



Cheyenne-High Plains
Audubon Society

March 2026 "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 2025-2026

Lorie Chesnut, President

Grant Frost, Vice president

Kirk Miller, Secretary

Chuck Seniawski, Treasurer

Kurt Warmbier, Conservation

Sarah Grace Delgado, Education

Historian, Open

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

Pete Arnold, Audubon Rockies Board

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 17, 6:00 p.m. – Cheyenne Audubon program – Elizabeth Wommack on Vulture Watch Wyoming

(Don't be a turkey, come learn about vultures!)

in the Trout Room at the Game and Fish headquarters,

5400 Bishop Boulevard, Cheyenne.

(Use the parking lot and door on the east side of the building).

Cheyenne Audubon invites the public for a free talk by Elizabeth Wommack on Turkey Vultures in Wyoming and the community science project, "Vulture Watch Wyoming," to learn more about them.

The talk will also provide training for identifying and aging Turkey Vultures, and discuss why they are important to the ecosystem in Wyoming, and the history of our understanding of these vultures in the state. Everyone attending will be able to help Vulture Watch Wyoming to collect observations and counts.



Turkey Vulture: Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Wommack

Dr. Elizabeth (Beth)

Wommack is the staff curator and collections manager at the University of Wyoming Museum of Vertebrates. Her research focuses on understanding phenotypic variation and behavior of birds of prey. She also works to preserve, curate, and understand the diversity of all vertebrate groups in Wyoming.

Through a collaboration with the Biodiversity Institute, Beth helps lead Vulture Watch Wyoming, a community science program that is designed to gather data to improve our knowledge of this vital scavenger across the state. Online training information is available at the University of Wyoming Biodiversity Institute website under the Community Science tab.

March 17, 4:30 p.m. We will have a no-host dinner with the speaker at Hacienda Guadalajara, 317 E Lincolnway, Cheyenne, WY 82001 at 4:30 p.m.

Please let Barb Gorges know if you are planning to join us for dinner so that we can reserve enough room at the restaurant. Text or email Barb at 307-287-4952 or bgorges4@msn.com.

March 24, 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 Laramie County Library in the Sage Room

March 27, 8:00 a.m. – Country Club Bird Survey

Contact Vicki Herren to be on the email notice list: 307-256-2043 or Vickiblue@hotmail.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 Vicki know you are coming.

March 28, 1:00 p.m. – “The Lives of Sandhill Cranes” at the Goshen County Public Library (2001 E. A St, Torrington)

Senior Wildlife Biologist Grant Frost (Wyoming Game and Fish Department) will talk about this annual migration spectacle that has taken place for millions of years along a narrow portion of the Platte River. While many visit Central Nebraska to view the migration, you can also enjoy the cranes at Table Mountain Wildlife Habitat Management Area in eastern Goshen County.

Sandhill Cranes are considered “living fossils” with evidence of their migration dating back 10 million years in Central Nebraska. You will learn about the Central Flyway and Sandhill Crane migration, how Sandhill Cranes raise their young (called “Colts”), and the future of the species.

After the presentation, you can visit Table Mountain yourself to view the cranes or join the Cheyenne-High Plain Audubon Chapter for a field trip to view the cranes at 4:30 p.m. that same evening. More information will be provided after the presentation.

March 28, 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 will rendezvous at about 4:15 p.m. at the check station on Co. Rd. 42, about 3/4 mile west of US 85 and the Pheasant Farm.

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.

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.



Sandhill Cranes: Photo by Curt Warmbier

AARP and Audubon bring virtual birdwatching series to Wyoming

“For the Birds: From Backyard to Binoculars”, an AARP Wyoming-sponsored virtual series in partnership with the Audubon of the Rockies, helps you spot, identify and track birds of the West by using simple observation skills, digital birding tools and migration insights.

Each session builds confidence without jargon or pressure — perfect for beginners and curious watchers alike.

The series is free, and there is no need to be an AARP member or over age 50 to participate. To register for the event, use your aarp.org account, or visit events.aarp.org/event/forthebirds/. You will receive an email with the Zoom link before the session.

The sessions are led by Zach Hutchinson, community science coordinator for Audubon Rockies, who brings deep knowledge of bird identification, migration behavior and modern birding tools — especially digital resources that make bird watching easier and more accurate than ever.

The sessions all run from 10-11 a.m. MDT and include:

March 27 — A trivia-based kickoff

April 3 — An introduction to birdwatching

April 10 — Identification session

April 17 — Tools of the trade and digital birding

April 24 — Where to look for birds in Wyoming and the West

Explore other Wyoming events and visit AARP Wyoming on Demand to view recordings of any classes.

