



# August 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

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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

### August 14, 6:00 p.m. – Renewal envelope stuffing

This will be about 60 to 90 minutes of work stuffing envelopes. We will be at Mark and Barb's house, 3417 Yucca Rd. Please let Mark know that you are coming so that we have enough chairs; call or text Mark at 307-287-4953.

### August 17, 7:00 a.m. – Field Trip: Snowy Range Hike-Libby Lake to Mirror Lake

We will leave the Lions Park parking lot south of the Children's Village at 7 a.m. and drive to the Libby Lake area, a little over 90 miles, about an hour and a half. We will

hike from there to Mirror Lake, about 3 miles. The entire hike is above 10,000 feet in elevation.

A wide variety of mountain birds can be seen in the area, including hummingbirds, nuthatches, kinglets, thrushes and more.

Carpooling should be available but check with Grant (307-343-2024) if you will need a ride. The trip is free and open to the public. We expect to be back in Cheyenne before 3 p.m. Be sure to bring lunch, water and dress for changing weather.

### **August 20, 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 held at the Laramie County Library in the Windflower Room.

### **August 30, 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](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.

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## **Chapter News**



*Mountain Plover,  
drawn by Michelle  
LaGory*

### **Chapter President's message**

Did you hear the election news? No, not the national news that the current president has withdrawn, or that the former president might win again.

I'm talking about the Cheyenne High Plains Audubon board elections. We had a strong slate of candidates, which were the exact same as last year. It goes without saying that the election went very quickly, and you will have the same leaders for the chapter for the coming year.

Each of these people is talented and dedicated, and I'm proud to work with them in directing the chapter. But, and I think I can speak for all of them, it would be really great to see some new faces and hear some new voices at board meetings! Most of the committees we have are in name only, where the chair is the only person on the committee. And several of us wear several hats or chair more than one committee.

Being on the board is not a large time-consuming commitment. We don't even require that someone be on the board to participate in the board meetings; any member could show up and take part. We usually meet the fourth Tuesday of each month, most often at the library in downtown Cheyenne, but the details are in the monthly newsletter.

I would especially like to encourage some younger members to lend their voices to our conversations. Experience we have in spades on the board currently, but that may not be meeting the needs or desires of all the members. It would also be great if we could have participation from the other counties that CHPAS covers, Platte and Goshen counties.

If you might be interested in any of the committees at the top of this newsletter, contact us at [cheyenneaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:cheyenneaudubon@gmail.com), and we will get back to you.

Grant  
CHPAS President

### **Habitat Work Starting at One of Our IBAs This Year**

*By Vicki Herren*

One of the two Important Bird Areas (IBAs) within the Cheyenne High Plains Audubon (CHPAS) area became the focus of habitat restoration work by the CHPAS board this year. Our two IBAs are Lions Park and the Wyoming Hereford Ranch (WHR) that have been used by 222 and 272 species respectively over the years. That's why they are so important!

Last year's rain produced a healthy crop of weeds mixed in with the willow shrubs and trees along Crow Creek at WHR where birders are welcome to observe and photograph birds and other wildlife. Of particular concern to CHPAS and to the WHR owners are the Canada thistle.

After an inventory of where the weeds are, board members started clearing out old vegetation for easier access to treat this year's growth. In total, eight board members have devoted about 110 hours to this effort while the WHR folks helped for many hours by hauling away the weed piles.

Several herbicides were tested, in cooperation with the Laramie County Conservation District to ensure that the desirable shrubs, grasses and flowers would not be affected by the spraying. We are still in this process although we've been able to spot spray in a few areas. We are also testing the efficacy of cutting down this year's growth in areas without willows where we can use a weed whacker. Both methods are good options for us.

In one area that has some cheatgrass, we sprayed an herbicide that targets next year's germination from seeds so we've started some restoration work in that area. Even though it has been quite hot and dry, we planted almost 40 mature yarrow plants, and board members are watering them daily to get them established.

So, you may see us out there working on this project this year, and in future years as well since weed management and habitat restoration is a long-term commitment. Or maybe you'll see some of the changes we're making while you're at the WHR Important Bird Area enjoying the birds and other wildlife.

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## Education and Conservation

### Education Chair Activities

#### More ideas?

Kim Parfitt 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



### Habitat Hero Graden at the Cheyenne Botanic Gardens update

Summer is in its prime at CBG. The new extension from last year is coming along nicely as seen in this photo.

The original area is being overrun by milkweed this year. We plan on cutting off most of the seedpods before they open to cut back on next year's crop.

The photo is



*Swallowtail butterfly on milkweed by Barb Gorges*

## 2025 Habitat Hero Workshop

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

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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 “The Wind River BioBlitz”, “Collaboration is Key to Conserving the Sagebrush Ecosystem”, and more.

