

November 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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Dennis Saville, Vice president

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Board

Jack Palma, Audubon Rockies
Board

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Education, Open

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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

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/>

Thank you to all who have renewed their chapter membership for 2024-2025; and welcome to new chapter members.

Calendar

November 16, 8:00 a.m. - Field Trip: Ft. Collins Lakes

We will leave the Lions Park parking lot south of the Children's Village at 8 a.m. We plan to visit a number of lakes between the state line and the Ft. Collins area.

Although this is mainly a waterfowl trip with a dozen or more species, we hope to also see some raptors including Bald Eagles.

The trip is free and open to the public. We expect to head back towards town by 1:00 p.m. Be sure to bring water, lunch or a snack, 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.



Common Goldeneye: Photo by Mark Gorges

November 19, 6:30 p.m. – Program: A Peek into the Lives of Bats (Note the new start time.)

Cheyenne Audubon invites the public for a free program, at 6:30 p.m. (this is a new start time) in the Sunflower Room, 3rd floor, at the Laramie County Library, 2200 Pioneer Ave., featuring guest speaker Mason Lee from the University of Wyoming Biodiversity Institute.

Bats are vital to healthy ecosystems around the world, and yet, much of their remarkable lives remain a mystery even to wildlife enthusiasts. This talk will take a peek into the lives of these incredible animals, both around the world and in Wyoming. Native bat specimens provided by the University of Wyoming Museum of Vertebrates will be on display.



A western small-footed myotis was rescued from a University of Wyoming building in September. Photo courtesy of Mason Lee

Mason is the Senior Project Coordinator for the University of Wyoming Biodiversity Institute. She hosts Bat Walks and bat outreach programs in communities around the state to introduce Wyomingites to the wonderful world of bats.

At 4:45 p.m. there will be a no-host dinner with guest speaker Mason Lee at 2 Doors Down, 118 E. 17th St. Please text or call Barb to save a seat, 307-287-4952.

November 26, 6:00 p.m. – Monthly Board Meeting (Note the new start time.)

Contact us, 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 Windflower Room, 2nd floor.

November 29, 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.

December 7, 1:00 to 3:00 pm – Introduction to the Christmas Bird Count

This is a class and outing for families and kids of all ages. We will meet at the Children's Village in the Cheyenne Botanic Gardens and introduce you to some of the local winter birds. Then we will take a short hike in the park to see what birds we can find and record their numbers.

We will talk about the upcoming official Cheyenne Christmas Bird Count planned for December 14th.

December 9, 4:00 to 5:00 pm - Bird Counts and Birds Count!

Join us at the Laramie County Library in the Early Literacy Center on the 2nd floor: for kids from the 2nd thru 6th grades.

Meet a volunteer from the Cheyenne High Plains Audubon Society who will tell us how and why we count birds. Discover how to find and identify birds then test your skills at spotting feathered friends (or their look-alikes) and learn about the library's birding backpack program and the upcoming Christmas Bird Count.

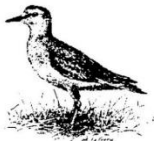
December 14 – Cheyenne Christmas Bird Count

Save the date; more details next month.

January 1 - Guernsey/Ft. Laramie Christmas Bird Count

Save the date; more details next month.

Chapter News



*Mountain Plover,
drawn by Michelle
LaGory*

Chapter President's message

I was waiting in a medical office a while back, and there happened to be an Audubon magazine on the table. I was shocked, not only that it was Audubon, but that there were magazines!

This edition had some articles on cats. I'm going to say right up front that I like cats. But the only one that allowed my wife and I to live with her was strictly an indoor cat. By the time she was an adult and somehow got out undetected overnight, she didn't realize that she could go to the bathroom outside and was desperate to get to the litter box the next morning.

What really caught my eye was an article on patios for cats, or catios, and other ways to keep both cats and birds safe. Enclosed spaces in the outdoors that allow cats out but keep a barrier between them and birds seem to be the ideal compromise for both. And the cats are kept safe from cars, dogs, other cats, wildlife and various hazards they encounter in their wanderings.

If you don't own a cat, you know someone who does. This obviously wouldn't solve the problem with feral cats, but an astounding number of birds and other small critters could be saved with these measures. I urge you to check out this information at

https://www.audubon.org/search_results?search=catio

Grant
CHPAS President

Review of our October program

Birding in Cuba

By Barb Gorges

Chapter board member Vicki Herren was our October program speaker, relating her experiences birding in Cuba last February. She and several friends went through a company called Cuban Adventures which helped them get through all the unique paperwork needed to visit this country that was closed to visitors for so long.

One of the requirements was a general license, an affidavit that the group's travel was in support of the Cuban people, and another was to keep a daily journal showing that—and to keep it for 5 years.