Chapter News

Chapter President's message

Chapter President's Message

I would like to start with warm congratulations to the Habitat Hero Committee for an outstanding 12th Habitat Hero Workshop. The room was packed, the speakers were interesting and relevant, and the hands-on experiences were appreciated by many. What a great way to welcome spring! Thanks to all of the committee members with special thanks to Mark Gorges, Chair.

We have wonderful news to share with you. During the month of March, the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies will be installing our chapter's first ever Motus Wildlife Tracking System in the Bluffs, south of the town of Pine Bluffs. We hope to have it installed before migration peaks in April, May, and June.

This is an ideal location, just north of the Pawnee National Grasslands and a “bird oasis” within the prairie habitat. Special thanks to Mayor Dennis Michaud (also a birder!), former Mayor Justin Fornstrom, members of Pine Bluffs City Council, and Wanda and Jeremy Manley, for making this possible. Thanks also to Wyoming Game and Fish for providing funding for the equipment and installation. What an amazing partnership!

We will share more information about the Motus Wildlife Tracking Systems and plans are underway for a field trip to the site later this year. If you want to learn more about Motus and how it tracks wildlife, check out this website: motus.org.

All of this work is made possible by you, our members and friends. Thank you for your dedication to our organization. Without you, none of this would be possible.

Happy birding!

Lorie Wayne Chesnut, Chapter President

Other Chapter Board Activities:

Recap of February program/book talk: "Poisoning the Well"

By Barb Gorges

Sharon Udasin, co-author of "Poisoning the Well: How Forever Chemicals Contaminated America," was our guest speaker for our February program. We also invited Clint Bassett, Cheyenne Board of Public Utilities water quality manager.

Sharon, who had to Zoom in because she and her family tested positive for Covid, gave a brief overview of her book, including sound clips from her interviews with people negatively affected by PFAS and related toxic forever chemicals. Her book shines a light on particular cases and how people are affected with severe diseases and how they fight back:

--PFAS from factory waste in rivers. So many of these chemicals are used in manufacturing going way back to the Du Pont family.

--PFAS in fire-fighting foam in groundwater, primarily from airport and military aviation firefighting training. The example is from Colorado Springs.

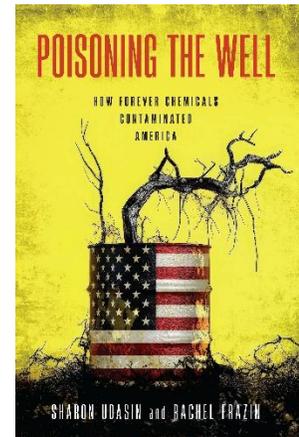
--PFAS from spreading solids from sewage treatment plants on farm fields. It gets in the plants farmers grow, whether for livestock or people, and makes both sick, as well as wildlife.

There are several ways to filter PFAS from drinking water, most cost-effectively at the municipal level. It's expensive. And then what do you do with the chemicals collected? Researchers are looking for ways to defuse them.

Sharon looked up Cheyenne's water quality statistics. They are available at <https://www.cheyennebopu.org/>. BOPU has tested for several PFAS chemicals and has not been able to detect any, at the testing level available, Clint said. Long ago, BOPU asked the U.S. Forest Service not to use fire-fighting foam within the watershed providing our city water. And we also don't have farm fields spread with toxins in our city's wellfield west of town.

However, there is contaminated groundwater on the northwest side of Cheyenne, from the base and airport, and private well owners should have their water tested. Lindsay Patterson, Emerging Contaminants Coordinator for the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality, who also attended the meeting, said owners can contact her for help through the PFAS Outreach Initiative by email, Lindsay.Patterson@wyo.gov.

If you order Sharon's book directly from the publisher, Island Press, islandpress.org/books/poisoning-well, and use the code POISONED, you can get a 20 percent discount.



Lions Park Pollinator Patch - Cheyenne Birds and Pollinators Need Your Help!

- Are you planning to thin out the plants in your garden next May?
- Do you enjoy gardening?
- Would you volunteer to help us water these plants this summer at Lions Park?

The Cheyenne-High Plains Audubon Society (CHPAS) needs about 45 plants to create a Pollinator Patch surrounding the new "Place for Pollinators" interpretive sign. We want to create a small "meadow" where none currently exists.

We hope to expand this area in future years, bringing more color and plant diversity to the park.

CHPAS and the City of Cheyenne Parks and Recreation staff have identified 18 species for this area that will bloom throughout the growing season and provide



The site in the park

foraging opportunities for a wide variety of pollinators and birds.

