



September 2021 "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 2020-2021

Wanda Manley, 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

Art Anderson, Important Bird Areas

Elaine Grings, Social Media

Barb Gorges, Programs, Publicity

Lorie Chesnut, Hospitality, Website

Jordyn Sorrow, Student Advisory Member

Advocacy, open

Terry Harper, 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

Please become a CHPAS member (Have you renewed your membership for 2021-2022?)

Membership renewal letters were in the mail by mid-August.

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 21, 7 p.m. – Program: Cottonwood Room, Laramie County Library: Pete Arnold's photographic tour of Costa Rica

Chapter board member Pete Arnold and his wife Ruth toured Costa Rica for two weeks in January 2020. While there, Pete took 9,000 photos and added 125 birds to his life list. He'll share a select number of those photos and birds, and the stories from the trip.

Pete says he has been snapping pictures for 65 years and is a member of the Cheyenne Camera Club. He is also a member of the Audubon Rockies board.



Pete photographing strutting Sage Grouse with Audubon Rockies near Pinedale and one of his Costa Rica pictures

September 24, 8 a.m. – Country Club Bird Survey

Contact Chuck Seniawski to take part or to be on his email notice list: 307-638-6519 or chuckski@aol.com. The count will start in the County Clubhouse's main parking lot.

September 25, 8 a.m. – Field Trip to Wyoming Hereford Ranch

We will meet at the Wyoming Hereford Ranch office, 1101 Hereford Ranch Road (white stucco building with red metal roof) at 8 a.m.

What can we expect this time of year? That depends on the weather. If it stays warm through the entire month, we could have some of our summer birds who have not headed south or some migrating birds who are taking their time on the way south. Early winter weather could bring in some of our winter birds.

We will be done by noon.

Please contact Grant Frost at 307-343-2024 if you plan to join us, so that we have a list of those expected and can let you know if the plans change for any reason such as bad weather.



Dark-eyed Junco, a winter bird by Mark Gorges

September 28, 6:30 p.m. – Board Meeting

Contact Wanda Manley, cheyenneaudubon@gmail.com, if you would like to participate in helping to plan chapter activities.

October 19, 7 p.m. – Program: Laramie County Conservation District Project on Dry Creek with Jeff Geyer

The program is planned for the Laramie County Library in the Cottonwood Room. This watershed project is partially funded with grants from both the Cheyenne High Plains Audubon Society and the National Audubon Society. For further details on this project see Barb's Bird Banter article at the end of this newsletter.

Chapter News

Chapter President's message



Dear CHPAS Members and Friends,

Welcome to September everyone!! Though the days are still warm, the mornings have the cool bite of fall. The kids are back in school and the rush of summer is over. I hope you all had a memorable and enjoyable summer.

CHPAS will be resuming our in-person meetings on the 3rd Tuesday at 7:00 pm at the Laramie County Library Cottonwood Room. We are suspending the cookie and drink table for a while but feel to bring your own with you. We will Zoom these presentations also and hope to have links to them on our website as well.

First up on September 21st is Pete Arnold with a travelogue of his visit to Costa Rica. You all know Pete is a fabulous photographer, so you won't want to miss this one!

On a sad note, Mary Ostlund, our longtime CHPAS member and supporter has passed away. Many of you probably saw the obituary in one of the state newspapers, but if you didn't, go to this website: <https://www.schradercares.com/obituary/Mary-Ostlund>. She was a fascinating woman and the obituary provides a peek into her amazing life.

I will close for now; we hope to see you in September for Pete's program.

Wanda Manley
CHPAS President

Cheyenne - High Plains Audubon Society logo, Mountain Plover, drawn by Michelle LaGory.

Advocacy Network

Volunteer with Environment for the Americas

Want a meaningful way to give to conservation, diversity, equity and inclusion? Join us virtually or in our office (fully vaccinated please!) to support our work.

- Help with everything from preparing Thank You notes to our partners to checking the inventory of our education materials.

- Become an ambassador and help us carry education materials to Bird Day sites.

- Be a volunteer mentor and visit one of our interns to offer support.

