



July 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

Grant Frost, President

Dennis Saville, Vice president

Lorie Chesnut, Secretary

Chuck Seniawski, Treasurer

Pete Arnold, Audubon Rockies Board

Jack Palma, Audubon Rockies Board

Conservation, Open

Kim Parfitt, Education,

Donna Kassel, Historian

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

The CHPAS Flyer is published online monthly. Submissions are welcome. The current issue is available online at www.CheyenneAudubon.org.

Contact Us at 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/>

Calendar

July 19, 7:00 a.m. – Birding Float Trip out of Saratoga (a Friday trip)

You must pre-register with Dennis Saville at 307-899-2740. We will have two rafts to take only ten people. You can bring your own raft, but you must pre-register, especially if you have seats available for additional people. We plan to float from 10 am till 3pm starting at Treasure Island on the North Platte.

Dennis will have the contact information for everyone registered, and he can let you know if the plans change for any reason like bad weather.

We will leave the Lions Park parking lot south of the Children's Village at 7 a.m. and drive to Saratoga. Carpooling should be available but check with Grant (307-343-

2024) if you will need a ride. You might consider staying in the Saratoga the night before.

The trip is free and open to the public. We expect to be back in Cheyenne by 6 p.m. Be sure to bring lunch, water and dress for changing weather and getting wet.

July 19-July22 – Wyoming Statewide BioBlitz 2024

Contribute to conservation science from anywhere in Wyoming! Friday, July 19, 2024 - Monday, July 22, 2024, 12:00am - 12:00am - Online Event. Or go to: <https://rockies.audubon.org/events/wyoming-statewide-bioblitz-2024> for all the information about this event.

July 23, 6:30 p.m. Board Meeting:

Contact us, cheyenneaudubon@gmail.com, if you would like to attend and participate in helping to plan chapter activities. This meeting will be held at the Laramie County Library in the Windflower Room.

July 26, 7:00 a.m. – Country Club Bird Survey

Contact Chuck Seniawski to be on his email notice list: 307-638-6519 or 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.

Chapter News



*Mountain Plover,
drawn by Michelle
LaGory*

Chapter's message for July

From Isabel Cooke <isabel.cooke@mail.utoronto.ca>

Hello!

I'm a researcher at the University of Toronto in Canada. Our lab studies how the brain changes as we learn about the natural world. Our lab's current study is part of our wider project of connecting birding and citizen science activities with research on cognitive health and brain function.

I am emailing to ask if you would share our short online study with your members, as we are looking for bird-interested folk to participate. The study involves identification of different bird species, but it is open to everyone regardless of birding background/experience. We thought some of your members might be interested in our research and want to participate in our study.

If you think they would, attached is a graphic with the study information that we have been sending out to other groups, so you could share the graphic on your social media or through a newsletter! I'm also happy to write a custom post on our behalf. We would be so grateful for your help in getting our message out.

There's a link to the study as well as articles about this research (in Audubon Magazine, National Geographic, etc.) on our website, www.birdingstudies.com.

Happy to provide further details and answer any questions.

Many thanks,
Isabel

Did you know that learning skills—like bird identification—can reshape the brain? Join us as we continue to explore connections between neuroplasticity and knowledge of the natural world.



Our newest online study is now available at
www.birdingstudies.com

The study (~15min) is open to all, regardless of experience. Research updates and publications are also posted on the site so you can see what you're helping us discover. Study participation spots refresh monthly. Thanks!



Participants can enter raffle for binoculars giveaway



Education and Conservation

Education Chair Activities

Birding Backpack Spring Kick-Off! A success!

The Laramie County Library has continued to promote birding and the backpacks all summer so far! This is a display in the computing center which uses the How to Get Started Guide from the backpack along with interesting bird books at their Cheyenne facility (left picture).

The Pine Bluffs Birding Backpack Kick Off had a great mix of adults and kids. Dennis engaged everyone in discovering binoculars. He also brought the bird cornhole from the May event. As one teen said "All I needed to hear was cornhole and I'm there" (middle picture).

Cornhole continues to be popular! The burrowing owl cornhole game designed and built by volunteers Becky O'Leary and Kim Stevens was a big hit at the Burns Library for the Birding Backpack Kick Off! The cornhole board shows predators and prey hiding in the prairie habitat of the bean bag owls (right picture). *Pictures from Kim Parfitt*



More ideas?

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. 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.

