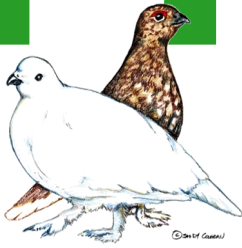


# PTARMIGAN



Northern Colorado Bird Alliance

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.

**September 2026**

**Volume 58, Issue 6**

**Northern Colorado Bird Alliance Hosts**

**Dr. Lauryn Benedict presenting: "What are Talking Parrots Telling us?"**

**Thursday, September 10**

**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/87383773817>**

Parrots are one of the few groups of animals that can learn vocalizations throughout their lives. Why do they learn so well? What makes some birds better at vocal gymnastics than others? The Many Parrots Project is investigating these questions (and more) with the help of companion parrots and their humans. The project has data describing how over 1,200 individual parrots mimic human speech. Join Dr. Lauryn Benedict, to hear what these data have revealed about cognition and vocal learning across a range of parrot species. If you know a parrot that talks, whistles, or sings, you can contribute to this research by visiting <https://www.manyparrots.org/>.



**Lauryn Benedict and parrot logo.**

Dr. Lauryn Benedict is a professor of Biological Sciences at the University of Northern Colorado and a researcher in animal communication and social behavior, using bird vocalizations to study how signals evolve in nature. Through a combination of community science, field observation, and sound recording analysis, Dr. Benedict studies the function and evolution of male and female vocalizations in a wide range of birds, including parrots and Colorado wrens. She holds a bachelor's degree from Cornell University and a Ph.D. in Integrative Biology from the University of California, Berkeley.

Join us on September 10 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).

This summer I said farewell to my most frequent birding companion, a small dog with a huge personality named Daisy. She was seven weeks shy of 17 years old and is sorely missed.

My wife and I brought Daisy home when she was seven weeks old and weighed just seven pounds. I could literally hold her in the palm of my hand! Over the years, she and I took several thousand walks together and became best friends. We would get out first thing in the morning nearly every single day, and I would almost always carry binoculars.

Birding with Daisy was challenging. She had an uncanny knack for stopping when I needed to move and moving when I needed to stop. I would see an intriguing bird ahead of us and want to move quickly for a better look, but she had other ideas. Short of dragging her, we weren't going anywhere. On the other hand, if I was in the right spot and trying to focus on an active bird, it was virtually certain that would be when Daisy decided to pull me – forcefully – down the trail.

Birding with Daisy was difficult, sometimes even frustrating, but it also taught me useful lessons. Because we went out nearly every day, I became much more aware of daily and seasonal variations in bird activity. I learned to bird by ear, to the point where more than half the species I would record on a typical walk were “heard only.” I also learned the value of patience, especially in her final year



John and Daisy. Photo by Amy Shenot.

when it could take up to an hour for us to cover about a quarter mile. It was amazing to discover, as we walked at a snail's pace, how many interesting birds might eventually pass through a place that I would have missed if we were moving faster. Daisy is gone now, sadly, but birding by ear and slow birding will remain part of my routine.

## CHAPTER CONTACTS

### President

John Shenot  
802-595-1669

[president@nocobirdalliance.org](mailto:president@nocobirdalliance.org)

### Vice President

Liz Pruessner  
970-484-4371

### Program Chair

Nolan Bunting

[programs@nocobirdalliance.org](mailto:programs@nocobirdalliance.org)

907-299-4625

### Field Trip Coordinator

Amy Roush

[fieldtrips@nocobirdalliance.org](mailto:fieldtrips@nocobirdalliance.org)

512-993-0242

### Membership Chair

Harry Rose

[membership@nocobirdalliance.org](mailto:membership@nocobirdalliance.org)

970-430-6731

### Publications/Newsletter

Joe Webber

[publications@nocobirdalliance.org](mailto:publications@nocobirdalliance.org)

720-345-4757

For other contacts visit

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

Visit us on Facebook:

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

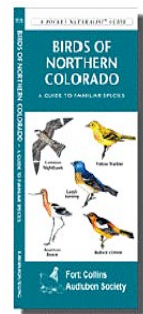
## Pocket Guide to Local Birds

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  
2665W. Eisenhower  
(970) 667-7375

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



Brown-headed  
Cowbird  
by Joseph  
Webber.