Join us! Send an email to info@environmentamericas.org and become part of our work.

Education and Conservation

Chapter Grants

Our chapter provided the town of Fort Laramie with a \$500 grant to purchase plants for a Habitat Hero garden in front of their town hall. They got all the infrastructure installed earlier this year but held off planting in the heat of the summer. As of the end of August the planting has been done.



Here are two pictures from our visit before the planting.

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



Habitat Hero



Winter Interest

Don't cut back your foliage in the fall. Let it stand in your garden through the winter. It will catch snow, providing free moisture and maybe a blanket to protect some plants from freezing. When your spring bulbs start to come up, cut back the old vegetation and chop it and drop it as mulch.

Save The Date

January 29th we will be hosting the 8th Annual Habitat Hero Workshop at Laramie County Community College. The committee will be meeting in September to finalize an agenda with a working title of "Nurture the Prairie in Town and Country". Watch for more details in the coming months.

Bird News

August 14 – Report: Field Trip to Table Mountain and Fort Laramie

By Mark Gorges

Seven of us spent about 2 hours at the Table Mountain Wildlife Habitat Management Area in Goshen County. Most of the ponds were dry, but the two where the water was concentrated had plenty of birds. We then moved on to the town of Fort Laramie to view the site where a native pollinator garden is being established in front of the town hall.

We made notes of the bird species in town, at Fort Laramie National Historic Site where we ate our picnic lunches and while driving. That list included: Bald Eagle Ferruginous Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk Swainson's Hawk, American Kestrel, Loggerhead Shrike, American Robin, Blue Jay, American Goldfinch, House Wren, Yellow Warbler, Chimney Swift, House Sparrow and Eurasian Collared-Dove.

26 species seen at Table Mountain

Canada Goose 1
Wood Duck 3
Blue-winged Teal 50
Gadwall 2
Pied-billed Grebe 5
Mourning Dove 2
American Coot 6
Sandhill Crane 5
Killdeer 3
Baird's Sandpiper 15
Least Sandpiper 2
Wilson's Phalarope 2
Spotted Sandpiper 2
Lesser Yellowlegs 1
Ring-billed Gull 3
Double-crested Cormorant 7
American White Pelican 8
Great Blue Heron 9
White-faced Ibis 13
Great Horned Owl 2
Horned Lark 7
Barn Swallow 3
Marsh Wren 2
Lark Bunting 2
Yellow-headed Blackbird 1
Red-winged Blackbird 17



Great Horned Owl at Table Mountain by Mark Gorges

August 27 – Cheyenne Country Club survey results

By Chuck Seniawski

6:45 AM - 9:45 AM

Protocol: Traveling

3.2 mile(s)

Checklist Comments: 60 degrees. Clear skies. Calm. Art Anderson, Grant Frost, Mark Gorges, Vicki Herren, Greg Johnson, Jerry Johnson, Chuck Seniawski, Pete Sokolosky.

31 species (+2 other taxa)

Gadwall 5

Mallard 55

Eurasian Collared-Dove 2

Mourning Dove 1

Common Nighthawk 1

Spotted Sandpiper 2

American White Pelican 3

Great Blue Heron 1

Turkey Vulture 1

Great Horned Owl 2

Belted Kingfisher 1

Downy/Hairy Woodpecker 1

Northern Flicker 20

Western Wood-Pewee 4

Least Flycatcher 1

Empidonax sp. 5

Black-billed Magpie 5

American Crow 14

Mountain Chickadee 1

Barn Swallow 9

Cliff Swallow 2

Red-breasted Nuthatch 9

White-breasted Nuthatch 1

European Starling 10

American Robin 8

House Sparrow 4

House Finch 2

American Goldfinch 6

Chipping Sparrow 6

Red-winged Blackbird 3

Yellow Warbler 1

Townsend's Warbler 1

Wilson's Warbler 14



Common Nighthawk keeping an eye on us, by Mark Gorges

View this checklist online at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S93804570>

Dry Creek restoration to improve hydrology and habitat

By Barb Gorges

Jeff Geyer is fixing Cheyenne's Dry Creek.

