



# February 2024 "Flyer"

## Cheyenne - High Plains Audubon Society

Chartered by the National Audubon Society since 1974

Serving southeastern Wyoming Audubon members

**Mission Statement:** *The Cheyenne-High Plains Audubon Society promotes the conservation and appreciation of birds and wildlife through education, science, advocacy, and habitat stewardship in Southeast Wyoming.*

**Vision Statement:** *The Cheyenne-High Plains Audubon Society envisions a community where birds, wildlife, and their habitats are valued, protected, and enjoyed by the general public.*

### Officers and Committee Chairs 2023-2024

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Grant Frost, Field Trips, Bird Compiler

Mark Gorges, Newsletter, Habitat Hero

Vicki Herren, Important Bird Areas

Kirk Miller, Social Media,

Barb Gorges, Programs, Publicity

Lorie Chesnut, Website

**Advocacy, open**

Wanda Manley, Past president

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**The CHPAS Flyer** is published online monthly. Submissions are welcome. The current issue is available online at [www.CheyenneAudubon.org](http://www.CheyenneAudubon.org).

**Contact Us** at [cheyenneaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:cheyenneaudubon@gmail.com)

**Join our Facebook Group**, Cheyenne-High Plains Audubon Society Group

**Please become a CHPAS member**

Send \$12 plus any optional donation and your name, email address and mailing address to Cheyenne-High Plains Audubon Society, P.O. Box 2502, Cheyenne, WY 82003.

All chapter memberships expire Sept. 1. Any membership dues sent in after May 1 will pertain to the remainder of the current membership year and the following year.

**Join the National Audubon Society**

Send \$20 to Cheyenne - High Plains Audubon Society to join the National Audubon Society and you will receive NAS membership and NAS will return the \$20 to CHPAS.

**"Wyoming Bird" chat group**

Subscribe, post and/or read about interesting sightings on this Facebook public group site:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/403337446664409/>

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## Calendar

### February 17, 9:00 a.m. – Field Trip: Popular Birding Spots Around Cheyenne

We will leave the Lions Park parking lot south of the Children's Village at 9 a.m. Carpooling should be available for driving around town to various spots.

We want to show people, especially newer members or those that can't get around very well, some places that they might not know about to find a variety of birds right in town besides the usual hot spots. We will go to places like Lake View Cemetery, Mylar Park, LCCC, maybe some others.

The trip is free, open to the public, and non-birders of all ages are encouraged to join us to learn about the birds we see such as European Starling, Eurasian Collared Dove, chickadees, woodpeckers, etc.

We expect to be done by noon. Be sure to bring water, and dress for changing weather.

If you are interested in going, contact Grant Frost, 307-343-2024, so that he has a list of those expected, and he can let you know if the plans change for any reason like bad weather.



*American Goldfinch by Mark Gorges*

## **February 20, 7:00 p.m. – Program: Beach Birds: learn how to identify ducks, hawks and shorebirds, with Barb Gorges**

Cheyenne Audubon invites the public for a free talk by Barb Gorges, author of “Cheyenne Birds by the Month,” about “Beach Birds: Learn how to i.d. ducks, hawks and shorebirds,” Feb. 20, 7 p.m., in the Cottonwood Room at the Laramie County Library, 2200 Pioneer Ave.

Barb will review how to identify birds that visit Wyoming’s “Sea of Grass” and the “beaches” of its many reservoirs. Are you already a whiz at identifying ducks, hawks and shorebirds? Share your tips with us at the meeting.



*Gadwall by Mark Gorges*

## **February 23, 8:00 a.m. – Country Club Bird Survey**

Contact Chuck Seniawski to be on his email notice list: 307-638-6519 or [chuckski@aol.com](mailto:chuckski@aol.com). The count will start in the Country Club’s clubhouse’s main parking lot. These counts are free and open to everyone, but please let Chuck know you are coming.

## **February 27, 6:30 p.m. Board Meeting:**

Contact us, [cheyenneaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:cheyenneaudubon@gmail.com), if you would like to attend and participate in helping to plan chapter activities. This meeting will be at the new Conservation District Office at 1923 Whitney Road.

## **Mark your calendars for this upcoming special event:**

### **May 11, Cheyenne-High Plains Audubon Society 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Morning and afternoon field trips**

**5:00 to 9:00 p.m. – Dinner, Laramie County Community College**

- Land and Sea dinner with vegetarian option and door prizes
- Guest speaker

We will have more information in a month or so.

