

September 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.*

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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

September 14, 9:00 a.m. – Greenway Cleanup

Cheyenne Audubon is hosting a Greenway cleanup event, Saturday, September 14th. The public is invited to help. The starting location is the parking lot adjacent to the intersection of Van Buren Avenue and Laramie Street (just north of East Lincolnway and east of its intersection with Pershing Blvd.). Work will proceed to the north along Dry Creek and should take less than two hours.

Trash bags and light-weight gloves will be provided. Participants should wear sturdy footwear (preferably waterproof) and heavy gloves and bring rakes and hoes, if available, for fishing trash out of the creek.

September 17, 7:00 p.m. – Program: How Audubon’s Conservation Ranching Initiative helps birds

Cheyenne Audubon’s free program, “How Audubon’s Conservation Ranching Initiative helps birds,” with Audubon range ecologist Cidney Handy, will be Sept. 17 at 7 p.m. in the Cottonwood Room at the Laramie County Library, 2200 Pioneer Ave. The public is welcome to attend.

Cidney Handy assists in certifying ranches for the initiative. Grassland bird populations have declined over the past 50 years because of development, cropland conversion and wildfire. The Conservation Ranching Initiative offers ranchers incentives for grassland stewardship through a certification label on beef and bison products and offers resources for wildlife projects.



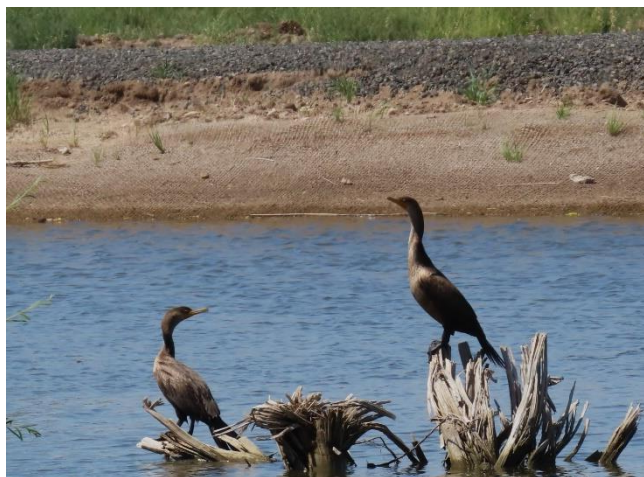
September 21, 8:00 a.m. - Field Trip: New Pond Area at the Laramie County Conservation District (LCCD) Headquarters

We will meet at their office at 1923 Whitney Rd., Cheyenne; it is located on the north side of Campstool Road. The address is in Google Maps, but their new building may not show on the map.

LCCD rebuilt their pond in the Cheyenne Business Parkway Natural Area. It is now deeper and has an island and a trail around part of it. It is not yet open to the public. No dogs are allowed in this natural area that is set aside for wildlife.

A wide variety of birds can be seen in the area, including waterfowl, shorebirds and some prairie birds.

The trip is free and open to the public. We expect to be back in town by noon. Be sure to bring water and dress for changing weather.



Double-crested Cormorants at LCCD pond; Photo by Mark Gorges

September 24, 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.

September 27, 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. 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 President's message

I have always enjoyed the changing of the seasons. There is something good and bad that can be said for all of them, but it also makes life interesting. The seasons for birds, at least around here, have different timelines than the calendar has.

Summer for birds is essentially over, because some birds that have already completed raising families are working their way back to where they winter.

Shorebirds, hummingbirds and others have started appearing here from up north.

After the frenetic pace of spring migration, this return migration is much more leisurely and drawn out.

For example, there have been hummingbirds hanging out in front of the Botanic Gardens in Lions Park for weeks now. They have found a couple of patches of flowers that they really like and will probably stay as long as the flowers continue to provide enough food.

For different species, this can go on for months. When the big lakes in southeast Wyoming stay ice-free, we can have rarities showing up into November or December. The Laramie Plains lakes, and especially Lake Hattie and Twin Buttes, are well known for attracting unusual waterfowl, gulls and terns. Two years ago, a couple of King Eiders showed up there in November, and last year a Yellow-billed Loon. Both are birds of the high Arctic, and the closest they should be in the winter would be the Pacific coast.

