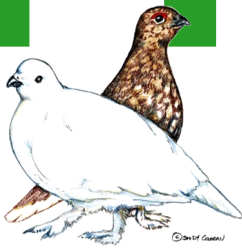


PTARMIGAN



Northern Colorado Bird Alliance

(formerly Fort Collins Audubon Society)

P.O. Box 271968 Fort Collins, CO 80527-1968 www.nocobirdalliance.org

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

November 2025

Volume 57, Issue 8

Northern Colorado Bird Alliance Hosts

Delilah Lopez Presenting:

“Sharing Knowledge on the Significance of the Bald Eagle in Native American Culture and the Ecosystem”

Thursday, November 13

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/81878077981>

Eagles have always been a lasting symbol of Native American peoples. Their beauty and majesty have inspired many artists and cultures throughout North America. Bald Eagles also play an important role in ecosystems that many Native Americans call home. Much of the protection of Bald Eagles was started due to their significance. Our presentation hopes to highlight and improve the understanding of this unique bond.

Delilah Lopez is a CSU alum and a current master's student. She was born in Great Falls, Montana, is an enrolled member of the Chippewa Cree Tribe of Rocky Boy Reservation in Montana, and also is Hispanic. She was a stay-at-home parent for over 10



**Physical exam on a Bald Eagle after impact injury.
Photo by Nolan Bunting.**

years before returning to college in the fall of 2022. At CSU she majored in Ethnic Studies with a minor in Indigenous Studies. She says her goal is to be an educator for underserved students. Lopez is passionate about serving others and making a difference in her community. She also wants to be a positive role model for her children, family, and community. In 2023, she was awarded the Udall Undergraduate Scholarship, was the Multicultural Undergraduate Research Art and Leadership Symposium (MURALS) presenter, and became a leader in the CSU community.

Join us on November 13 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.

President's Corner

A couple of months ago, we wrapped up work on a Mindful Birding project and submitted a final grant report to our funders at the National Audubon Society (NAS). But I realized just today that we hadn't yet shared the fantastic results of that project with our members!

Led by longtime chapter member Dr. Barb Patterson, our Mindful Birding Project consisted of a series of workshops and webinars in which participants across the country were introduced to Mindful Birding, which combines the joy and fascination of observing birds with the mental and emotional health benefits that can come from mindfulness practices. (For a more thorough explanation, visit www.themindfulbirdingnetwork.com.)

Over the course of nearly a year, Dr. Patterson led three in-person workshops in the Denver, San Francisco, and Philadelphia areas, as well as four online webinars. One of the most rewarding aspects of this project was bringing together participants from diverse organizations. In addition to leaders from other chapters in the NAS network, we connected with groups such as the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society, Latino Outdoors, Feminist Birders, environmental education centers, and native plant societies. More than 450 attendees learned everything they need to know to offer mindful birding field trips and events in their own communities. The feedback we received was fantastic, and the enthusiasm generated by this project continues to ripple outward, inspiring a more thoughtful, inclusive way to experience

birds and the natural world.

Although our grant is now over, Dr. Patterson and our chapter will continue to offer Mindful Birding events in our local communities.

We're even collaborating with researchers at Colorado State University to better understand, and perhaps eventually quantify, the health benefits of mindful birding. If you would like to learn more or volunteer to help with these efforts, please reach out and we'll connect you with the right people.



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Visit us on Facebook:

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

NOCO Bird Alliance Fall 2025 Fund Raiser Seeking Donations of Books and Art

There's still plenty of time to donate! The fund raiser will take place at our December program meeting. 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, and 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 November 13 program meeting at the Senior Center. Or contact Liz Pruessner to arrange the transfer of your donations: 970-215-3409; lizpru@colostate.edu.



Conservation Easements

Approximately 60 percent of Colorado's land is privately owned by individuals and organizations, but only two percent is permanently protected according to Colorado Open Lands.

Conservation easements are a tool for protecting the conservation values of a property. These values include scenic, historic, relatively natural habitat, recreational and educational, and agricultural. Conservation easements allow the property to stay in private hands and still be taxed, but protects the conservation values the individual landowner and easement holder wish to see protected in perpetuity.

A conservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and an eligible organization, such as a land trust, that restricts the activities that may take place on a property in order to protect the land's conservation values. The easement holder visits the property to ensure the conservation values are being upheld.



A moose passing through a conservation easement property.
Photo by Joseph Webber.

The landowner and any future owners of the property may continue current land use such as ranching, farming, recreation, hunting, and educational programs as these uses are written

into the easement. Tax incentives are available to help reduce the size of a taxable estate by reducing the overall value of the property subject to taxation. Colorado is one of several states that offer tax credits for conservation easement donations. With the complexity of the conservation tax credit system, landowners consult



A variety of habitats being placed in conservation easement. Photo by Joseph Webber.

with experts regarding legal and financial aspects of placing a property in an easement.