Next time you are in Lions Park, check out the new sign and the future Pollinator Patch semi-circle around it. We need 2 or 3 plants of each of these 18 species for the Lions Park Pollinator Patch. For a listing of plants go to: https://cheyenneaudubon.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/pollinator-patch-species_lions-park.pdf

We also need help watering these new plants until they are established. We will water at least twice weekly, depending on rainfall. We are planning a planting day on June 6; more information on that in May.

Please let us know if you would like to help us with our Pollinator Patch by contacting CHPAS by email at cheyenneaudubon@gmail.com.

The birds, bees, and bugs thank you!

Inside look at the Program Committee

By Barb Gorges, Program Chair

Arguably, the backbone of our Audubon chapter is made up of our monthly field trips and the programs at our meetings, buttressed by our advocacy, education, science and hands-on conservation work.

As the chapter's current program chair, looking to retire, or at least hand off some of the work, I thought I would explain what I do so you can see if any of it fits you.

Late spring I make a list of the dates of the third Tuesdays, September - November and January - April. Then about mid-summer, I look at my list of possible speakers. This list comes from recommendations from board members, other chapter members, things I've read, things the chapter is involved in. I add to it all the time. I make sure September is covered as soon as possible, but there's no need to have all the dates filled right away; it's good to leave a little room for timely topics that come up--and even rescheduling snowed-out meetings.

I recently updated the list of past programs. It's a long list of institutions, agencies, organizations, authors, photographers, travelers - plenty of inspiration right there. I've been known to call or email and ask if the UW Zoology and Physiology Department has any grad students that have bird studies they'd like to present.

I do not change our meeting dates to accommodate speakers, unless it is outside our regular schedule, May - August. Eventually, speakers have a date that fits us.

Mark Gorges has been making room reservations for us at the library, usually right on the 90th day before our meeting dates; the earliest the reservations are open. This year, we've been skunked three times by the library's own scheduled events. We are currently lobbying the library for partnership status since we hold free, public, educational programs rather than chapter business meetings. If you know anyone on the library staff or board, please put in a good word for us.

I contact potential speakers by email, explaining our program's dates available, talk length (30-60 minutes), venue, AV available, and that the chapter will buy them dinner. One or two months before a scheduled talk, I contact the speaker again for their talk title and description, their bio and a photo (and their dinner choice). I edit the information sent for the newsletter (by the first), reminder emails and news releases (at least two weeks out).

The fun part of the job is meeting the speaker for dinner--such interesting people. We have been able to make use of Zoom when necessary if a speaker can't come in person, but we'd rather not. After dinner we make sure the speaker can find the library. I often jump in their front passenger seat to give them directions.

At the meeting room we usually shuffle a few chairs and tables and get the AV set up, and sometimes it takes Plan C to get the speaker's PowerPoint on the screen. My last job is to get us all out the door before the library closes.

If you are good with a calendar and like meeting interesting people, Program Chair is the job for you! Email me, bgorges4@msn.com.

Volunteer with the Chapter

CHPAS welcomes anyone who cares about birds and their environments to join us in volunteer activities; we have many ongoing projects. Just email us at cheyenneaudubon@gmail.com and let us know of your interest.

Education and Conservation

Chapter Grants

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

Habitat Hero



2026 Habitat Hero Workshop, Report

The 12th annual workshop was a great success, and everything ran very smoothly. Reviewing the evaluations from the participants, our speakers were well received with comments including: excellent, very informative, inspiring information, great ideas, excellent topics, etc. As always, we got high marks for the accommodations and the lunch and snacks.

All the break-out areas were busy during coffee breaks and through the afternoon. The hands-on activities were very busy.

A big thank you to everyone who helped with the day's activities. You can find YouTube recordings and Power Points from the workshop at: <https://cheyenneaudubon.org/2026-habit-hero-workshop/>.

Bird and Conservation News

News from Audubon Rockies

Check out the Audubon Rockies News for up-to-date information on conservation issues in our part of the West.

For the latest update go to: <https://www.audubon.org/rockies/news>

February 21 - Field Trip Report, Curt Gowdy State Park

Fourteen people participated in the field trip. Four sites in Curt Gowdy were surveyed. Fourteen species were seen as reported on eBird.