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## Chapter News



*Mountain Plover, drawn by  
Michelle LaGory*

### Chapter President's message

It's the dead of winter. Brown grass, bare cottonwoods, and old snow that looks more like dirt can make for a dreary landscape. What better time to start thinking about this spring, summer and further on?

Shortly after this newsletter comes out, the 2024 edition of the Habitat Hero workshop here in Cheyenne will happen on February 3. These are always chock full of great ideas and motivation, as well as a chance to start planting seeds now that will be ready to plant this summer. Even if you can't attend in person, there is a remote attendance option that many people take advantage of.

But beyond this, there are all kinds of resources out there that can help you make changes to your property and environment. The chapter website has links to more information on Habitat Hero and the Native Prairie Islands program administered by the Laramie County Conservation District (which is also an under-utilized resource). The Wyoming Game and Fish Department website has a section on helping nongame wildlife at <https://wgfd.wyo.gov/wildlife-in-Wyoming/More-wildlife/nongame-birds>. The Wyoming Wildscape booklet can help go through the whole process of designing, executing, and maintaining a wildlife-friendly property.

There are many other sources of information out there. The thing to remember is, it's amazing how much positive difference these changes to your environment can make for both you and the things we care about.

Grant  
CHPAS President

### Chapter Programs Recorded

We have attempted to record our monthly chapter meetings/programs since January 2023. If you have missed any of those meetings, you can find them at our chapter web page, [www.CheyenneAudubon.org](http://www.CheyenneAudubon.org), under Programs in the Activities heading, Or you can just go to <https://cheyenneaudubon.org/programs/>.

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## Education and Conservation

### Education Chair Activities

Kim has a list of ideas for kids' programs for the coming year. What we need are volunteers to work with Kim on these projects.

**If you are interested in joining Kim on a project, or you have some ideas of your own, contact the chapter at: [cheyenneaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:cheyenneaudubon@gmail.com). Kim will get in touch with you.**

### Chapter Grants

For information on our chapter education and conservation grants, see our chapter website at: [www.cheyenneaudubon.org](http://www.cheyenneaudubon.org).

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## Habitat Hero



### 10th Annual Cheyenne Habitat Hero Workshop, Feb. 3, Laramie County Community College:

#### "Ways to Make and Keep a Garden for the Birds and Bees Plus Advice on Trees"

We are excited that all 100 seats for the workshop sold out. If you were not able to get tickets, you can still get the plant lists from the event at:

<https://cheyenneaudubon.files.wordpress.com/2024/01/2024-chey-hh-workshop-plant-list.pdf>.

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# Bird News

## News from Audubon Rockies

Check out the Audubon Rockies blog page for up-to-date news on conservation issues in our part of the West, including a 2023 year-end update on Audubon Rockies' activities.

Go to: <https://rockies.audubon.org/blog>

## January 1 – Christmas Bird County, Guernsey-Fort Laramie

By Jane Dorn

It is hard to believe, the CBC on January 1, 2024, was the 20<sup>th</sup> official count for this circle. The first official county was 12/18/04. There have actually been 21 counts in this circle, as Bob and I tested the circle in 2003 by doing a count following all the rules to make sure it was a good circle. When we first drew the circle on the map, we knew we wanted to incorporate a variety of habitats, as well as include some good winter habitat. It seems to have worked. We now routinely see 45-50 species and are still finding surprises every year or so.

This year was no different. The big surprise was two male Eastern Bluebirds on the west side of Guernsey Reservoir in the ponderosa pines. I know bluebirds are tough, but the Eastern Bluebirds barely reach eastern Wyoming, even in summer. Thanks to Jeff Frost for finding and photographing these. The other nice find was a Lesser Goldfinch found and photographed by Stephen Lorenz. We always have plenty of Common Goldfinch on the count, but this is the first Lesser Goldfinch. Thanks for a great catch.

The ponderosa forest areas of Guernsey State Park have always attracted both Black-capped and Mountain Chickadees. The two species are known to hybridize and this year for the first time, Stephen Lorenz found four hybrid chickadees on the count. If you are unfamiliar with this hybrid, try looking them up so you can be alert for them in the future. They have been documented from other areas along the Front Range.

The weather was exceptionally nice for this count—no snow, bare ground except in the shade, no wind, temperature reaching 45 degrees, sunshine much of the day. It was a day to be outside for sure. Even with the great weather, most of the still water was frozen, so finding waterfowl except for Canada Geese, Mallards, Common Mergansers, Common Goldeneye, and Green-winged Teal, was a challenge.

