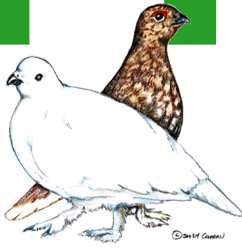


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Northern Colorado Bird Alliance

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.

October 2026

Volume 58, Issue 7

**Northern Colorado Bird Alliance Hosts Emma Balunek presenting:
"You Go Over, I Go Under: A Study of the Coyote and Badger Hunting Relationship."
Thursday, October 8**

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/85787681410>

Across western North America, coyotes and American badgers sometimes work together to hunt prairie dogs and ground squirrels using their complementary hunting skills. Badgers are excellent diggers and usually hunt below ground, digging up burrows searching for small mammals. Coyotes are opportunistic hunters that seek a wide variety of prey from deer to mice and mostly hunt above ground. When coyotes and badgers work together, burrowing mammals, such as prairie dogs, are not safe above or below ground. If a coyote chases a prairie dog into its burrow, the badger has an opportunity to capture the animal, and if a prairie dog escapes the badger and comes above ground, the coyote has an opportunity to catch it.

Although this relationship is described by Indigenous

people and early European settlers dating back to at least the 19th century, little research has been done to understand how these two carnivore species work together. To expand on the handful of recent studies, Emma Balunek studied the environmental conditions when coyotes and badgers hunt together with conservation storyteller Michael Forsberg and carnivore ecologist John Benson.

Through a mix of conservation, storytelling, and scientific research, Emma hopes her work will create fascination and wonder about

prairie wildlife species and the unique relationship they form with one another.

Join us on October 8 for this informative program that is free and open to the public.



Badger and coyote by Emma Balunek.

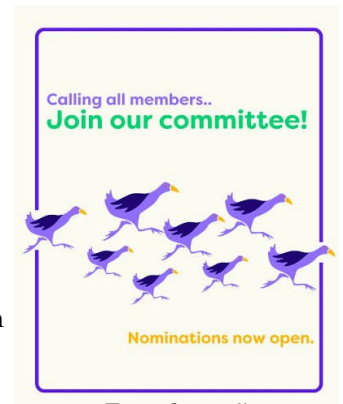
Northern Colorado Bird Alliance welcomes new National Audubon Society members by sending one complimentary copy of our newsletter. Join us at our monthly programs on the second Thursday of the month to find out more about Northern Colorado Bird Alliance. National dues do not cover the cost of printing 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.

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.

The first step in our annual elections process is to form a Nominations Committee. This committee is charged with identifying good candidates to serve on the Board of Directors. The work of this committee has been and always will be crucial to our chapter's success, so I want to urge any Bird Alliance member who might entertain the idea of serving on this year's Nominations Committee to contact me immediately. In keeping with our bylaws, we must announce the members of the committee at our chapter meeting on October 8, so time is of the essence!

I also want to get a head start on the nominations process by inviting anyone who might be curious about serving as a board member in 2027, or knows someone who might be a good candidate, to contact me at their earliest convenience. Candidates do not have to be expert birders or have any experience leading an organization; we need people with lots of different talents. New board members

will get a lot of coaching and help in fulfilling their duties. 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.



From <https://www.facebook.com/HobartToyLibrary>



American Bittern
by John Shenot.

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Visit us on Facebook:

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

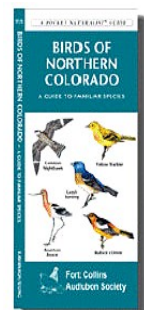
Pocket Guide to Local Birds

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



Wildlife Conservation Issues Related to Our Feathered Friends

Many issues, including climate change, data centers, wildfires, drought, urban and commercial development, pesticide use and misuse, and invasive species are associated with downward trends in wildlife biodiversity and loss of our feathered friends. These are issues that many of you care about as many are impacting the avian community. I would like to discuss individual topics, but for now I am discussing a broad overview of the issues as they pertain to wildlife conservation and, in particular, the avian community in the current geopolitical climate.

Wildlife conservation is witnessing positive and negative activities involving the environment, policies, media and public engagement, and international developments. These events are occurring at a blistering pace and are difficult to track, especially through the weeds of conspiracies and propaganda campaigns that can dominate the airwaves and social media algorithms. Wildlife conservation often sits at a tense crossroads where noble ecological goals collide with the influence of money that can shape narratives in ways that can mislead the public. Funding from corporations, private donors, or governments can determine what issues and species receive attention, how threats are portrayed, and even which conservation strategies are promoted. When financial interests take over, they may frame environmental issues in ways that protect economic agendas rather than ecosystems. On the other side, conservation campaigns may highlight charismatic animals to attract donations while neglecting less “marketable” species (for example, lake vs. swamp or Bald Eagle vs. Yellow-billed Magpie). These distortions affect public perception and can redirect resources away from the habitats and species that need attention most. Funding shapes conservation messaging, but is essential for building transparent and science-based efforts that prioritize ecological integrity over profit.

