

# October 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**

Education, Open

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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**If you have not renewed your chapter membership for our 2024-2025 fiscal year, please do that soon. You can either use the renewal form that you received in August or send a check for \$12 to Cheyenne-High Plains Audubon Society, P.O. Box 2502, Cheyenne, WY 82003.**

**Thank you to all who have renewed.**

## Calendar

### **October 15, 7:00 p.m. – Program: Birding in Cuba**

Cheyenne Audubon invites the public for a free program, “Birding in Cuba,” Oct. 15 at 7 p.m. in the Cottonwood Room at the Laramie County Library, 2200 Pioneer Ave., featuring guest speaker Vicki Herren.

Chapter member Vicki Herren will describe birding in Cuba: How to get there and what to see. Last February she traveled with five other birders on a 9-day trip guided by Cuban Adventures, from the mountains to the marshes. They counted 114 bird species of which 16 were endemic, some very hard to find.



*Vicki Herren in Cuba: self portrait*

Vicki started birdwatching in the 1980s and took her first international trip in 1993 to Costa Rica. She’s been on numerous trips to South and Central America and was eager to make the trip to Cuba when it was suggested by a friend.

We will have a no-host dinner with Vicki before the program at 5:00 p.m. at Bella Fuoco Pizza (2115 Warren Avenue, Cheyenne). Everyone is invited, but you must let Barb Gorges know by Monday October 14th (307-287-4952) so that we can reserve enough seating.

### **October 22, 6:30 p.m. – Monthly 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, or if you are interested in volunteering in some of our activities. This meeting will be held at the Laramie County Library in the Sage Room, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor.

### **October 26, 9:00 a.m. - Field Trip: High Plains Arboretum**

We will leave the Lions Park parking lot south of the Children's Village at 9 a.m. and drive to the Arboretum, which is located on the USDA Cheyenne Horticultural Field Station, west of Warren Air Force Base. If you drive there yourself, you can meet us at about 9:30 at the Arboretum parking area just past the Y in the road within the Ag Station.

No dogs are allowed on the grounds of the Ag Station. A wide variety of birds can be seen in the area, including prairie and forest birds.

The trip is free and open to the public. We expect to be back in town by 1:00 p.m. 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 can let you know if the plans change for any reason.

### **November 1, 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.

### **December 14 – Cheyenne Christmas Bird Count**

Save the date.

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## **Chapter News**



*Mountain Plover,  
drawn by Michelle  
LaGory*

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

In the spirit of Halloween, I thought I'd talk about scary birds.

With the season, a lot of people will think of owls. Certainly, for a mouse, an owl is terrifying, but since we don't see them usually, I don't think they are very scary.

Raptors are frightening because of the "look". That intense stare they give you. It's like they're thinking, "If I was as big as you, you'd be in big trouble, buddy."

The raven comes to mind, mostly because of the association with Edgar Allen Poe. I mostly think of them as really intelligent – so intelligent that they are causing problems for some other species, like sage grouse and desert tortoises. So, I guess they are scary for that.

Some birds sound frightening because of their names: Screaming cowbird, Pale-billed Sicklebill, Blood-colored Woodpecker, Variegated Bristle Tyrant, among others. I'd like to see those, but I don't want to be screamed at though.

My nominee for scariest bird is the Sandhill Crane. Here me out. When they are coming in to land, they resemble a pterodactyl. They often can be concentrated in the thousands. And, when I was trying to help capture some to put transmitters on them a few years ago, we were warned to wear protective goggles, because when they are in hand they will try to peck your eyes. Yes, I'll go with that one.

Grant  
CHPAS President

### **Review of our September program**

Cidney Handy was our speaker. She is an Audubon Rockies' range ecologist for Audubon's Conservation Ranching Initiative.

Audubon Conservation Ranching aims to stabilize declining grassland bird populations in partnership with farmers and ranchers.

The majority of grassland birds – whose populations have declined by more than 50 percent in the last 50 years – inhabit privately owned land.

Landowners voluntarily enroll in the program, and when they meet requirements centering on habitat management, environmental sustainability, and animal welfare, they earn the Audubon bird-friendly land certification. Nationwide, more than 100 ranches and nearly 3 million acres have earned status as Audubon Certified bird-friendly land.

Consumers with an appetite for conservation support these bird-friendly habitats. A special package designation – the Audubon Certified bird-friendly seal – lets shoppers know which beef or bison products come from these lands managed for birds and biodiversity

To see where you can buy their beef and bison, go to:  
<https://www.audubon.org/marketplace/conservation-ranching-products>



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## Education and Conservation

### 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 Committee Update

The Habitat Hero committee recently met with Amanda Martinez, Audubon Rockies' new Habitat Hero Senior Coordinator.

