lot of coaching and help in whatever role they assume. I will share any names I receive with the nominations committee. We're always happy to bring new faces to our chapter leadership and I will gladly answer questions about the roles we need to fill and what it takes to serve. I hope to hear from some of you.



### NOCO Bird Alliance Fall 2025 Fund Raiser

We are seeking donations of new and/or gently used bird guides, nature books, animal artwork, bird plates and figurines, your own home crafted bird houses, or anything you no longer need and think other nature lovers would enjoy and treasure. Clean out your home and support your chapter!



Bring your donations to the October 9 program meeting at the Senior Center, or contact Liz Pruessner (970-215-3409; [lizpru@colostate.edu](mailto:lizpru@colostate.edu)) to arrange the transfer of your donations.



#### CHAPTER CONTACTS

##### President

John Shenot  
802-595-1669

[johnshenot@gmail.com](mailto:johnshenot@gmail.com)

##### Vice President

Liz Pruessner

[lizpru@colostate.edu](mailto:lizpru@colostate.edu)

970-484-4371

##### Program Chair

Nolan Bunting

[nolanbunting@hotmail.com](mailto:nolanbunting@hotmail.com)

907-299-4625

##### Field Trip Coordinator

Amy Roush

[fcasfieldtrips@gmail.com](mailto:fcasfieldtrips@gmail.com)

512-993-0242

##### Membership Chair

Harry Rose

[hrose@toadaway.net](mailto:hrose@toadaway.net)

970-430-6731

##### Publications/Newsletter

Joe Webber

[Joe.Webber26@gmail.com](mailto:Joe.Webber26@gmail.com)

720-345-4757

For other contacts visit

[www.nocobirdalliance.org](http://www.nocobirdalliance.org)

Visit us on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/NoCoBirdAlliance>

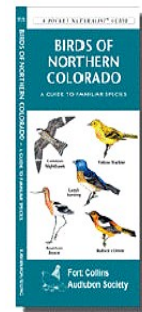
#### Pocket Guide to Local Birds

Is available at the following retailers who support our organization with the sales:

Wild Birds Unlimited  
3636 S. College Ave  
Ste. C  
(970) 225-2557

Jax Loveland West  
Outdoor Gear  
2665 W. Eisenhower  
(970) 667-7375

Jax Outdoor Gear  
1200 N. College  
(970) 221-0544



## The Power (and Responsibility) of Sharing Bird Data

Citizen science is transforming science and conservation. Platforms like eBird and iNaturalist now allow anyone with binoculars or a smartphone to contribute



House Sparrow by Joseph Webber.

to scientific understanding. Here in Northern Colorado, those contributions are more than just data points, they help state and local land managers know what's happening where, and make decisions that affect the future of bird habitats.

Managers use these public databases to 1) track species of special concern such as Burrowing Owls and Long-billed Curlews, 2) identify important breeding and stopover sites for migrants, 3) guide restoration priorities and evaluate where resources are most urgently needed, and 4) cross-check rare or out-of-range species for inclusion in management plans.

This kind of broad coverage is impossible for agencies to achieve on their own, which is why your checklist, photo, or sound recording matters.

At the same time, open data comes with risks. Exact locations of sensitive species (nesting raptors, grouse leks, wetland specialists) can draw unwanted attention. Curious birders or photographers can unintentionally cause disturbance, and heavy foot traffic may degrade fragile habitats. To help mitigate these risks, platforms have safeguards: eBird automatically obscures certain species, iNaturalist allows records to be obscured or

made private. As contributors, we share responsibility to obscure nest sites, generalize locations when appropriate, and use project portals that balance data utility with species protection.

Despite the excitement that a rogue Anhinga or Wood Stork can generate, even the ordinary birds and plants we see daily, House Sparrows, American Robins, or yes, even Canada thistle, provide value. For example, in the annual worldwide City Nature Challenge, participants log all living things, from rare butterflies to invasive weeds. Those “common” or “undesirable” records help scientists and land managers detect ecological shifts, map spread patterns, and assess the effectiveness of restoration work. In mass, such observations are even more useful than the odd rare discovery, so don't hesitate to submit that Canada Goose!