## Conservation Corner: There Oughta Be a Law!

Members often ask whether the Northern Colorado Bird Alliance does any advocacy for laws, rules, or policies to better protect wildlife and habitats. The answer is a little complicated.

Our chapter's Conservation Committee sometimes engages on local, state, or even national issues where decisionmakers are soliciting public comments about a proposed development, ordinance, regulation, policy change, or activity that is a concern for wildlife conservation. We engage in this kind of direct advocacy as much as our resources allow, prioritizing issues that are important enough to merit our engagement and where we believe an overwhelming majority of our members would want us to speak up.

Direct advocacy, however, is different than political activity (supporting or opposing a candidate for elected office) and legislative activity (lobbying for or against proposed new laws). As a tax-exempt nonprofit, we are allowed to participate in the kinds of direct advocacy described above essentially without limits, but forbidden to participate in almost all forms of political activity and restricted from participating in too much lobbying. To ensure we do not jeopardize our tax-exempt status, our chapter follows complex IRS guidance on what we can and cannot do.

This does not mean we are entirely passive about new Colorado laws. We are part of a group called the Audubon Colorado Council (ACC), which has representatives from every National Audubon Society chapter in the state. The ACC provides a forum for chapters to learn from and collaborate with each other and with National Audubon's paid professional staff. The ACC also has a Public Policy Committee (PPC) that monitors legislative activities and provides an avenue for our chapter to address concerns with proposed state laws.

Audubon Rockies, the regional office of National Audubon Society serving Colorado, annually contracts with a lobbyist who works in the state capitol to support bills that would be good for wildlife conservation and oppose bills deemed harmful. This lobbyist works for Audubon Rockies, but receives input from the ACC

PPC. With the lobbyist available as a resource, the PPC studies legislative bills and decides if a bill should be supported or opposed, and whether it should have priority status, which means that the PPC wants the lobbyist to actively work the bill by testifying at committee meetings, talking with legislators, and coordinating efforts with lobbyists from other environmental organizations on a combined response. Because bills can undergo significant changes in the Colorado House or Senate after their initial introduction, the PPC may monitor some bills prior to taking a position.

Throughout each annual Colorado legislative session, the lobbyist hired by Audubon Rockies provides periodic updates to the PPC on the progress of bills. The lobbyist may sometimes advise the PPC to encourage broader public input that could make the difference between success and failure on a priority status bill. Our members may then see an appeal at a chapter meeting or on our social media outlets asking you to speak up. Chapters are advised not to publicly take a position on a bill when it is introduced based solely on its subject, but instead wait until the bill's

final form is known and the lobbyist recommends contacting legislators. The lobbyist also provides a final report at the end of each session. You can read the 2026 report, which reviews the fate of bills followed by the PPC at <https://tinyurl.com/25678mwr>.

In summary, our chapter does not directly lobby for or against state laws, but we do have access to a seasoned professional working in Denver to communicate our concerns and achieve outcomes that we can support. The ACC PPC has proven to be an effective voice for wildlife conservation and it is always looking for volunteers.



From Rebubble.com.

## Hummingbird Migration

A tiny sprite, weighing as little as 0.1 oz; feisty enough to chase a red-tailed hawk during breeding season; males wear jewels, bright colors, and females are beautifully camouflaged in subtle, but beautiful colors of her own: what is not to love?

Hummingbirds are fascinating. These diminutive jewels, weighing less than a penny, make remarkable journeys between breeding and wintering grounds. They are always awaited in the spring with great anticipation, and are greatly missed in the non-breeding season here in Colorado.

Hummingbirds are important pollinators, feeding on flower nectar. They are also insectivores and will perch and fly out to catch small flying insects. A sapsucker well, which is a hole drilled by sapsucker species such as the Red-



Female Broad-tailed Hummingbird by Sheila Webber.



Female Rufous Hummingbird  
by Joseph Webber.

naped, may be visited by hummingbirds for a sip of nectar and a snack of the insects trapped in the sticky-sweet nutrient-rich sap. Hummingbird feeders (clean and without red dye) are also a favorite for hummingbirds.