Typical of Central American birding trips, the group travelled by small but comfortable bus and stayed in hotels and privately owned guest houses in different parts of the country.

Some of the places they visited were a crocodile breeding farm, a coffee farm, refuges, parks, a botanic garden and trails. Some birding stops were at feeders and blinds set up specifically for visiting birders.

Vicki saw 114 bird species of the 354 found in Cuba. She saw 16 endemics of a possible 29, 31 Caribbean species and 67 species that also occur in the U.S.

At a hummingbird feeder station, Vicki saw the Bee Hummingbird, the world's smallest hummer (and smallest bird) at 2.5 inches long.

The Bee Hummingbird is endemic to Cuba, found only there. The Cuban national bird, the Cuban Trogon is also an endemic and was easy to see. It sports the colors of the Cuban flag, red, white and blue.

The other endemics Vicki saw (and some of her comments) were:
Blue-headed Quail-Dove (shy, seen from a blind)
Common Toady (cutest bird)



Vicki in Cuba, self portrait

Cuban Vireo
Cuban Solitaire (hardest to see)
Cuban Pygmy Owl (Cuba's smallest owl)
Cuban Parakeet (hard to see, local but rare)
Cuban Oriole
Cuban Blackbird
Cuban Green Woodpecker (common)
Fernandina's Flicker
Cuban Grassquit (at a feeding station)
Cuban Bullfinch (common and widespread)
Cuban Black Hawk (coastal)

If you are thinking about birding Cuba and have questions for Vicki, email her at vickiblu@hotmai.com.

Education and Conservation

Programs for Kids

Check the calendar above for November 7th and 9th.

Chapter Grants

For information on our chapter education and conservation grants, see our chapter website at: www.cheyenneaudubon.org.

Habitat Hero



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 $\frac{3}{4}$ acre *Undaunted Garden*, and a 350-foot long hellstrip (between street and sidewalk) 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.

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 "Simple Ways to Ease into Fall and Winter Yard Cleanup for Birds"; discover how to transition to a more naturalistic, bird-friendly yard.

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

Bird Name Changes in 2024

From the American Ornithological Society

The 65th Supplement to the American Ornithological Society's (AOS's) Check-list of North American Birds, published in "Ornithology", includes several updates to the classifications of bird species found in North America, Central America, and the Caribbean.

A few highlights from this year's supplement include species splits for *Troglodytes aedon* (House Wren) and *Tyto alba* (Barn Owl); a lumping of *Acanthis flammea* (Common Redpoll), *Acanthis hornemanni* (Hoary Redpoll), and *Acanthis cabaret* (Lesser Redpoll); a genus merger for bitterns; and a genus split for plovers. [Our House Wren is now the Northern House Wren; our Barn Owl is now the American Barn Owl, and the redpolls are lumped as just Redpoll]



Redpoll, new name: photo by Mark Gorges

The *Check-list*, published since 1886, is updated in annual supplements from the AOS's North American Classification Committee (NACC). The *Check-list* and its supplements provide the taxonomic and nomenclatural foundation for bird research, conservation, management, and education throughout the region, and are relied on as the authority on avian biodiversity by government agencies, NGOs, scientists, and birders, among others.

For more details about these and other changes, go to <https://bit.ly/BirdNames24>.

October 26 - Field Trip: High Plains Grasslands Research Station, Cheyenne

We had 17 people on the field trip.

9:51 AM - 12:18 PM

Protocol: Traveling

2.6 mile(s)

22 species

Gadwall 1
Mallard 6
Bufflehead 1
Pied-billed Grebe 1
Red-tailed Hawk 5
Northern Flicker 3
American Kestrel 2
Merlin 1
Black-billed Magpie 9
American Crow 12
Common Raven 1
Mountain Chickadee 2
Ruby-crowned Kinglet 1
Red-breasted Nuthatch 1
European Starling 50
Townsend's Solitaire 2
American Robin 20
Pine Siskin 3
American Tree Sparrow 1
Dark-eyed Junco 18
White-crowned Sparrow 2
Red-winged Blackbird 14



Merlin by Kurt Warmbier

View this checklist online at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S200353071>

November 1 – Country Club Survey Results

Cheyenne Country Club, Laramie, Wyoming, US

Nov 1, 2024 7:53 AM - 10:05 AM

Protocol: Traveling

2.7 mile(s)

Checklist Comments: 28 degrees. Sunny. Light breeze. Grant Frost, Vicki Herren, Chuck Seniawski, Pete Sokolosky, Janet Thompson and Kurt Warmbier.

32 species (+1 other taxa)

Canada Goose 26

Wood Duck 1 Fully colored male. See photo.

Cinnamon Teal 1 Cinnamon coloring on duck smaller than nearby mallards. Photo with poor lighting.