Food abundance is definitely an important factor for this count. In years when there are plenty of Russian olive berries and ponderosa pinecones, certain species are abundant and often very concentrated. This year was the opposite. Juniper berries were plentiful and attracted a large number of American Robins, but the complete absence of Russian olive and buffalo berries and most pinecones meant other berry and seed eaters were either absent or in small numbers and very dispersed.

We finished the count day with 46 species and added 5 more during count week for a total of 51 species. Not our highest numbers with 57 species on 12/29/07, and 54 species on 12/30/16, but still a great way to start the new year.

We had a great turnout of counters, 22 total, and it really shows in both the number of species and number of individual birds counted. Thank you to everyone who helped with the count: Brad Andres, Robert Dorn, Jeff Frost, Luci Frost, Joyce Evans, Mike Evans, Kim Evezich, Grant Frost, Barbara Gorges, Mark Gorges, Vicki Herren, Heather Johnston, Jennifer Lanier, Steven Lorenz, Thorsten Lorenz, Heidrun Lorenz, Clay Rouse, Leslie Rouse, Karl Vogler, Lorie Vogler, Bill Gerhart.

Jane Dorn, compiler.

The official bird list follows:

Cackling Goose 4  
Canada Goose 2901  
Mallard 987  
Green-winged Teal 76

Common Goldeneye 700  
Hooded Merganser 2  
Common Merganser 387  
Wild Turkey 5

Rock Pigeon 1306  
 Ring-billed Gull 18  
 Golden Eagle 4  
 Northern Harrier -CW  
 Sharp-shinned Hawk 1  
 Cooper's Hawk 2  
 Bald Eagle 9  
 Red-tailed Hawk 6  
 Rough-legged Hawk 1  
 Belted Kingfisher 5  
 Downy Woodpecker 11  
 Hairy Woodpecker 1  
 Northern Flicker (all) 8  
     Red-shafted 1  
     Yellow-shafted 1  
 American Kestrel 12  
 Merlin 2  
 Northern Shrike 3  
 Steller's Jay 7  
 Blue Jay 5  
 Black-billed Magpie 43  
 American Crow 3  
 Common Raven 10  
 Horned Lark 4  
 Black-capped Chickadee 21

Mountain Chickadee 2  
 Hybrid Chickadee 4  
 Red-breasted Nuthatch 20  
 White-breasted Nuthatch CW  
 Eastern Bluebird 2  
 Townsend's Solitaire 56  
 American Robin 630  
 European Starling 479  
 Cedar Waxwing 13  
 House Sparrow 28  
 House Finch 96  
 Cassin's Finch 16  
 Pine Siskin 7  
 American Goldfinch 83  
 Lesser Goldfinch 1  
 American Tree Sparrow CW  
 Dark-Eyed Junco 99 (all)  
     Slate-colored 17  
     Oregon 39  
     Pink-sided 12  
     Gray-headed 4  
 White-crowned Sparrow CW  
 Song Sparrow CW  
 Red-winged Blackbird 120

## January 20 – Field Trip to the Buford area

9:55 AM

About a dozen of us spent over an hour and a half in the area around Pat's house and her bird feeders.

11 species

American Goshawk 1  
 Rough-legged Hawk 1  
 Hairy Woodpecker 1  
 Steller's Jay 2  
 Black-billed Magpie 1  
 Mountain Chickadee 30  
 White-breasted Nuthatch 15  
 Pygmy Nuthatch 9  
 Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch 15  
 Cassin's Finch 50  
 Dark-eyed Junco 4



*Cassin's Finch by Grant Frost*

## January 26 – Country Club Survey Results

7:50 AM - 9:38 AM

Protocol: Traveling

2.8 mile(s)

Checklist Comments: 34 degrees. Very light breeze. Overcast. Austin and Theresa Authier, Grant Frost, Bill Gerhart, Mark Gorges, Vicki Herren, Chuck Seniawski and Kurt Warmbier.

13 species

Canada Goose 50



Mallard 34  
Eurasian Collared-Dove 2  
Sharp-shinned Hawk 1 Tried to take on a magpie, swooping  
down on it more than once.  
Great Horned Owl 1  
Northern Flicker 7  
Black-billed Magpie 4  
American Crow 3  
Mountain Chickadee 3  
Red-breasted Nuthatch 2  
European Starling 1  
Townsend's Solitaire 1  
House Sparrow 3



*Townsend's Solitaire by Mark Gorges*

View this checklist online  
at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S159834553>

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Long-tailed Duck by Scott Keyes, Audubon Photography Awards.