Calliope Hummingbirds are the smallest breeding bird in North America and the smallest long-distance migrant. Their migration path takes them along the Pacific Coast in the spring, where they breed in the northwestern states and up into Canada. Then, when migrating to Mexico for the non-breeding season, they take a path along the Rocky Mountains.

Broad-tailed Hummingbirds breed in Northern Colo-

rado. They can be found in the foothills, and even in town on their tiny, well-hidden nests. They can stay in the area well into October as one was reported in Littleton on October 19, 2025. Non-breeding season is spent in Mexico.

A short-distant, partial migrant is the Black-chinned Hummingbird. Males leave breeding grounds in mid-to-late June. Females and juveniles start heading for non-breeding grounds in mid-July and are mostly out of the breeding grounds by mid-to-late August, although a Black-chinned was sighted in Colorado on October 1, 2025. Most of the population winters in western Mexico.

Another of our Colorado species of hummingbird arrives during their migration in about mid-July. Rufous Hummingbirds make the longest migration of any bird in the world by body size. Rufous nest the farthest north of any hummingbird species, raising their chicks in the Pacific Northwest and up into Canada and Alaska. Non-breeding season is spent in Mexico and along the southern coast of the United States and Florida.

So, as fall migration gears up, we say farewell to our little spritely jewels, wishing them safe travels to far away places. We can start planning which native plants to add to the garden to lure them in and help them along in the spring, when we will happily welcome them back.



Black-chinned Hummingbird  
By Janet Stevens.



## 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. 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 [fieldtrips@nocobirdalliance.org](mailto:fieldtrips@nocobirdalliance.org).

**Sept. 13, 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 4-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 7 a.m. in Bobcat Ridge parking lot. The trip may be cancelled, rescheduled, or relocated if trails are closed.

Next dates and times for Bobcat Ridge Surveys: Oct. 11 at 7:30 a.m., and Nov. 8 at 8 a.m.

**Sept. 24, Thursday, River's Edge Natural Area.** Leader: Amy Roush, [canyonwren4@gmail.com](mailto:canyonwren4@gmail.com) or 512-993-0242. This is a great location for birds year-round, but at this time we might find some migrating warblers. The group will meet at the east parking lot at 8 a.m. and walk for about two hours on the natural surface trails around the ponds. Signup for River's Edge Natural Area will go out on Sep. 12.

**Reoccurring First Saturday of the Month, Bird Banding and Survey at the High Plains Environmental Center (HPEC).** Leaders: Scott Rashid (bird

banding at 9 a.m.), Sheila or Joseph Webber (survey walk starting at 10 a.m.). Scott shares his extensive knowledge of bird banding data and demonstrates ethical bird banding practices, and Sheila or Joseph leads a survey walk around Equalizer Reservoir, which generally lasts until about noon. This is a collaboration between the High Plains Environmental Center, Scott Rashid/Colorado Avian Research and Rehabilitation Institute, and the Northern Colorado Bird Alliance. Registration is through HPEC by donation at [tinyurl.com/HPECbirdbanding](http://tinyurl.com/HPECbirdbanding). This event does not occur in January or July and may be cancelled due to weather or other circumstances. Anyone who is registered will be notified of cancellation.

**Tentative: October 17, Mindful Birding Walk at High Plains Environmental Center.** Leaders: Barbara Patterson, [bpatters1957@gmail.com](mailto:bpatters1957@gmail.com), and Amy Roush, [amy@suburbitat.org](mailto:amy@suburbitat.org). We plan to start in the classroom and then head out on a walk; more details TBA.



Prairie Warbler by Gary Robinette.

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

|                    |                               |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| Kimón Berline      | Denver Urban Homesteading LLC |
| Lila Bartman       | Marcia Maeda                  |
| Sara Eftang        | John Ringland                 |
| Benjamin Holzworth | Shelby Robinson               |
| Anne Kesler        | David Schaffter               |
| Christine Larson   | Mary Jeanne McFerren Stobie   |
|                    | Peter Weckeser                |

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



Yellow Warbler by Noelle Mason.



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 |

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