Canada Goose
Common Merganser
Golden Eagle
Bald Eagle
Downy Woodpecker
Steller's Jay
Black-billed Magpie
Common Raven
Mountain Chickadee
White-breasted Nuthatch
Pygmy Nuthatch
Red-Breasted Nuthatch
Red Crossbill
Cassin's Finch



Cassin's Finch: Photo by Kurt Warmbier

February 27 – Cheyenne Country Club Survey Results

Observers:5

7:58 a.m., Duration 1 hr, 53 min

Distance 2.05 mi

19 species +3 other taxa, 204 individual birds

Cackling Goose 17
Canada Goose 45
Gadwall 8
Mallard 30
Ring-necked Duck 2
Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon) 7
Eurasian Collared-Dove 3
American Coot 1
Larus sp. 8
Accipitrine hawk sp. 1
Northern Flicker 2
Black-billed Magpie 5
American Crow 7
Mountain Chickadee 1
Horned Lark 8
White-breasted Nuthatch 1
Brown Creeper 1
European Starling 9
House Finch 1
Dark-eyed Junco 3
Red-winged Blackbird 4
Passerine sp. 40



Red-winged Blackbird: Photo by Mark Gorges



This female mountain bluebird shares the same electric blue color as the males, but only on her tail. Mountain bluebirds are regularly seen in southeastern Wyoming as early as late February. Photo by Mark Gorges

Birds give mixed seasonal messages this year

By Barb Gorges

I've been waiting for winter weather to start since the end of October and now it is the month that spring officially begins and I feel I've missed it.

Yes, we've had a couple episodes of single digit temperatures and road closures, but we haven't had the usual snow that interferes with our schedules and makes us take time to clear driveways and sidewalks.

February 18, a day before the late February snowstorm, though its 3 inches hardly seem to rate that designation, I had three seasonal signs from birds. The first, as I rounded the south end of Sloans Lake at Lions Park, where the cattails are, was the sound of at least two male red-winged blackbirds singing. Mid-February is a bit early for them so maybe they were reacting to all the unseasonably warm weather further south. The females migrate later, so hopefully they weren't also here that early. February 22, I walked past the cattails again but didn't hear any blackbirds.

February 18 at the park I also first heard and then saw a Townsend's solitaire. Its wintery single note call made me look up and there it was, a plain gray bird perched at the tip of one of the large evergreens by the Children's Village. If it thought it was spring, it would be heading for the mountains and singing to attract mates and defend territory.

The same day at Curt Gowdy State Park, hiking the high ground of the northwest corner with friends, stopping to catch our breath on a long uphill, movement in the shrubs ahead of us caught our attention. Sparks of bright blue lifted into the air and quickly descended. Kim tried counting and came up with 13 mountain bluebirds before a breeze took them all out of view. Mountain bluebirds winter as far north as southern Colorado. Showing up here at the end of February is not unusual. Pretty soon we better make sure our bluebird nest boxes are in order.

A couple days after the snowstorm, I was back up at Curt Gowdy with the Cheyenne – High Plains Audubon Society for a bird watching hike. This time there was a couple inches of snow on the trails. I wore an additional layer because birdwatching is not nearly as warming an activity as hiking—there's a lot of stopping and scanning.

It was a beautiful day, sunny, not much wind up a little creek, and soon we found birds flitting in the trees and shrubs. It seemed like every small bird I could pin down with my binoculars was a mountain chickadee—the one with a black cap but also with thick white eyebrows.

Small birds travel in mixed flocks this time of year and the chickadees were traveling with white-breasted nuthatches and pygmy nuthatches. We caught a glimpse of Cassin's finches, cousin to the house finches at my backyard birdfeeder.

One of the Audubon chapter members visiting Curt Gowdy earlier in the week had reported an American dipper in the creek between Granite and Crystal reservoirs. This is a unique bird that dives into rushing streams to find food. We parked at the Middle Kingdom trailhead to hike the creek. It was flowing, but it was probably covered with more ice from the recent cold temperatures than when the dipper was seen. No luck.

However, when we began hiking in from the parking area, three large raptors zoomed into view, low down over the trail ahead of us before throwing themselves back up and off over the ridge: golden eagles!

Meanwhile, in our backyard, Mark and I have been recording the birds visiting our feeder. Usually, it is hanging under our patio roof but after 30-some years the squirrels started making the jump from the railing onto it, ruining it for the birds. Instead, Mark put up a pole in the middle of the yard with two hooks, one for a tube full of sunflower seed hearts and the other for a cage of suet. On the pole underneath is a cone that prevents the squirrels from climbing up.

The set up is farther from the window and the birds are often more backlit, making casual, naked-eye differentiation between house sparrows and house finches more difficult. But we've been graced with three northern flickers nearly every day, flicking wing linings, each a slightly different shade between red and yellow.

And finally, my favorites, the American goldfinches, started coming again mid-February. We always have thistle seed out for them. I hope they stay until they lose their dull winter feathers and get their bright yellow feathers once again.

Barb Gorges is the author of "Cheyenne Birds by the Month" and "The Best of Cheyenne Bird Banter" www.YuccaRoadPress.com. Her previous columns are at <http://cheyennebirdbanter.wordpress.com>. Contact her at bgorges4@msn.com.

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