Fall migration is like a leisurely, five-month long, walk after the sprint of Spring. And the coolest part is, you never know what might show up. It's nice that, even on a date with your spouse, you might run into a Mississippi Kite right here in Cheyenne on a pleasant evening, which is what happened to me last week. Get out and enjoy it.

Grant
CHPAS President

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. 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 Garden at the Cheyenne Botanic Gardens

update *By Mark Gorges*

Both the original and the new sections are in full seed production, adding to the seed bank in this mostly native garden.

We will be culling milkweed this year as the seed pods open to make room for more kinds of plants. I am impressed by some of the 6-foot-tall milkweed by the back wall.



The CBG garden on September 1st, 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

September 14 – UW's WYOBIRD and Biodiversity Institute to Host WYOBIRD Day

The University of Wyoming campus community and the public can learn about bird capture and banding; participate in bird-themed crafts and games; and listen to a keynote address about bird migration as part of WYOBIRD Day Saturday, Sept. 14. The event is free.

Hosted by WYOBIRD (Wyoming Bird Initiative for Resilience and Diversity) and the UW Biodiversity Institute, events will take place from 7:30 a.m.-7 p.m. in the Berry Biodiversity Conservation Center and on private property in Laramie.

[WYOBIRD](#) has a mission to advance knowledge, appreciation and conservation of birds locally and globally. The initiative achieves this by conducting novel research on birds; training a new generation of scientists at UW through hands-on training; and sharing science through networking, public outreach and seminar speakers.

"This event provides an opportunity for people to learn about birds, see birds up close and talk to students and faculty about the types of research they do on birds," says Corey Tarwater, an associate professor in the UW Department of Zoology and Physiology, the Robert B. Berry Distinguished Chair in Ecology and director of WYOBIRD. "WYOBIRD is excited to share our love of birds with the public and to talk to them about the amazing birds we see in our backyards and those from faraway places."

Schedule:

- Bird banding demonstrations and birding, 7:30-9 a.m. or 9-10:30 a.m., Laramie: See how ornithologists capture, handle and measure birds at the fall banding stations. Attendees can learn how to identify birds by sight and sound. Advance registration is required. To register, go to <https://share.hsforms.com/1wl0HSzcYS2u7r7U-wyGSgg5katt>.
- Bird-themed crafts and games, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., Berry Center: Learn about bird nests; bird color; how to identify birds; migration; the tools ornithologists use to study birds; and more.
- Evening social, student posters and keynote address, 4-7 p.m., Berry Center: Peter Marra, dean of the Earth Commons Institute for the Environment and Sustainability, the Laudato Si' Professor of Biology and the Environment, and a professor in the McCourt School of Public Policy at Georgetown University, will provide the keynote address, "The Epic Migration of Birds," from 4:30-5:30 p.m. There will be a cash bar and appetizers.

More than 20 UW students and faculty members will take part in heading

For more information, go to: <https://www.uwyo.edu/news/2024/08/uws-wyobird-and-biodiversity-institute-to-host-wyobird-day.html>

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 "Looking Underground: Why Birds Need Healthy Soils", "Audubon Rockies 2024 Mid-year Update", and more.

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

August 17 - Field Trip: Snowy Range Hike from Libby Lake to Mirror Lake

Sat 17 Aug 2024 9:08 AM

Location: Medicine Bow NF--Libby & Lewis Lakes area

Observers: 8

Duration: 3 hr, 36 min

Distance: 2.91 mi

12 people went on the trip. Only 8 went on the entire three-mile hike; the other 4 helped with moving vehicles.

17 Species

Hairy Woodpecker 1

Northern Flicker 4

American Kestrel 2

Common Raven 1

Mountain Chickadee 1

Red-breasted Nuthatch 1

Mountain Bluebird 3

American Robin 2

American Pipit 2

Pine Grosbeak 4

Cassin's Finch 2

Pine Siskin 1

Dark-eyed Junco 4

White-crowned Sparrow 10

Lincoln's Sparrow 1

Yellow-rumped Warbler 1

Wilson's Warbler 1



American pika on the trip: photo by Pete Sokolosky

August 30 – Country Club Survey Results

Aug 30, 2024 7:00 AM - 8:41 AM

Protocol: Traveling

2.8 mile(s)

Checklist Comments: 51 degrees, sunny, light breeze. Art Anderson, Mark Gorges, Chuck Seniawski, Pete Sokolosky.