Habitat Hero



Habitat Hero Graden at the Cheyenne Botanic Gardens update

Summer has come in the CBG. The recently planted additional perennials in the expanded area beyond the flagpole are doing well. The Cheyenne mock orange we planted last year is flowering.



Photo by Barb Gorges

2025 Habitat Hero Workshop

We are preparing for our next Habitat Hero Workshop in Cheyenne on Saturday, February 1st. Watch for more information in the coming months.

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 updated information on sage grouse conservation, Nine Native Plants to Attract Hummingbirds in Colorado, Utah and Wyoming, and more.

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

Butterflies in Decline

From Environment for the Americas

New Data

A new study highlights a major threat to butterfly populations in the Midwest United States. Published in PLOS ONE, the findings suggest that insecticides, especially neonicotinoids, are a key factor in the decline of butterfly numbers. Read the report at [Insecticides, more than herbicides, land use, and climate, are associated with declines in butterfly species richness and abundance in the American Midwest | PLOS ONE](#)

Over 17 years and across 81 counties, researchers found an alarming 8% decline in butterfly populations linked to pesticide use. The effect was even more pronounced for Monarch butterflies, with a 33% decline. This decline coincides



EFTA Interns Spot Monarch Caterpillar on Military Base

with the widespread use of neonicotinoids, which are absorbed by plants and harm insects that feed on them.

While habitat loss and climate change are significant threats, this study suggests insecticides may be the biggest factor affecting butterfly populations in the Midwest. Neonicotinoids, already banned in Europe due to risks to bees, are extensively used in the United States. They control agricultural pests but at a significant cost to non-target species like butterflies.

Importance of Multiple Factors

The study emphasizes the need to consider multiple factors in addressing environmental issues. While habitat loss, climate change, and other threats are significant, focusing on specific causes like neonicotinoid use can offer more targeted solutions to declines.

However, the study uses data from 1998 to 2014, so recent climate impacts aren't reflected. Additionally, the major impact of glyphosate, which eliminates milkweed (the primary food for Monarch butterflies), occurred before the study period. This doesn't downplay the threat of glyphosate to Monarch butterflies but rather highlights the complexity of these issues.

World Migratory Bird Day

This news comes as World Migratory Bird Day is in full swing, with the theme "Protect Insects, Protect Birds." Our campaign shines a light on the important link between healthy insect populations and thriving bird communities. Butterflies in their caterpillar stage, and other insects, are a crucial food source for many birds, especially those that migrate. When butterfly numbers drop, it upsets this delicate balance in the ecosystem.

Environment for the Americas is not only dedicated to protecting migratory birds but also works to protect Monarch butterflies. One of our unique programs survey milkweed and butterfly populations on U.S. military installations to protect them with science-based research. These areas often offer suitable habitats, including milkweed, the sole food source for caterpillars. We work with military bases to create and maintain safe breeding grounds for Monarch butterflies.

This new study highlights why it's important to look at multiple factors when tackling environmental issues. Habitat loss and climate change are major threats, but this research shows that focusing on specific causes, like neonicotinoid use, can strengthen arguments for policy, regulation, and awareness.

This summer, as we celebrate World Migratory Bird Day and prepare for our fall peak, let us remember the interconnectedness of our shared environment. By protecting insects, we safeguard the birds that depend on them and, in turn, the health of our entire ecosystem.

To learn more about World Migratory Bird Day and how you can get involved in protecting insects and birds go to [World Migratory Bird Day | in the Americas](#).

June 28 – Country Club Survey Results

7:00 AM - 8:58 AM

Protocol: Traveling

2.9 mile(s)

Checklist Comments: 60 degrees. Clear, light breeze. Vicki Herren, Bill Gerhart, Sue Lowry, Chuck Seniawski, Janet Thompson, Kurt Warmbier.

26 species

Canada Goose 22

Mallard 19

Eurasian Collared-Dove 2

Mourning Dove 2

American Coot 1

California Gull 8

Black-crowned Night Heron 3

Turkey Vulture 1

Red-tailed Hawk 1

Great Horned Owl 2 Pair of adults found together.

