



March 2025 "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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Kurt Warmbier, Member at Large

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

March 18, 6:30 p.m. Program: Ryan Dibala on restoring bald eagles at Channel Islands National Park

Cheyenne Audubon members invite the public to a free talk by Ryan Dibala, author, naturalist and guide, about his work restoring bald eagles on Catalina Island and Channel Islands National Park, Tuesday, March 18, 6:30 p.m., in the Cottonwood Room at Laramie County Library, 2200 Pioneer Ave.

We will take Ryan to dinner at 4:45 at 2 Doors Down, 118 E 17th St, Cheyenne. If you are interested in joining us for dinner with



Ryan, courtesy of Ryan

Ryan, please contact Barb Gorges at 307-287-4952 or bgorges4@msn.com so that we can reserve enough seating.

March 19, 6:00 p.m. – Monthly Board Meeting

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 **Highlands United Presbyterian Church at 2390 Pattison Avenue**, Cheyenne. Please park and come in at the back of the church.

March 28, 8:00 a.m. – Country Club Bird Survey

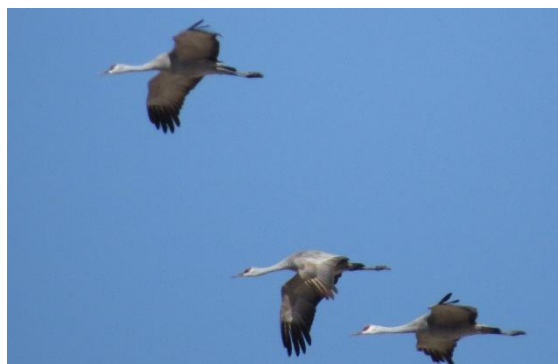
Contact Chuck Seniawski to be on his email notice list: 307-638-6519 or chuckski@aol.com. The count will start in the Country Club's clubhouse's main parking lot. These outings are free and open to everyone, but please let Chuck know you are coming.

March 29, 3:00 p.m. – Field Trip: Table Mountain Wildlife Management Area: Sandhill Crane Migration

We will leave the Lions Park parking lot south of the Children's Village at 3 p.m. Carpooling should be available but check with Grant (see below) if you will need a ride.

Our field trips are free and open to the public. Anyone interested in birds is welcome.

We are going to Table Mountain to watch Sandhill Cranes return in flocks to their nighttime roosting area after they spend the day feeding in grain fields. We will also be looking for migrating waterfowl along the way.



Sandhill Cranes at Table Mountain 2023 by Mark Gorges

The management area is about 75 miles north of Cheyenne, near Yoder, WY. The trip is free, open to the public, and non-birders of all ages are encouraged to join us to learn about the birds we see.

We expect to be back in Cheyenne by 9 p.m. Be sure to bring water, something for yourself to eat and dress for changing weather.

If you want to carpool but don't want to leave your car in the parking lot in the evening, when you call Grant, let him know if you want a ride or riders and let's see if we can make arrangements to arrive at the park already matched up.

If you are interested in going, contact Grant Frost, 307-343-2024, so that he has a list of those expected, and he can let you know if the plans change for any reason like bad weather.

Chapter News



Chapter President's message

February was not good for chapter activities weather-wise. First, the monthly field trip had to be cancelled (this was rescheduled from January), and then the program had to be cancelled when, 45 minutes before it was due to begin, people from the library came in and said the library would be closing in 15 minutes. With that short notice, there was no way to inform anybody that it was cancelled. If you came out on a not-so-nice night and found the building closed, my apologies. The good news is that Chris's talk has been rescheduled to May 20th, when I would almost guarantee that we won't have a snowstorm.

If you are waiting for good weather to get out and bird, you might be missing some chances. Over 64 species have been seen in Laramie County since the first of the year, including some of our winter visitors like Northern shrike and Lapland longspur, as well as some unusual birds like Trumpeter swans and an American dipper that is hanging around Curt Gowdy State Park. As I often say, you don't know what you will see until you get out there.

But the vast majority of birding will take place in the warmer months ahead, and so I wanted to talk about birding ethics. The American Birding Association has published their code, which I include here:

- Respect and promote the birding community and its individual members.
- Be an exemplary ethical role model by following this Code and leading by example.
- Always bird and report with honesty and integrity.
- Respect the interests, rights, and skill levels of fellow birders, as well as people participating in other outdoor activities.
- Promote the welfare of birds and their environment.
- Support the protection of important bird habitat.
- To avoid stressing birds or exposing them to danger, exercise restraint and caution during observation, photography, sound recording, or filming.