19 species

Wood Duck 2 male and female

Blue-winged Teal 11

Gadwall 7

Mallard 30

Eurasian Collared-Dove 4

Double-crested Cormorant 2

Swainson's Hawk 1

Northern Flicker 4

Western Wood-Pewee 1

Black-billed Magpie 2



Figure 1 Wood Duck, male: photo by Chuck Seniawski

American Crow 9
Mountain Chickadee 2
Barn Swallow 1
Red-breasted Nuthatch 3
European Starling 7
American Robin 2
Red-winged Blackbird 2
Common Grackle 3
Wilson's Warbler 2

View this checklist online at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S193441503>

Bird poop pesters people in parks and at home

By Barb Gorges

Every day I clean three cat litter boxes, then walk the dog, poop bag in hand. So, you can imagine what I thought when we woke up one morning to find a large amount of bird droppings on our patio.

“Oh no! More poop!” And it had to be cleaned up because the dog started licking it.

We have a flock of crows hanging out in our neighborhood so I’m thinking it was probably them trying out our backyard as an overnight roost. So far, so good—they seem happier with the dead branches in the big tree across the street.

However, a few juvenile crows discovered the bathroom skylight’s acrylic bubble early one evening and tried to dance on it. Then they pecked at it, the drumming noise carrying through the house. I turned on the lights and the exhaust fan, a noisy old thing, and they haven’t been back.

Generally, birds work around us though we leave some difficult obstacles like loose cats, shiny windows and wind turbine blades. Sometimes, when we try to benefit birds, it can lead to a mess. In the spring of 2023, I started noticing gulls hanging out at a house on Henderson Drive. A flock of 25 or so perched on the ridge of the roof, turning it white with droppings, or circled overhead calling, bringing back memories of beaches.

I noticed the flock again this spring. They started hanging out on the neighbor’s roof too. There was also gull splat on another neighbor’s rooftop solar panels. Uh-oh. Then I got a call for advice from my city councilman who had been contacted by one of the Henderson Drive neighbors. It turns out the resident of the house with the most gull poop has been feeding them.

Ordinarily, feeding birds doesn’t lead to a public health problem, but in this latest round of bird flu crossing the country, inviting a flock of gulls to hang out borders on being a public health issue. Following up with the councilman in August when I noticed there weren’t any gulls anymore, he said the neighbor had been given a chirper and maybe the sound had driven the birds away or the gull feeder quit. I’m thinking the gulls got restless—some birds start migrating by the end of July.

Another recent caller told me about another bird splat problem. This time it is the black-crowned night herons in Lions Park. The colony used to be in Holliday Park, going back at least 35 years. They nested in the big trees.

After a big hailstorm in July one year, the park was littered with dead and injured night herons. Game and Fish employees salvaged as many birds as possible. But bird splats were never a problem there as they just disappeared in the lawn under the trees.

It may be the gradual loss of the big cottonwoods and willows at Holliday Park, first the ones on the island when the island was removed, and then the trees damaged by squirrels that had to be taken out for public safety, but the night herons seem to have relocated their colony to Lions Park. This time, they seem to favor big spruce trees. Nests and birds are a little harder to pick out—unless you look for the splats—on the sidewalks at the Cheyenne Botanic Gardens. Right where brides choose to be married. And of course, night heron nesting season corresponds to peak wedding season.

Scott Aker, the botanic gardens director, said it's not only the splats, but an awful lot of the young birds don't make it to adulthood and their bodies must be picked up before wedding guests arrive. Scott is looking to get permission from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to haze the birds in the spring before they nest, trying to get them to try other trees.

I am rather fond of night herons after all these years, especially watching the youngsters in late summer learning to fish at the edges of the lakes in the parks. I hope saving the wedding venue from splats doesn't drive them too far away.

I've been reading a book recommended by a friend: "Death and Life of the Great Lakes" by Dan Egan. The invasive, exotic fish, mussels and toxic algae and the effect they have on one of the country's best sources of drinking water makes a few noisy and splatty crows and night herons a very small problem in comparison.



Crow pecks the edge of our skylight, by Barb Gorges



Young Black-crowned Night Heron fishes the edge of Peanut Pond at Lions Park, Sep. 1st, by Mark Gorges

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.

Cheyenne – High Plains Audubon Society P. O. Box 2502, Cheyenne, WY 82003