Amanda brings a longtime love for birds and native plants to Audubon. Amanda is passionate about helping people understand the importance of ecological connections and working to build positive human-environment relationships.

Additionally, she is fiercely dedicated to incorporating environmental justice in her work and considering equity and inclusion when developing and presenting environmental programs.

### 2025 Habitat Hero Workshop

We are preparing for our next Habitat Hero Workshop in Cheyenne on Saturday, February 1st. Our keynote speaker will be Lauren Springer. She has been working in horticulture as a professional gardener, designer, propagator, lecturer, and writer for 40 years and has introduced more than two dozen plants into the trade.

Lauren is now on staff at The Gardens on Spring Creek in Fort Collins, Colorado, managing the ¾-acre *Undaunted Garden*, and a 350 foot long hellstrip garden that she created. Lauren continues to share her knowledge and design talent there, inspiring visitors and mentoring the next generation of horticultural heroes!

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 "Our 2024 Audubon Conservation Ranching Bird Monitoring Results" by Dusty Downey (bird activity and sightings on Audubon Certified bird-friendly ranches were noticeably higher this year), and more.

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

### Why Birds Hit Windows—and How You Can Help Prevent It

For birds, glass windows are worse than invisible. By reflecting foliage or sky, they look like inviting places to fly into. And because the sheer number of windows is so great, their toll on



birds is huge. Up to about 1 billion birds die from window strikes in the U.S. each year, according to a 2014 study.

For the full report and more information, go to: <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/why-birds-hit-windows-and-how-you-can-help-prevent-it/>



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## **September 21 - Field Trip: Laramie County Conservation District Natural Area**

8:01 AM - 9:36 AM

Protocol: Traveling

1.57 mile(s)

16 species

Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon) 1

Mourning Dove 8

Solitary Sandpiper 3  
 Northern Flicker 2  
 Say's Phoebe 1  
 Horned Lark 7  
 Barn Swallow 6  
 American Robin 1  
 American Pipit 1  
 House Finch 1  
 Chipping Sparrow 5  
 White-crowned Sparrow 4  
 Red-winged Blackbird 13  
 Brewer's Blackbird 8  
 Yellow-rumped Warbler 1  
 Wilson's Warbler 1



*Solitary Sandpiper from the Field Trip. Photo by Kirk Seniawski*

View this checklist online at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S195938315>

## September 27 – Country Club Survey Results

8:00 AM - 10:15 AM

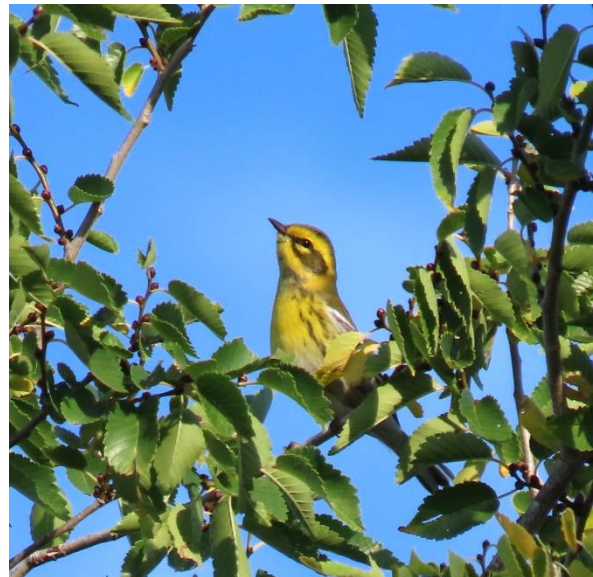
Protocol: Traveling

2.7 mile(s)

Checklist Comments: 57 degrees. Clear skies. Barely noticeable breeze. Art Anderson, Jeff Frost, Mark Gorges, Vicki Herren, Jerry Johnson, Kirk Miller, Kim Parfitt, Chuck Seniawski, Janet Thompson, and Kurt Warmbier.