The first six are straight forward. The last is open to a little interpretation. What does "stressing birds or exposing them to danger" really mean? The mere presence of people causes almost all wild birds to move away from them, at least temporarily. Is that stress or danger? Probably not, as long as we move along and let them get back to their lives. But, if we press matters in an attempt to get that ultimate view, picture or recording we can quickly cross a line.

If it's a really special bird, it can draw a crowd. Should we let other people know right where they are? That can happen so easily now with eBird and notifications of rare species, or if these things get posted on social media.

Each bird species is different in how they react to us, but where they are all most vulnerable is when they are attempting to raise their young. Life for birds is tough enough, so let's just keep that in mind as spring and summer arrive.

Grant

CHPAS President

Other Chapter Board Activities

February Program - Chris Madson's talk was cancelled due to bad weather that closed the library at 6:00 p.m. It is rescheduled for May 20, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. in the Cottonwood Room at the Laramie County Library.

New Board Member - Kurt Warmbier volunteered and was accepted as a Member at Large.

Chapter Bumper Sticker – Thank you all for your suggestions. The board liked "I Brake for Birds" with our logo and "Cheyenne-High Plains Audubon". They will follow up on how to do that.

Lions Park Habitat Discussion - Wanda Manley, Rex Lockman from the Laramie County Conservation District and Vicki Herren went out on Feb. 6 to look at the unmowed areas of the park like the Old Buffalo Pasture area. Rex will go out with the seeder in March/April to add some flowers from the native seed mix. Vicki viewed the Master Plan for the city and found a lot of ways for the chapter to collaborate.

IBA Sign Update at Lions Park - Vicki Herren reached out to Kim Parfitt to create a mock-up of what the message was going to be. The chapter may be able to install three educational signs: Snags, The Lake, and Pollinators

Education Chair – As we get more requests for help with educational opportunities for kids, we are in desperate need of an education coordinator. We have volunteers willing to help, but we need someone to coordinate those activities.

If you are interested or would like more information, contact us at cheyenneaudubon@gmail.com.

Education and Conservation

Chapter Grants

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

Habitat Hero



Learn Habitat Hero lessons for native plant gardening

Published Feb. 14, 2025, in the Wyoming Tribune Eagle.

By Barb Gorges

The Cheyenne Habitat Hero Committee strives to put on a different, but useful workshop every winter.

The 11th annual workshop Feb. 1 hosted 137 participants and keynote speaker, Lauren Springer, who tailored her vast knowledge of plants to Cheyenne's climate. She highlighted the toughest, the "undaunted" plants she thinks will do well here, yet provide nectar, pollen, fruit and other habitat needs, like leaves for caterpillars to munch before they become baby bird food.

Lauren is noted for her lush-looking plants, even in water-restricted gardens like the Undaunted Garden she designed for The Gardens on Spring Creek, the public garden in Fort Collins, Colorado. Her photography, both in her presentations and books, glows. Altogether, she gave a very inspiring talk with a backbone of recommended plants printed for every participant.

The question, of course, is where can gardeners find shrubs like Cheyenne Mock Orange? Jessica Friis, horticulturist from the Cheyenne Botanic Gardens, spoke up, saying many of the trees and shrubs mentioned will be available this spring at the High Plains Arboretum Plant Sale June 7. So far, the next closest best selection of native plants is the High Plains Environmental Center in Loveland, Colorado. Beginning in April, you can order online and pick up in person. See suburbitat.org/.

Our other major speaker was Deryn Davidson on how to maintain a native perennial garden. She is the Sustainable Landscape State Specialist for Colorado State University Extension. Here is the link to the "Habitat Friendly Maintenance Guidelines," https://arapahoe.extension.colostate.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2025/01/Habitat-Friendly-Maintenance-Guidelines-12_2022.pdf.

One of her takeaways was IPPM, Integrated Pest and Pollinator Management. She said, "Right plant in the right place" will go a long way to solving problems, as will offering a diversity of plants. And sometimes just fence out the rabbits and deer.

For weeds, Deryn explained you can't use much mulch in a pollinator garden because many of our native bees winter in holes in the ground. But cutting perennials back in the spring provides a nice, light layer of mulch if you drop the cuttings next to the plants. Minimal disturbance of the soil is one way to limit weeds—don't thoroughly till your new native plant garden bed—you will just bring weed seeds to light, and they need light to germinate.