Together, these observations form a living map of bio-



Long-billed Curlews (and Greater Yellowlegs) by Joseph Webber.

diversity in our region. Every checklist, every photo, every sound recording contributes to a better understanding of the natural world. When we balance openness with care, we ensure our data helps birds and habitats without putting them at risk.

### Northern Colorado Bird Alliance Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Thank you for your membership! As we head toward the year's end, we are beginning a membership drive. We currently have a bit over 260 local members and would like to substantially increase that number. Memberships provide a major part of the funding that supports our conservation and education work. You can help support our work by informing friends, family, and fellow birders about us.



Marsh Wren by Ron Harden.

## Bird Song Basics

Perhaps the most reliable means of finding and identifying birds is by listening closely. Learning the bird songs and calls of species in your region is an excellent way of increasing the size and accuracy of your bird lists, not to mention it's a magical means of enjoying birds.

This is often easier said than done for a number of reasons. During winter, most birds don't sing at all, and only call infrequently. Several groups of North American birds have songs or calls that are quite similar to one another. In Western Colorado, the songs of the American Robin, Western Tanager, and Black-headed Grosbeak easily can be confused.

Most field guides reserve only a line or two of text to describe a bird's voice, which is usually not enough to learn their songs and calls. A notable exception to this generalization is the *Peterson Field Guide to Bird Sounds of Western (or Eastern) North America*, by Nathan Pieplow.

One way to learn songs is by listening to songs and calls on apps like Sibley, Audubon, Merlin Bird ID, through the Macaulay library, or (even better) in person. Then come up with mnemonics to remember them by, like "wichitee, wichitee, wichitee" for the Common Yellowthroat, or the famous "who cooks for you?" of the Barred Owl. Often a song will be either too complex, or too simple for a mnemonic. In the case of complex songs, listen for identifying phrases within the song;

the Western Tanager periodically includes a distinctive, ascending, three-note "chippi-tee," within or between songs. For simple songs and calls, listen for defining qualities to the notes. This also can be useful in discerning birds with similar songs, like the Dark-eyed Junco and Chipping Sparrow. Both make an insect-like trill, but the trill of the Dark-eyed Junco sounds more

"musical" while the Chipping Sparrow sounds more "insect-like."

The Merlin app is also a useful tool for learning bird songs. The user takes an audio recording that the app analyzes, in combination with GPS location, to provide a list of birds that best match the audio spectrograph. While Merlin is generally quite accurate, it is not perfect. Remember,

the app lists likely birds; if it can't decide which of two birds is singing, it may list both. Additionally, it can be fooled by mimics like mockingbirds, starlings, and jays.

It remains an excellent tool for recording and identifying birds, just take its recommendations with a grain of salt.

My favorite means of learning bird songs is to go to bird walks and workshops dedicated to birding by ear. Often a fellow birder will know a memorable way of remembering a tricky song.



Male Lazuli Bunting singing by Joseph Webber.



Rock Wren singing from a mountain top by Joseph Webber.



## October Field Trips

*All field trips are free and open to the public. Anyone at any experience level is welcome. Bring snacks or lunch, water, binoculars, and/or spotting scopes. Changes to dates, meeting times, locations, and trip leaders are occasionally unavoidable. To register for any trip, please see posts at <https://www.facebook.com/NoCoBirdAlliance> or member emails sent out 1 — 2 weeks in advance of each trip. When announced, links will also be posted to the linktree at [linktr.ee/nocobirdalliance](http://linktr.ee/nocobirdalliance). Attendance may be limited. Bobcat Ridge surveys do not require registration. With questions, suggestions, or interest in leading trips (all you need is a desire to share your love of birds and/or nature), please email [ncbafieldtrips@gmail.com](mailto:ncbafieldtrips@gmail.com). Keep an eye on email and/or social media posts for additional field trips!*

**Oct. 12, Sunday, Bobcat Ridge Survey.** Leader: Denise Bretting, [dbretting@swloveland.com](mailto:dbretting@swloveland.com) or 970-402-1292. The survey looks at bird populations and helps local scientists better understand bird dynamics. The little more than four-mile hike covers moderate to flat terrain with some steep sections. No registration required and there is no participation limit, but please email or text Denise that you plan to attend. Meet in Bobcat Ridge parking lot at 7:30 a.m. The trip may be cancelled, rescheduled, or relocated if trails are closed.