For example, climate change propaganda has taken a complex scientific reality and reshaped it to serve political or economic interests. Instead of engaging honestly with data, propagandists often cherry pick statistics and exaggerate uncertainties to either amplify fears or downplay risks. Industries with financial stakes such as fossil fuels or carbon intensive agriculture sometimes fund campaigns that cast doubt on scientific con-

sensus. These tactics can distort understanding, polarize communities, and delay meaningful action by turning a scientific challenge with no easy solution in the first place into an ideological battlefield. Recognizing the messaging and benefactors is essential for navigating climate discourse with clarity and integrity.

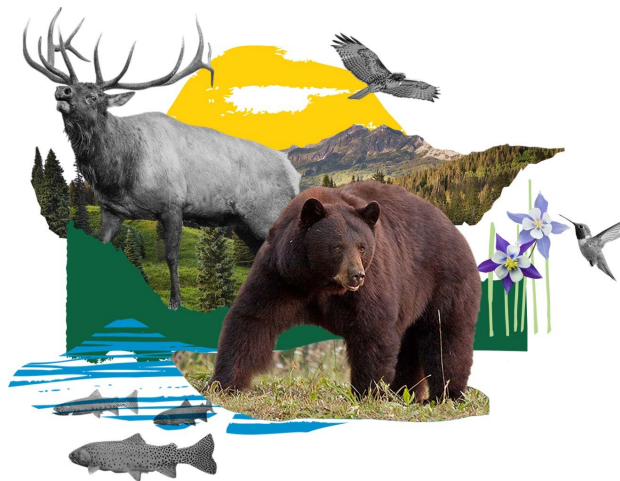
For example, showing a clear climate-linked trend, bird populations across multiple regions have expanded noticeably northward, with the scale of movement varying by species. Audubon data reveal that many duck species in the southeastern United States have shifted

their wintering grounds north over the past 50 years as winters have become milder, reducing the need to migrate as far south. Broader analyses of North American birds show that species with historically southern distributions have moved their northern range limits northward at an average rate of 1.5 miles per year, a shift strongly associated with warming temperatures. Individual species studies echo this pattern establishing new breeding populations well beyond their traditional lim-

its. Anecdotally, I never encountered Black-chinned Hummingbirds with any regularity north of Colorado Springs growing up, but now have them nesting north of Fort Collins near my feeders. At the same time this could be devastating for species that rely on alpine areas and cooler climates such as the White-tailed Ptarmigan. These findings indicate that climate change, land-use changes, and habitat availability is driving a widespread northward redistribution of bird communities across continents.

Current literature recognizes that avian populations in North America have declined by three billion birds from climate change related actions and habitat loss. Pesticide use is linked to a loss of insect biomass, a crucial dietary need for birds, especially nestlings. Other losses are associated with invasive species (feral domestic house cats, feral swine), overabundant native species associated with anthropogenic food sources such as landfills (sage grouse declines are associated with abundant Common Ravens), and window-strikes amid many others.

What topics would you want discussed in greater depth?



From <https://conservationco.org>.

Birding at RMNP and Other Close by Locations

One of my favorite places to see birds is at Rocky Mountain National Park. It is always a pleasure to see Long's Peak getting closer and closer as we enter the park. There are varied places to view birds — from the beginning of the park at Bear Lake up to the top of Trail Ridge Road.

A first sighting was of female Mallard at Bear Lake at elevation 9,475 feet. We wondered where the males were. Our next sighting was a Steller's Jay who was determined to get some of our lunch as we ate at a picnic table. A raven was walking around on the ground looking for tidbits. A House Wren stopped by to check if any crumbs were available. We also saw a Clark's Nutcracker clinging



American Crow by Carole Hossan.

to the top sprig of a fir tree as well as an American Pipit walking on the ground looking for sustenance. Flocks of Canada Geese were heard and then seen flying overhead on their way to places unknown. A bird we did not see was the White-tailed Ptarmigan

on the alpine tundra.

Favorite places to bird locally are Running Deer Natural Area and the Environmental Learning Center. I used to see a female Northern Harrier (my favorite bird) at Running Deer Natural Area, but I haven't seen

her for years. I did see the gray Northern Harrier male once a long time ago.