## **Columnist looks back at first Bird Banter installment for the WTE circa 1999**

*By Barb Gorges*

In this, the very first Bird Banter column I wrote for the Wyoming Tribune Eagle 25 years ago this month (see below), you can see how much change there has been.

Back in 1999, once a week the WTE ran a four-page Outdoors section. It was the Outdoors editor, Bill Gruber, who invited me to write a monthly column.

The oldsquaw duck highlighted became the long-tailed duck in 2000. When I checked a few weeks ago on eBird for the birds seen at the reservoir at the Rawhide power plant, the latest report of another long-tailed duck was just days before: Jan. 6.

Of the people I mention, Ron Ryder died back in 2016 at the age of 88. Gloria Lawrence and her husband moved out of state years ago as did Dave Felley and his family.

Technological advances have replaced the birding hotline with a Google Group called WyoBirds. And now it's better to email me than to call me—you can attach photos to your email of birds you are trying to identify.

The Cheyenne – High Plains Audubon Society still meets at Lions Park for field trips, but in the parking lot between the Children's Village and the big picnic shelter and usually not until 8 a.m.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is still held over Presidents' Day weekend. Find out how to participate this year at <https://www.birdcount.org/>.

### **Birding the Colorado coast**

*Thursday, February 18, 1999, Wyoming Tribune Eagle, Outdoors section, page C3*

There is a section of the Golden Guides' "Birds of North America" I never expected to use unless I became wealthy enough to take ocean cruises.

The section on sea ducks lists species spending winters along the Pacific and Atlantic coasts and summers on the shores of Hudson's Bay. Perhaps by the time I'm old and retired, I thought, I'll have the funds to travel there.

Then I went on a field trip 20 miles south of Cheyenne a couple of winters ago and saw my first oldsquaw. This is a sea duck that spends summers on the North American tundra and winters far out in the ocean. But it also has a habit of hanging out on large inland lakes.

Our nearest large lake is the reservoir at the Rawhide power plant just off I-25, not far into Colorado. The water remains open at about 65 degrees all winter, unless the plant must go offline temporarily, said Dr. Ron Ryder, Colorado State University wildlife professor emeritus. Ryder has been studying the ecology of the reservoir for 14 years.

The oldsquaw sighting was somewhat unusual and hasn't been repeated yet this season. However, a red-necked grebe, another coastal-wintering waterfowl species was spotted. Birder Gloria Lawrence says the oldsquaw is a visitor nine out of 10 years on the North Platte River and Gray Rocks Reservoir, probably because these waters are farther north and closer to the duck's normal range.

To look for sea ducks, you may accompany Ron and the Cheyenne High Plains Audubon Society to Rawhide Reservoir on Saturday, February 20 [1999]. The trip is free and open to the public. The group will meet at the Cheyenne Botanic Gardens in Lions Park by 7 a.m. Call Dave Felley at ... for details.

Ron will be able to take us behind the locked gates, but if you miss the field trip, you can still scope out the bird action from the public observation area. Take I-25 south to Exit 288 (Buckeye) and head toward the mountains for about three miles. You'll need a spotting scope or strong binoculars to appreciate the diverse bird life.

To find out about or to report unusual bird sightings in Wyoming, call the toll-free hotline maintained by the Murie Audubon Society in Casper: ... (the last four digits spell "bird").

When I checked recently, Gloria had listed canvasback, dipper and northern shrike. Last month the hotline had Eurasian wigeon, Lapland longspur and glaucous gull sightings. Many of the birds listed are in the Casper area, but the hotline serves the whole state.

For those of us who like birding best at our kitchen windows, don't forget the Second Annual Great Backyard Bird Count sponsored by Bird Source, a joint venture between National Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. It is scheduled for this weekend, Feb. 19-21 [1999]. Just observe the species occurring in your yard or neighborhood for half an hour or so, and then go on-line to report. You may want to explore the website in advance; last year's data is an interesting snapshot of where birds were wintering. The address:....

If you aren't online, you may call me at...and leave your name, phone number and species list. I'll pass the information on.

Barb Gorges is the author of "Cheyenne Birds by the Month," [www.YuccaRoadPress.com](http://www.YuccaRoadPress.com). Her previous columns are at <http://cheyennebirdbanter.wordpress.com>. Contact her at [bgorges4@msn.com](mailto:bgorges4@msn.com).

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