Another way to minimize soil disturbance is to transplant young plants bareroot. Shake the potting soil off the roots and into the pot, then slip the roots into a slot made by your soil knife, or hori hori, in the garden instead of a hole. Trees and shrubs also benefit from bareroot planting, but you will want to spread their roots out in a shallow circle. Young plants establish much faster than older, larger ones.

Deryn stressed never mulch with plastic. It limits air and moisture exchanges with the soil, which is bad for plants.

On the other hand, leave some leaves in your flowerbeds over the winter. They insulate plant roots, provide shelter for beneficial insects and eventually break down as soil nutrients. You'll know if you have too much mulch if you have to peel it back to find new growth in April. Compost what you remove and top-dress your vegetable garden with the finished compost later.

Scott Aker, Cheyenne Botanic Gardens director, talked about the new master plan for the gardens. Every homeowner could relate to the need to improve the irrigation system, fence out troublemakers, improve walkways and patio areas and plant more waterwise plants that will do well in our climate.

Cheyenne City Councilman Mark Rinne talked about coming to Cheyenne more than 30 years ago and lamenting how it didn't look very inviting. In his decades on the council, he pushed for requiring new businesses and housing to plant trees and grass. Now, the idea of water-smart plantings is catching up with the regulations, even the idea that protecting native prairie can benefit developers.

Amanda Martinez, Habitat Hero senior coordinator for Audubon Rockies, reviewed what it takes to become a certified Habitat Hero. It's about planting native plants, whether in containers on your apartment balcony, in your front yard or to enhance native prairie on your acreage. The requirements are listed at rockies.audubon.org/habitat-hero.

The last five years or so we always end with the very popular hands-on part led by Laramie County Master Gardener Michelle Bohanan. Previously, she guided everyone through winter sowing a milk jug to take home (search for "winter sowing" at CheyenneGardenGossip.wordpress.com).

This year, she wanted people to learn how to get seedlings out of milk jugs and potted up. Everyone went home with three or four little seedlings and a dose of optimism.



Lauren Springer designed the Cactus Garden as part of the Undaunted Garden at the Gardens on Spring Creek in Fort Collins, Colorado. It is surprisingly colorful and lush-looking for a minimal amount of water, yet attractive to bees, birds and butterflies. Photo courtesy of Lauren Springer.

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 "Ninth Circuit Upholds Decision in Favor of Greater Sage-grouse Habitat"; court invalidates oil and gas leasing in essential habitat, as well as other articles.

For more news go to: <https://rockies.audubon.org/blog>

February 14-17 – Great Backyard Bird Count

In Laramie County, these are the counts according to the eBird app:

44 Checklists by 15 contributors

39 Species

Cackling Goose

Canada Goose

Gadwall

Mallard

Green-winged Teal

Redhead

Ring-necked Duck

Common Goldeneye

Rock Pigeon

Eurasian Collared-Dove

Golden Eagle

Sharp-shinned Hawk

Cooper's Hawk

Northern Harrier

Red-tailed Hawk

Great Horned Owl

Belted Kingfisher

Downy Woodpecker

Hairy Woodpecker

Northern Flicker

American Kestrel

Blue Jay

American Crow

Black-billed Magpie

Common Raven

Mountain Chickadee

Horned Lark

White-breasted Nuthatch

Red-breasted Nuthatch

Townsend's Solitaire

American Robin

House Sparrow

House Finch

Pine Siskin

American Goldfinch

American Tree Sparrow

Dark-eyed Junco

Song Sparrow



Red-tailed Hawk photographed during the count by Kirk Miller

February 28 – Country Club Survey Results

8:00 AM - 9:48 AM

Protocol: Traveling

2.8 mile(s)

Checklist Comments: 40 degrees. Sunny. Light breeze. Grant Frost, Bill Gerhart, Mark Gorges, Jerry Johnson, Ray Milczewski, Chuck Seniawski, Kurt Warmbier and Susan and Roy West.

