



November 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.*

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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

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

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



November 16, 7 p.m. – Program: Eric Dalton, "Common Outdoor Ground widens scope from trails to wildlife-friendly projects" - Cottonwood Room, Laramie County Library or Zoom

Common Outdoor Ground (COG) was started by a group of outdoor recreationists in Laramie several years ago as an umbrella organization to spearhead volunteer projects in the Medicine Bow National Forest. The emphasis has been on trail work and mountain biking in particular. However, it is branching

out beyond the National Forest and to projects like making fences wildlife friendly and is looking for other opportunities, including improving birding access and habitat.

Eric Dalton is president of COG and its only board member from outside Laramie, so far. He appreciates Wyoming's abundant public lands after an Air Force career that took him to many countries with little. After making landscaping and gardening improvements at his Cheyenne home, this year he became a certified Habitat Hero through Audubon Rockies.

Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87293355411?pwd=TGhTb25wOWVUWWdCb0prRGRlZDhtUT09>.

November 20, 9 a.m. – Field Trip at Lions Park in Cheyenne

Think of this as a primer for the Christmas Bird Count. We plan to leave meet at the parking lot next to the Children's Village at the Cheyenne Botanic Gardens in Lions Park at 9 a.m.

We will be looking for wintering birds in the park including waterfowl such as geese, ducks and grebes on the lake. We will probably spend about two hours birding, but you can leave whenever you need to.

Please contact Mark Gorges at 307-287-4953 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.



Townsend's Solitaire by Mark Gorges

November 23, 7 p.m. – Board Meeting: Laramie County Library, Windflower Room, on the 3rd floor

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

November 26, 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.

December 18 - Cheyenne Christmas Bird Count

More information in our December newsletter.

December 19 – Guernsey/Ft. Laramie Christmas Bird Count

Chapter News

Chapter President's message



Greetings everyone,

I hope this finds you all bundled up and strolling around outside in the wet and misty day. I love these mornings; it is so incredibly quite outside. Or maybe you are more the hot tea and Sunday paper type on these fall mornings. Either way, the weather is changing for a few days.

CHPAS has another busy month ahead for you. Eric Dalton will be our speaker on November 16th at the Laramie County Library and on Zoom. Eric is with Common Outdoor Ground, a community organization providing

volunteer support for sustainability of outdoor spaces in southeast Wyoming. It promises to be an interesting talk about pooling resources and labor to improve trails and campsites on public lands in our area.

We will have a field trip this month to prepare us for looking for winter birds before the Christmas Bird Count. We are planning to schedule our future field trips to be on the 3rd Saturday every month so it will be easy to save those days on our calendars. Let us know if you have any thoughts about that change. Chuck will also be heading up the bird survey at the Country Club on the last Friday of the month – Black Friday.

Many thanks go out to Jeff Geyer (Laramie County Conservation District) for his talk about rehabilitating Dry Creek. It's a big project with lots of moving parts, but eventually it should help the sedimentation in Crow Creek. It will also reestablish native habitat along that stretch of Dry Creek.

We're looking for an Education Chairperson to join the CHPAS board. We have money to support projects in schools or school districts. If you have a project in mind, please reach out to one of us.

Have a great month everyone; we hope to see you at one of the CHPAS events.

Wanda
CHPAS President

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

Education and Conservation

Chapter Grants

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

Habitat Hero



Save The Date - January 29: "How to Nurture the Prairie in Town and Country"

We will be hosting the 8th Annual Habitat Hero Workshop at Laramie County Community College.
Keynote: Aaron Maier (Range Ecologist for Audubon Rockies)– Regenerative Ag and Landscape Practices (soil health, carbon cycling, small acreage or garden).
Watch for registration details next month. Other topics:

Prairie Birds and Their Needs
Buffalo-grass Lawns
Soil Testing: at home in a jar or by a lab

Winter Sowing
Individual Site Planning Q&A
Native Plants

Bird News

Project FeederWatch 2021-2022 season begins Nov. 13

The season runs through April 30. To find out how to take part in this 35-year-old Cornell Lab of Ornithology community science project, visit <https://feederwatch.org>. Sign up any time this fall, record your feeder birds over two days and as often as once a week.

Audubon Rockies Blog

Be sure to check out this blog at: <https://rockies.audubon.org/blog>. They have many informative stories about conservation issues in the west.

October 9 - October Big Day/World Migratory Big Day

Compiled from eBird.org by Mark Gorges

For the October Big Day, nearly 33,000 birders around the world enjoyed birds. October Big Day contributors joined from a record-setting 195 countries and reported 7,269 species, making October 9th the biggest day in October birding history!

This year's global team consisted of more than 800 eBirders in Africa, 2,000 in Asia, 2,500 in Europe, 5,300 in Central and South America and 23,000 in North America. These tremendous efforts showcase the power of birds to bring people together.