Gadwall 57

American Wigeon 54

Mallard 20

Green-winged Teal 5

Redhead 2

Ring-necked Duck 33

Lesser Scaup 7

Eurasian Collared-Dove 1

Eared Grebe 1

Great Blue Heron 1

Red-tailed Hawk 3

Northern Flicker 3

Merlin 1

Black-billed Magpie 8

American Crow 3

Common Raven 2

Mountain Chickadee 1

Red-breasted Nuthatch 11

Brown Creeper 1

European Starling 27

American Robin 20

House Sparrow 3

House Finch 6

Pine Siskin 5

American Tree Sparrow 1

Dark-eyed Junco 12

Dark-eyed Junco (Slate-colored) 1

White-crowned Sparrow 2

Song Sparrow 2

Red-winged Blackbird 5



American Wigeon: Photo by Chuck Seniawski

View this checklist online at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S201010884>



A female house finch enjoys slipping in and eating shelled sunflower seed inside the protective cage around a tube feeder. The cage seems to be thwarting squirrels so far. The screened part of the patio in the background is where our cats safely enjoy birdwatching outside. Photo by Mark Gorges.

Bird feeding for pleasure can aid science

By Barb Gorges

This is the time of year Mark and I put our bird feeders back up and invite you to join Project FeederWatch. Sign up (\$18), renew, or donate at <https://feederwatch.org/>.

This season, it starts Nov. 1 and runs through April 30, 2025, though you can join anytime. Begun in 1987, it is now one of many citizen science projects asking you to share your observations. Last year 17,991 people participated. As of Oct. 25, the map shows only three locations in Wyoming registered for this year so I hope you will join us in providing scientific data.

Data—it sounds daunting. All you need is to attract birds with some black oil sunflower seed on the ground (a concrete surface is easier to clean up than a lawn) and look to see who shows up.

Mark and I designate Saturday and Sunday as our two count days each week. It's ok if we miss a few. We could pick certain times to watch our feeders from the kitchen window, but we choose to leave paper and pen on the table and record what we see when we happen to look.

The protocol is to record the greatest number of each species you see over the two days. So, if I count 5 house finches on the feeder at one time on Saturday morning and 7 all at once on the feeder Sunday afternoon, I report 7 house finches to Project FeederWatch at the end of my two-day count period. Intervals between count periods can be more than 5 days, but weekly works for us.

The FeederWatch website can help you identify birds. Here are the top 12 from the list Project FeederWatch has compiled with Mark's and my data from the past 24 years and what percentage of counts we've reported them. The other 23 species we've seen are more unusual sightings, mostly 1 – 3 percent.

House Finch 92%
Dark-eyed Junco 80%
Eurasian Collared-Dove 64%
House Sparrow 53%
Red-breasted Nuthatch 43%
Mountain Chickadee 31%
Northern Flicker 28%
American Robin 22%
American Crow 20%
American Goldfinch 17%
Downy Woodpecker 16%
European Starling 11 %

The website also discusses the favorite foods and feeders of different species. In Cheyenne, you'll get the most species with black oil sunflower seed. And you'll also get squirrels. Our latest feeder, a tube inside a roomy cage, seems to be working, and keeps out the aggressive bigger birds like crows too.

When it is cold enough, we sometimes hang a block of suet in a cage-type feeder. It attracts the woodpeckers—the flickers and downies—and chickadees too. We also hang a nyger thistle seed feeder for the goldfinches and pine siskins, but they are irregular visitors, and the seed gets stale because the feeder is designed to exclude seed eaters with larger bills. So, we throw the stale stuff on the patio for the less discriminating birds and refill with fresh.

Having a winter birdbath will attract birds too. I trade the ceramic one for a large, heavy-duty plastic plant pot saucer, 16-inch diameter, for winter. A rock in the middle adds a perch and keeps it from blowing away. It's easy to bring inside to de-ice or clean.

If you put out any seed or any kind of feeder, you must commit to keeping them, and the area under them, clean. Mark and I tend to forget until we see a sick bird, crusty eyes or face. At that point we take down all the feeders for a week and clean them well before putting them back up.

For greatest enjoyment, place your feeders close to your favorite window, even less than 3 feet. Then you probably won't need binoculars to see birds and if they are spooked and fly into the window, they won't get enough speed in a short distance to hurt themselves.

If you choose to feed birds, you must keep your cats indoors. If you attract neighborhood cats, make sure the area around the feeders is completely clear of places the cats can hide. Or don't feed the birds.

You can also provide for birds by landscaping for them, planting species that go to seed or fruit or provide cover for escaping from predators or provide nesting possibilities. Plants that are native to our area are always a good bet.

The birds don't need us to feed them, but here, where the winter weather season can stretch seven or eight months, they have added to my enjoyment. And the birds and I can contribute to scientific inquiry. I hope you will join Project FeederWatch with us this winter.

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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