19 species

Canada Goose 75
 Mallard 80
 Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon) 2
 Eurasian Collared-Dove 6
 California Gull 1
 Red-tailed Hawk 1
 Downy Woodpecker 3
 Hairy Woodpecker 1
 Northern Flicker 9
 Black-billed Magpie 12
 American Crow 14
 Mountain Chickadee 7
 Red-breasted Nuthatch 4
 Brown Creeper 1
 European Starling 10
 House Sparrow 1
 House Finch 4
 Dark-eyed Junco 3
 Red-winged Blackbird 5



Hairy Woodpecker at Country Club by Mark Gorges

Forest finches are feeder-friendly, too

By Barb Gorges

“The Stokes Guide to Finches of the United States and Canada,” by Lillian Stokes and Matthew A. Young, published in 2024, is much more than a field guide to help you identify finches. It’s a 348-page natural history of all the finches you might see in our two countries, including Hawaii.

Hawaii? Apparently, the honeycreepers are classified as finches, along with our familiar house finch and goldfinch. However, only 35 pages are devoted to the 17 Hawaiian species compared to 217 photo-filled pages for our 17 continental finches. Nine vagrant finch species that occasionally, but regularly, blow in from Asia or Europe get 25 pages.

I’m writing this book report about finches because I, and other Cheyenne Audubon chapter members and friends, got weathered out twice the last two months trying to see our nearby winter forest finches.

Our Laramie birding friend, Don Jones, has set up feeders by the warming hut at Tie City on Pole Mountain, and we were hoping to see gray-crowned rosy-finches, red crossbills and pine grosbeaks—three finch species.

Gray-crowned rosy-finches are seen in Laramie County late November through March and reported through eBird.org at the forested, higher elevations west of Cheyenne and a few scattered reports on the plains. But Don, in the space of two days mid-February at Tie City, reported 12 and 30. Someone a couple days later had 43. I suppose it depends on when feeders are stocked. They appreciate black oil sunflower seed and Nyjer thistle before flying off to breeding grounds in Alaska and western



Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches enjoy spilled seed on a deck of a home in western Laramie County last winter. Photo by Mark Gorges

Canada. Without feeders, rosy-finches are out scouting for naturally occurring seeds.

Red crossbills, however, are in our forest year-round. But exactly which of many types of red crossbills I wouldn't venture to say.

Years ago, Craig Benkman, a University of Wyoming professor, spoke to the Cheyenne – High Plains Audubon Society about his research on types. The result is that one type of the dozen or so (it depends on who you talk to how many there are) has been given species status, the Cassia crossbill, named for the county in Idaho where they reside. Even with plenty of red crossbills galivanting around the west looking for pine, spruce and other conifer cones to extract seeds from with their wild-looking bills, this bunch never breeds with any of the other types, the definition of a species.

The pine grosbeak is reddish, like the red crossbill, and has white wing bars like the white-winged crossbill that is erratically seen in Wyoming. But the crossbills are closer to the size of a house finch (6-inch length) and the pine grosbeak is bigger and stockier (9 inches). And the pine grosbeak doesn't have upper and lower mandibles that cross at the tips.

The "Guide to Finches" has two very visible authors, especially for the "Quick Take" introducing each species. I think I can tell who wrote which one.

Lillian Stokes and her husband, Donald, have written 20 bird guides, including a standard North American field guide as well as beginner birdwatching guides and guides for gardening for birds, building birdhouses and feeding birds, plus books on different groups of birds such as hummingbirds.

The Stokeses also wrote 15 other nature guides, often collaborating with experts.

This book is similar—Lillian met finch expert Matthew Young over a shared interest in red crossbills. Lillian studied a flock of them for more than a month, photographing and recording them. Recording their calls is the only way to distinguish the different types. She met Matt when she had him look at the spectrograms of each call.

Matt discovered red crossbills at the Lower Falls of the Yellowstone River in 1995. It was his spark bird experience, and then he moved to Ithaca, New York, to work for the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and experienced a superflight of finches. This means that when finches hit a bad cone crop year, they leave the forests, irrupting, showing up at feeders elsewhere, further south.

The "Guide to Finches" has an entire chapter devoted to "Movements and Irruptions," Matt's forte. Another chapter, "Feeding and Attracting Finches," I'm guessing is Lillian's.

While many bird guides may mention conservation status of the birds they are showing, this book has an entire chapter, "Research and Conservation." Matt is the founder of the Finch Research Network. He's written finch species accounts for breeding bird atlases and the Birds of the World database.

Even if I never catch the forest finches this winter, the "Guide to Finches" also has 12 pages of insights into house finches, my daily backyard visitors.

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