Northern Flicker 2
Western Wood-Pewee 2
Black-billed Magpie 6
American Crow 12
Mountain Chickadee 3
Northern Rough-winged Swallow 2
Cliff Swallow 2
American Robin 8
House Sparrow 1
House Finch 4
Song Sparrow 2
Yellow-headed Blackbird 2
Red-winged Blackbird 31
Brown-headed Cowbird 1
Common Grackle 9
Common Yellowthroat 3

“Big sit” birdwatching has advantages

By Barb Gorges

Cheyenne – High Plains Audubon Society’s field trip chair, Grant Frost, comes up with new ideas for southeast Wyoming field trips often, like going to see burrowing owls, migrating sandhill cranes and dancing sage-grouse.

Last month, Grant thought it would be fun to do a birdwatching “big sit” at Curt Gowdy State Park, by the creek at Hynds Lodge. But Hynds Lodge was booked, as it is every summer weekend, so we opted for the nearby amphitheater. It’s not Red Rocks, but rock formations do wall it in on three sides and the stage makes a fourth wall.

We all brought folding chairs and stools, but some of us left ours in the car when we heard we’d be in the amphitheater. But you know what, concrete benches are not that comfortable for an hour-long span.

How many species of birds do you think 13 of us saw in the space of an hour? Would you have guessed 16? I was surprised we saw so many. Being in one place gave us a chance to see there were two house wrens nesting in one of the light fixtures.

A male western tanager, bright yellow with black and white wings and an orange face, stayed in the area for the whole hour, gleaning insects among the pine branches. Eventually we saw the all-greenish-yellow female so maybe they were in the area for nesting too.

The rest of the big sit bird list included:

Rock Pigeon – 2
White-throated Swift – 3
Broad-tailed Hummingbird – 1
Turkey Vulture – 1
Red-tailed Hawk – 3
Hairy Woodpecker – 1
Northern Flicker – 1
Western Wood-Pewee – 1
Violet-green Swallow – 1
Rock Wren – 1
American Robin – 1
Lesser Goldfinch – 1
American Goldfinch – 1
Yellow-rumped Warbler – 1



High Plains Audubon Society tried a birdwatching "big sit" June 15 at Curt Gowdy State Park. The area left of the stage had the most bird activity. Photo by Mark Gorges.

Following the big sit, much of the group spent 1.5 hours hiking the 1.4-mile nature trail along the creek. They saw all but five of the same species, plus 11 more (water attracts more species), for a total of 27 for the morning.

One advantage of a big sit is the chance to study resident birds like the house wrens. It was also a chance for a less mobile chapter member to join us, not only to see the birds, but to talk about them and learn about them.

Back in 1992, the New Haven Bird Club in Connecticut held The Big Sit! and later trademarked the name with the exclamation point. In 2001 and up through 2019, Birdwatchers Digest magazine sponsored and advertised it.

It is a free, international competition held the second Sunday of October plus the Saturday the day before. The goal is to count as many bird species as possible in 24 hours. In 2023, 93 teams took part from three countries: the U.S., Guatemala and Azerbaijan.

Each team designated a 17-foot-diameter circle and scheduled observers to cover it for as long as possible. Quick breaks are acceptable and team members rotate in and out. The team birding for the longest consecutive number of hours was the Shavers Creek Environmental Center in Pennsylvania, for 22 hours. They found 45 species. The team coming in 93rd was in Virginia at the Kiptopeke State Park Hawk Platform, 4 species in 1.5 hours.

Each team records its bird list on eBird.org and shares its list with The Big Sit organizers who compile the list of participants.

The top five teams in 2023 were:

1. Texas, Hazel Bazemore Park Hawkwatch Platform, 129 species in 13.7 hours
2. Ohio, Killbuck Marsh Wildlife Area, 99 species in 20 hours

3. California, Elfin Forest Preserve, 97 species in 12.3 hours
4. Guatemala, Finca La Gracia, 96 species in 12.2 hours
5. Oklahoma, Lone Oak Big Sit, 93 species in 13.7 hours

The Big Sit also features the Golden Bird Award. First, there's a random drawing of a bird species name from the list of all birds seen during the competition. Then, from all the circles featuring that species, the winner is drawn.

In 2023, the bird was the Bay-breasted Warbler. Only three circles recorded it and the team in Kill Devil Hills, North Carolina, at the Spot Run Hill Natural Area, won the \$500. The team decided to which conservation organization they'd like to donate it: the North Carolina Coastal Federation. Some of the teams use The Big Sit! as a fundraiser for their local conservation work.

You can see the complete results—and rules—at TheBigSit.org. You can also find their Facebook page, The Big Sit! NHBC.

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

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