Water resources are extremely valuable for the residence of Colorado, both human and wildlife. Conservation easements help protect important headwaters, streams, rivers, lakes, and wetlands. Many beautiful properties have been preserved forever due to strong conservation minded landowners, strong easement holding organizations, and conser-

vation organization partners. Birds and other wildlife benefit by relying on important migration stopover nesting and foraging sites being there when they need them.

Work is being done to conserve lands that are critical to migrating Sandhill Cranes and Gunnison Sage-Grouse. These species as well as many others will benefit from the conservation of private lands, preserving agricultural land with feeding grounds for the cranes and sagebrush habitat for the grouse in Gunnison valley.

Conservation easements are an important way to protect the most valuable wildlife habitat, protect waterways, and keep agricultural lands growing local food for Colorado's growing population.

Northern Colorado Bird Alliance Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Barbara Case
Christina Clayton
Joyce Dempsey
Renee Kohler

Michael Lujan
Jean Sanfacon
Lindsay Toillion

Your support makes our programs and conservation efforts possible and helps us achieve our mission of connecting people to the natural world.



Greater Sage-Grouse by Richard Pick.

Vagrant Birds

While conducting a bird survey in the Rio Grande National Forest this year in early July, I heard a bird song I didn't recognize. After some searching, I was surprised to find a Winter Wren singing from atop a subalpine fir! Normally a species that is only seen rarely in Colorado during migration, this individual was around 900 miles from its usual breeding range. This is an example of a "vagrant:" a bird that is well outside of its normal range or migration route.

This year has been quite the year for vagrants to Colorado. Notably, an Anhinga showed up in Boulder for a couple weeks, and a Wood Stork spent some time in Broomfield. Both are species that are ordinarily found in Florida. We've also had a Yellow Grosbeak vacationing at a yard in Estes Park, a species that is rarely seen north of the U.S./Mexico border.

Vagrant birds are one of the most exciting parts of birding. Finding and/or seeing a species you wouldn't normally encounter is like finding a hidden treasure. Vagrants occur most often during spring and fall migration. When birds are traveling, they will occasionally stray from their typical migration corridor. The exact means by which birds navigate varies by species, and is a complicated,

but fascinating, area of study. The strongest theories for how birds find their way during migration include the ability to see and/or feel the earth's magnetic field; determine north and south by way of sunrise and sunset, or by the rotation of the stars; and use of landmarks.

As difficult as it is to determine which of these navigational solutions are being used by migrating birds, it is a greater challenge still to determine exactly why a particular individual has strayed from its usual region. Notable cases of vagrants are often attributed to strong or unusual weather patterns, such as American Flamingos being found as far North as Pennsylvania as a result of hurricanes passing through their home territory in Southern Florida, or Canada Geese migrating at higher altitudes to avoid the smoke from wildfires.

When a vagrant shows up in lieu of a weather event or in an abnormal breeding or wintering ground, it's anyone's guess as to why. Whatever the reason, stray birds making a rare appearance always provides strong motivation for birders to keep getting outside with their eyes and ears open.



Winter Wren atop a Subalpine Fir in the Rio Grande National Forest by Joseph Webber.



Wood Stork in Broomfield, CO by Joseph Webber.

It's Time to Renew Your Membership

It is time to renew your annual membership. Northern Colorado Bird Alliance chapter memberships run for the calendar year from January through December. Dues are \$20 to receive the *Ptarmigan* electronically or \$30 for a printed copy through the mail. Please use the form on the back page of the newsletter to renew by mail or renew at a program meeting. As of this writing, our website is down and we are unable to accept renewals online. Our webmaster is working to remedy this situation. We will send out an email to everyone as soon as service is restored and rest assured we are still able to provide email delivery of our newsletter. Remember, your membership and contributions are tax deductible, and help make our programs possible. If you renewed September – December 2024, your membership is good through January 2026. Thank you to all those who have already renewed. We appreciate your support!



Renew



November 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. 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. Keep an eye on email and/or social media posts for additional field trips!

Nov. 9, Sunday, Bobcat Ridge Survey. Leader: Denise Bretting, 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 at 8 a.m. in the Bobcat Ridge parking lot.



Canyon Wren by John Shenot.

November, tentatively 15 or 16. LGBTQIA+ Community and Allies. Join us for a friendly and social bird outing. Birders of all levels are welcome. More info to be shared via email and social media.

November TBD: Collaboration with Wilderness Society's Arctic Defense Campaign. Join us to learn more about our local winter birds who rely on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in the summer! More info will be shared via email and social media.



Rough-legged Hawk by Carolyn McDonald.



Arctic Terns from All About Birds, Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Long-tailed Ducks
by Joan Tisdale.



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



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Membership Application

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

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

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.