22 species

American Wigeon 3  
 Mallard 23  
 Red-tailed Hawk 1  
 Ferruginous Hawk 1  
 Downy Woodpecker 1  
 Northern Flicker 15  
 Black-billed Magpie 6  
 American Crow 27  
 Mountain Chickadee 2  
 Barn Swallow 2  
 White-breasted Nuthatch 1  
 Red-breasted Nuthatch 3  
 European Starling 16  
 American Robin 17  
 House Finch 3  
 Chipping Sparrow 7  
 White-crowned Sparrow 6  
 Song Sparrow 1  
 Red-winged Blackbird 16  
 Common Grackle 12  
 Yellow-rumped Warbler 15  
 Townsend's Warbler 1



*Townsend's Warbler from the Country Club. Photo by Chuck Seniawski*

View this checklist online at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S196642424>

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*There's a view from the first phase of the Pilot Hill Connector trail of the Pole Mountain unit of the Medicine Bow National Forest. Wear orange like Bailey does while recreating during the fall hunting season. Photo by Barb Gorges*

## **Random bird watching meets migration**

By Barb Gorges

On the first day of fall, I talked Mark into hiking with me on a new trail by Pilot Hill in the Pole Mountain unit of the Medicine Bow National Forest.

The trails show up now on my GPS app, as do a plethora of dirt/rock and gravel roads, some of which are not worth attempting with a small SUV—I can walk faster.

We found the trailhead by driving 1.5 miles up a not too terrible gravel road that starts across Happy Jack Road from the Tie City parking lot.

The trail winds along the crest of a ridge with a wonderful view to the east, and is shaded by aspen and pine, both dead and alive. The dog and I were eager to see around every bend, but Mark, Sunday mornings being his favorite time to birdwatch, was loaded down with binoculars and camera. Soon he was seeing and hearing birds.

I'd left my binoculars at home. Hiking with a young dog takes up too much of my attention. And this was just going to be another random hike in the hills. But it was birdy.

Cheyenne birders, and visiting birders, know that if they want to have a good day birding, the place to go is the Wyoming Hereford Ranch. It's a Wyoming Important Bird Area, important for nesting as well as migrating birds because of its riparian areas full of cottonwoods and willows. And it's close to town.

But a random hike in the hills? Looking back later at [www.Birdcast.info](http://www.Birdcast.info), a website that predicts the location and amount of bird migration activity as well as recording it, shows that on the

night before, Sept. 21-22, from about midnight until 4 a.m., the bird migration traffic rate was medium to high in the Cheyenne area, even this far out. Night-flying migrants then land come morning.

We finished the hike with an unexpected number of expected species:

- 1 Turkey Vulture
- 1 Red-tailed Hawk
- 3 Northern Flicker
- 4 Clark's Nutcracker
- 2 Common Raven
- 3 Mountain Chickadee
- 1 White-breasted Nuthatch
- 1 Townsend's Solitaire
- 17 American Robin
- 8 Dark-eyed Junco

The robins were definitely a migrating flock. They slipped right through the branches on their way south. The juncos, however, I saw again on Wednesday. I think they are just waiting for the first winter-like weather before they come to our backyard feeders in town.

Except for the turkey vulture which will migrate, the rest of the birds we saw could be year round residents, just maybe at lower elevation in winter.

In a serendipitous moment, we met Wyoming Pathways executive director Mike Kusiek out for a ride on this new trail. It's phase 1 of the Pole Mountain Connector, he said, connecting the Pilot Hill trails that start in Laramie with the Happy Jack Recreation Area trailhead further east along Happy Jack Road. The second phase will be another 4 miles and include a highway underpass. And there are plans to improve trails between Happy Jack and the Vedauwoo Recreation Areas.

None of the 10 bike riders we met on the trail Sunday morning was wearing binoculars and we didn't meet any other pedestrians, but wherever there's a pathway, there's a chance for a birder to post an eBird.org report.

How does wildlife feel about people coming through a new area? Especially a place like Curt Gowdy State Park where the open spaces are continually subdivided by new trails seemingly every year. On this new Pilot Hill Connector, I saw elk droppings. Those may become scarcer as more people discover the trail.

There's nothing I like better than exploring a new trail, preferably one with few people. Well, maybe one or two fellow users strategically located, just where we are wondering where the trailhead is (over the cattleguard, on the right, marked by a line of rock cairns).

And then again, maybe we do need more trails in popular places. One weekday summer morning on the Hidden Falls trail at Curt Gowdy State Park I counted 60 hikers in a one-mile stretch. While the deer may be put off by the crowds, I'm not sure the birds are. Many of the species on our Sunday list have learned to tolerate and even make use of human contact. Clark's nutcracker is one of the species known as the camp robber bird. Ravens are smart. Juncos, chickadees and flickers visit our bird feeders, robins nest in our yards.

I am a part of nature, but maybe I can think about how to be less disruptive on the trail, such as leaving the pup at home sometimes.

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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