First, how did it get its name? Jeff, Laramie County Conservation District water specialist, told me that unlike Crow Creek, our other stream that starts in the mountains, Dry Creek starts somewhere on the F.E. Warren Air Force Base. He said it never had much of a channel, with the

water frequently spreading out in flat, temporarily marshy areas and percolating into the water table below as it flowed after a rain or snow event.

Fast-forward 160 years. The Greenway now follows Dry Creek as it crosses northern Cheyenne west to east, parallel to Dell Range Boulevard. At North College Drive it heads southeast to the new East Park and crosses under I-80. It joins Crow Creek near where the sewage treatment plant is today on Campstool Road.

What's changed is the Dry Creek watershed which drains two-thirds of Cheyenne. More land surfaces surrounding the creek have been paved and built on over the last 30 to 40 years as Cheyenne expands. Jeff says you can see the change on Google Earth (use the free Pro version you can download).

Snowmelt and rainfall aren't absorbed by pavement and roofs, so they run off into Dry Creek, making much higher flows. Higher flows are faster. Faster flows are straighter. Straighter flows have more energy to erode the soil. Between Campstool and I-80, that energy cut 5-foot deep banks and sent good soil into Crow Creek where it gets deposited in the downstream reservoirs—not good for reservoirs, or the fish in Crow Creek.

In 2019, Jeff started to fix a small section of Dry Creek that will make a difference. The idea is to slow the creek down by increasing its sinuosity which will reduce the energy of the water. The water flow needs to look more like a traveling snake—looping to one side and then to the other, rather than a straight stick.

Mathematically, a straight stream has a sinuosity of 1—the ratio of the distance the water travels is 1 to 1 with the length of the valley. Jeff would like to see a sinuosity of 1.2 or 1.4, meaning that in a 100 feet of valley length, the water would loop an extra 20 to 40 feet.

The banks of a sinuous stream will still erode a bit, but much of the dirt will be deposited in the next curve—slow moving streams can't carry as much soil suspended in the water.

While some earth work was required to reduce the 5-foot cutbank in places to give Dry Creek access to the flood plain during rainfall or snowmelt events, much of the sinuosity building is being done with willow stems, logs, posts and stakes.

At just the right location and angle in the stream bottom, Jeff and volunteers pounded in stakes in a line and then wove willow stems, forming a "Beaver Dam Analog." The willows were from a nearby location where they die back and new willows continue growing.

The woven willows are like snow fence that slows the wind, making the snow drop out into drifts. This structure slows water carrying dirt so the dirt will drop and form a bar where willows will grow, and their roots will stabilize the stream bed. There is already a nice stand of coyote willows in one spot.

Up on the flood plain are "Post Assisted Log Structures." Logs are pinned to the flood plain to make a rough passage that will also slow water down.

Long term, slower stream flow will allow more water around the creek to be absorbed and stored. That underground water flows like surface water and will eventually resurface in the creek, recharging it. Jeff is hoping for a little water to be always in Dry Creek—maybe it will need a new name.

Changing Dry Creek's hydrology, Jeff also expects to provide the moisture needed for more diverse vegetation for wildlife habitat. Mule deer and ermine have been seen. Cheyenne Audubon members have been making bird observations. Lorie Chesnut, a member, was instrumental in obtaining a \$3000 grant through the National Audubon Society's Western Water Network Grants this year that paid for the stakes and native plants.

As Jeff surveyed the conservation district-managed pasture that surrounds the first phase of the hydrology project (and a second phase that has just begun to the south), he frowned at all the 6-foot-tall mullein stalks and the other non-native weeds. Much more work will be required to transform the pasture into prairie more useful to ground-nesting birds and other wildlife, bringing it back to its formerly lush and flower-filled self.

****Barb Gorges invites readers to share their bird sightings and stories. Email bgorges4@msn.com or search <http://cheyennebirdbanter.wordpress.com>. She is the author of "Cheyenne Birds by the Month," www.YuccaRoadPress.com.



Jeff Geyer, water specialist with the Laramie County Conservation District, explains how a “Beaver Dam Analog” will improve Dry Creek hydrology. Photo by Barb Gorges.

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