**Oct. 25, Saturday, Grandview Cemetery.** Leaders: Nolan Bunting, [nbunting@rams.colostate.edu](mailto:nbunting@rams.colostate.edu) or 907-299-4625, and Dave Leatherman, [daleatherman@msn.com](mailto:daleatherman@msn.com). Prepare for a spooky trip just before dusk at the Grandview Cemetery. The trip will be 1.5 hours and will include some mild walking through one of Fort Collins' hidden birding locations. We may see owls, Brown Creepers, and perhaps stumble upon a murder of crows. Additionally, there will be stories about some of the well-

known ghosts and hauntings that are said to happen in the cemetery. The trip will begin at 5 p.m. and will conclude at dusk. Meet at the Mountain Ave entrance near

City Park. Please bring a headlamp and flashlight. Registration will be increased to 15 for this trip. Additional cemetery trips may be added if demand is high.

**October, Date TBD, Accessible Field Trip.** Contact: Amy Roush, [canyonwren4@gmail.com](mailto:canyonwren4@gmail.com) or 512-993-0242.

This field trip will be on a paved hike and bike path. More detail will be provided with the signup. Past locations have included Boyd Lake Trail at Boyd Lake State Park and the Poudre River Trail from Lee Martinez Park.

**November, Date TBD: LGBTQIA+ and Allies.** Leader: Kit Gray, [kit@kitgrayillustration.com](mailto:kit@kitgrayillustration.com). Join us for a friendly and social bird outing. Birders of all levels are welcome.

Keep an eye on email and/or

social media posts for updates and additional field trips.



Great Horned Owl by Evan Lopez.



Left: Evening Grosbeak by Farrell Steiner.

Right: screech owl by Carole Hossan.



Northern Colorado Bird Alliance  
PO Box 271968  
Fort Collins, CO 80527-1968



Printed on recycled paper

## Membership Application

Join Northern Colorado Bird Alliance (the chapter), National Audubon Society (NAS), or both.

- |                                                                                                         |          |                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> New or renewing chapter member<br>Receive the <i>Ptarmigan</i> by email        | \$ 20    | Name: _____                                                                                                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New or renewing chapter member<br>Receive the <i>Ptarmigan</i> by mail         | \$ 30    | Address: _____                                                                                                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime chapter member<br>Receive <i>Ptarmigan</i> by mail or email           | \$750    | City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____                                                                                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Additional support for chapter programs                                        | \$ _____ | Phone: _____                                                                                                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Additional support for Alex Cringan Fund<br>(natural history education grants) | \$ _____ | Email: _____                                                                                                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New NAS member<br>Receive the NAS <i>Audubon</i> by mail                       | \$ 20    | May we send you chapter email alerts if updates occur for field trips, programs, etc.? Yes or No                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Renewing NAS member<br>Receive the NAS <i>Audubon</i> by mail                  | \$ 35    | May we contact you for volunteer activities such as helping at events or contacting legislators on important issues? Yes or No |
| <b>Total Enclosed: \$ _____</b>                                                                         |          |                                                                                                                                |

Make tax-exempt checks payable to Northern Colorado Bird Alliance and mail this form to Northern Colorado Bird Alliance, P.O. Box 271968, Fort Collins, CO, 80527-1968. Your cancelled check is your receipt. All renewals are due in January. New memberships begun after August 31 extend throughout the following year. Applications can be completed at [www.nocobirdalliance.org](http://www.nocobirdalliance.org).