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

### July 19 - Audubon Bird Field Trip on North Platte River Treasure Island to Saratoga, WY

*By Timi Saville*

10:46 am to approximately 4:30 pm

10 miles by raft

**Raft A** (Dennis Saville, Tara and Gavin Martin and Family (Emily, Charley, Annabelle, Teddy))

bald eagle  
American white pelican  
spotted sandpiper  
belted kingfisher  
yellow warbler  
common merganser  
blue violet swallow  
tree swallow  
Canada goose  
cliff swallow  
northern flicker  
gold finch  
grackle  
killdeer  
mountain bluebird  
song sparrow  
western wood pewee  
osprey  
great blue heron  
robin  
flycatcher  
bush tits  
cedar waxwings



*Floating the river: Photo by Timi Saville*

**Raft B** (Amy Rhoad, Jeff Frost, Timi Saville)

Canada goose  
common merganser  
Eurasian collared dove  
mourning dove  
killdeer  
spotted sandpiper  
American white pelican



great blue heron  
 turkey vulture  
 osprey  
 bald eagle  
 Swainson's hawk  
 northern flicker  
 belted kingfisher  
 American kestrel  
 western wood pewee  
 black-billed magpie  
 sage thrasher  
 mountain bluebird  
 American robin  
 American goldfinch  
 red-winged blackbird  
 brown-headed cowbird  
 common grackle  
 yellow warbler  
 eastern kingbird  
 lesser goldfinch  
 blue jay  
 canyon wren  
 violet green swallow  
 tree swallow  
 bank swallow  
 cliff swallow



*Bald Eagle: Photo by Timi Saville*

Both groups also saw mink, marmot and deer

## **July 26 – Country Club Survey Results**

By Chuck Seniawski

6:56 AM - 9:08 AM

Protocol: Traveling

3.3 mile(s)

Checklist Comments: 64 degrees.

Partly cloudy. Grant Frost, Bill Gerhart,  
 Vicki Herren, Chuck Seniawski, Janet  
 Thompson, Kurt Warmbier.

24 species

Canada Goose 24

Mallard 53

Eurasian Collared-Dove 8

Mourning Dove 3

California Gull 4

Double-crested Cormorant 3

Great Blue Heron 1

Swainson's Hawk 1

Belted Kingfisher 1

Downy Woodpecker 1

Hairy Woodpecker 1

Northern Flicker 9

Western Kingbird 2



*Great Blue Heron by Chuck Seniawski*

Black-billed Magpie 15  
American Crow 8  
Mountain Chickadee 8  
European Starling 1  
American Robin 17  
House Sparrow 1  
House Finch 8  
American Goldfinch 1  
Song Sparrow 1  
Red-winged Blackbird 6  
Common Grackle 4

View this checklist online at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S188934774>

## Burrowing owls put on show for local photographer

By Barb Gorges

Back in June, Jeff told Grant, Grant told Pete and Pete took pictures he shared with friends and eventually someone told the minister at Cheyenne Hills Church: there are burrowing owls in your parking lot.

If your owl reference is the great horned owl, these are much smaller, have long, skinny, featherless legs and nest in burrows in the ground. Sometimes they dig their own, but here they mostly move into burrows dug and abandoned by prairie dogs or badgers.

Photographer Pete Arnold, who collaborated with me on the book, "Cheyenne Birds by the Month" (see local and online availability at [YuccaRoadPress.com](http://YuccaRoadPress.com)), has photographed burrowing owls before. It's a challenge because they live in the grasslands where it's difficult to sneak up on them. So, long lenses are essential. But Pete has turned to the GoPro video camera, the kind you might see a cyclist attaching to his helmet to record a ride. A typical model measures 1.3 x 2 x 2.8 inches. "I have been using the GoPro setup for several years. I place it at the site of a roadkill to catch images of eagles and other scavengers. But it is the most fun with burrowing owls because they are so expressive," Pete wrote to me in a recent email.

For the owls, he said, "I would set up the camera to take a photo every 5 seconds and then leave the area so they would be comfortable coming out of their burrow. I would return to the site



*Pete Arnold was able to get this shot of burrowing owls on the east side of Cheyenne this spring by leaving a GoPro video camera near their burrow. Photo by Pete Arnold.*

after three or four hours and retrieve my gear. The camera would have taken 200-300 photos in that period before the battery would wear out. The male was often at the burrow, while the female stayed at another burrow.” Pete counted four owlets.

But then the camera went missing. Pete thinks it went down into the burrow. Burrowing owls like to stash stuff. Back in 1997, one in Saskatchewan was found to have stashed 200 dead rodents, according to information posted about these owls at AllAboutBirds.org.

“No luck with the missing GoPro. I bought a scope snake camera that attaches to my iPhone to poke down into the burrow to see if my camera was within reach but it didn’t work very well. I have replaced the GoPro so I am ready for next spring and the next burrowing owl funscape,” wrote Pete.

Burrowing owls nest in Wyoming’s grasslands and migrate south, possibly as far as southern South America. But while they are here, they could be considered the ideal guest of gardeners, eating young rabbits, ground squirrels and smaller rodents and numerous unwanted insects like grasshoppers and caterpillars. They seem untroubled by nearby sites of human activity like the church’s dirt parking lot.

However, besides the usual natural predators, loose dogs and cats during their June, early July nesting period take a toll on them as they do ground nesting birds. Residents of prairie property should abstain from mowing and letting pets run loose between April and July.

Pete is looking forward to meeting more adorable owlets next year.

### **Front and backyard bird observations**

Hummingbirds showed up in my east Cheyenne backyard July 15, although a couple were spotted elsewhere in town in June. This year, the red beebalm is particularly juicy with nectar and they are ignoring the feeders. These are probably adults and juveniles returning from the breeding season in the mountains, migrating south eventually, usually after the first week in August.

House sparrows are once again trying to build a nest over our back door. The robins didn’t even try this location this year. It took some gazing out the front window while I was on the phone to realize the robins have a nest hidden in the leaves of the silver maple.

Across the street, where the neighbor’s aging mountain ash tree developed a cavity that red-breasted nuthatches used for a couple years, there are fledgling house sparrows flitting in and out. Their parents must have outcompeted the nuthatches.

And, while I gazed out into the front yard prairie garden I’ve created over the years, a trio of three young flickers came by for a bit of water play in the bird bath.

Summer is a great time to watch birds doing birdy things.

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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