Harry Rose and I have participated in a night time Eastern Screech-Owl Survey project for years; our

spot is at Watson Lake. We would play the sound of an Eastern Screech-Owl hooting and hope that we would hear a response. No such luck. Ironically, I once actually saw a pair of them in the daytime in a tree at Watson Lake. A pair of Golden Eagles used to nest there; I don't know if they still do.

On another note, back and front yard birding are easy and fun. We have a bird feeder in the front yard where we can see the birds from our living room window, and a back yard bird feeder we can see from our kitchen window. We also have a large bird bath in the back yard and a smaller version in the front yard. We have the usual visitors: House Sparrows, White-crowned Sparrows, Blue Jays, and occasionally the special weather fallout visitors. There are many large cottonwood trees in our neighborhood, so we have the occasional Eastern Screech-Owl and Common Grackle as well as the Downy Woodpecker. Here's to the Birds!



White-Crowned Sparrow by Carole Hossan.

Northern Colorado Bird Alliance Welcomes New and Renewing Members

Bonnie Breja
Eduardo Gallo
Carole Hossan
Michelle Johnston
Jana Kruger
Connie Ohlson
Margaret Wilkinson



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.



Clark's Nutcracker
By Brady Karg.



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. 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.

Oct. 11, 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 7:30 a.m. in Bobcat Ridge parking lot. Signup not required for Bobcat Ridge. The trip may be cancelled, rescheduled or relocated if trails are closed.

Oct. 2, Friday, Accessible Walk at Sheldon Lake. Leaders: Sheila Webber (education@nocobirdalliance.org) and Amy Roush; 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. This is a bird outing around Sheldon Lake in City Park to discover resident and migrating birds. This outing is specifically designed to invite people with physical disabilities or other access needs to join; it runs along a smooth, concrete path.

The signup link will be shared strategically to reach new audiences first, but if this walk is of particular interest to you, reach out to education@nocobirdalliance.org or fieldtrips@nocobirdalliance.org. We have more detailed site information to share also.

Oct. 17, Saturday, Mindful Birding Walk at High Plains Environmental Center. 9 a.m. – 11:30am. Leaders: Barbara Patterson, bpatters1957@gmail.com, and Amy Roush, amy@suburbitat.org. This is a mindful birding walk combining traditional birdwatching with mindfulness techniques, focusing on slow-paced, intentional awareness of birds and nature. Observing birds in their natural habitat can be inspiring and relaxing while also offering a variety of health benefits. This way of connecting with nature encourages purposeful curiosity, builds community, and deepens our appreciation for birds and the natural world. Join us at the High Plains Environmental Center where we'll begin in the classroom and then head outside for a guided walk. All abilities and interests are welcome. We'll provide bird books and binoculars; dress appropriately for weather. More details and location directions will be provided with the signup, which will be sent out before the publication of

this newsletter, and could be full by the time of publication. Interested in more Mindful Birding programs? Email fieldtrips@nocobirdalliance.org.

[Tentative] Oct. 24, Saturday, Sandstone Ranch, Longmont. Joint trip with Jamie Simo of Front Range Birding (Boulder), Amy Roush, and Frank Morgan. Meet at 8:30 a.m. More details to be sent out with signup one week in advance.

[Tentative] Oct. 23 and 24, Friday and Saturday, Grandview Cemetery. Leaders: Nolan Bunting, nbunting@rams.colostate.edu or 907-299-4625, and

Dave Leatherman, 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/or flashlight. Registration will be increased to 15 for this trip.

First Saturday of the Month: Recurring 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 .am.). Scott shares his extensive knowledge of bird banding data and demonstrates ethical bird banding practices, and Sheila or Joseph lead a survey walk around Equalizer Reservoir, which generally lasts until about noon. This is a collaboration between HPEC, Scott Rashid/Colorado Avian Research and Rehabilitation Institute, and the Northern Colorado Bird Alliance, and registration is through HPEC by donation: 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.



Great Horned Owl
by Margie Caswell.

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.

- | | | |
|---|-------|--|
| ☐ New or renewing chapter member
Receive the <i>Ptarmigan</i> by email | \$ 20 | Name: _____ |
| ☐ New or renewing chapter member
Receive the <i>Ptarmigan</i> by mail | \$ 30 | Address: _____ |
| ☐ Lifetime chapter member
Receive <i>Ptarmigan</i> by mail or email | \$750 | City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ |
| ☐ Additional support for chapter programs | \$__ | Phone: _____ |
| ☐ Additional support for Alex Cringan Fund
(natural history education grants) | \$__ | Email: _____ |
| ☐ New NAS member
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 |
| ☐ Renewing NAS member
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.