October Big Day by the numbers

- 32,670 people went birding
- 78,024 checklists submitted
- 7,269 species recorded
- 43,153 photos submitted to the Macaulay Library
- 1,170 audio recordings submitted to the Macaulay Library
- 108,000 Merlin users saved nearly 15,000 bird identifications

Explore more October Big Day results at: <https://ebird.org/news/october-big-day-2021-a-world-united-by-birds>

In Laramie County, 5 individuals made 10 eBird submissions at 9 separate locations. Thirty-four species and one other taxa were reported in the county.

Canada Goose
Blue-winged Teal
Northern Shoveler
Gadwall
American Wigeon
Mallard
Ring-necked Duck

Pied-billed Grebe
 Rock Pigeon
 Eurasian Collared-Dove
 Killdeer
 Wilson's Snipe
 Ring-billed Gull
 Great Blue Heron
 Sharp-shinned/Cooper's Hawk
 Bald Eagle
 Red-tailed Hawk
 Belted Kingfisher
 Northern Flicker
 Blue Jay
 Black-billed Magpie
 American Crow
 Mountain Chickadee
 Red-breasted Nuthatch
 Rock Wren
 European Starling
 American Robin
 House Sparrow
 House Finch
 American Goldfinch
 Dark-eyed Junco
 White-crowned Sparrow
 Song Sparrow
 Western Meadowlark
 Yellow-rumped Warbler



Rock Wren at Little America by Mark Gorges

October 23 – Report: Field Trip to Fossil Creek Reservoir & Regional Open Space, Larimer, Colorado

Compiled by Mark Gorges

Seven chapter members went on the trip south to Fossil Creek Reservoir. It was overcast most of the day, but it did warm up as the day progressed. Seeing over 1,000 birds at the reservoir was impressive.

35 species (+1 other taxa) in the morning and 27 species in afternoon

45 species total

Canada Goose 300

Northern Shoveler 73

Gadwall 4

American Wigeon 15

Mallard 189

Northern Pintail 4

Green-winged Teal 118

Canvasback 3

Redhead 80

Lesser Scaup 2

Bufflehead 47

Common Merganser 8

Ruddy Duck 2

Pied-billed Grebe 4

Horned Grebe 2
 Eared Grebe 1
 Western Grebe 58
 American Coot 40
 American Avocet 2
 Killdeer 23
 peep sp. 6
 Long-billed Dowitcher 5
 Wilson's Phalarope 2
 Ring-billed Gull 44
 Herring Gull 3
 Lesser Black-backed Gull 1
 Double-crested Cormorant 5
 American White Pelican 90
 Great Blue Heron 2
 Northern Harrier 2
 Bald Eagle 1
 Red-tailed Hawk 2
 Northern Flicker 4
 American Kestrel 1
 Blue Jay 2
 Black-billed Magpie 11
 American Crow 6
 Black-capped Chickadee 1
 Horned Lark 2
 European Starling 100
 American Tree Sparrow 3
 White-crowned Sparrow 3
 Song Sparrow 3
 Western Meadowlark 4
 Red-winged Blackbird 70



Lesser Black-backed Gull at Fossil Creek by Mark Gorges

October 29 – Cheyenne Country Club survey results

By Chuck Seniawski

7:50 AM - 9:57 AM

Protocol: Traveling

3.0 mile(s)

Checklist Comments: 45 degrees. Clear. Very light breeze. Barb and Mark Gorges, Vicki Herren, Jerry Johnson, Chuck Seniawski, Pete Sokolosky.

19 species (+1 other taxa)

Canada Goose 130
 Mallard 17
 Green-winged Teal 3
 Redhead 6
 Bufflehead 2
 Cooper's Hawk 1
 Red-tailed Hawk 1
 Hairy Woodpecker 2
 Northern Flicker 7
 Black-billed Magpie 8



Red-breasted Nuthatch by Mark Gorges

American Crow 4
Red-breasted Nuthatch 6
European Starling 2
Townsend's Solitaire 1
American Robin 1
House Sparrow 6
House Finch 5
Dark-eyed Junco 9
Song Sparrow 1
passerine sp. 35 One flock of 10, another of 25. Both flying. Finch/goldfinch size, but inadequate identifying color or pattern.

View this checklist online at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S96931453>

Fall reservoir birding is a leisurely affair, mostly black and white

By Barb Gorges

Birds and birders are in a rush in spring. The birds are hurrying to get from their wintering grounds to their breeding grounds. But fall birding is as leisurely as that of the birds' migration south.

On the fourth Saturday in October, the Cheyenne Audubon field trip was to Fossil Creek Reservoir Natural Area, Ft. Collins, Colorado, about 45 miles south of Cheyenne.



Birders at Fossil Creek by Barb Gorges

A reservoir during migration seasons is the avian equivalent of a truck stop, a crossroads with each species having its own itinerary. Birders are looking for the most interesting birds, the most exotic license plates.

Since ducks, geese and other water birds placidly rest or feed (unless a bald eagle passes by), every birder gets a chance to look through a spotting scope at them. We had five scopes on this trip.

We were dismayed to see the low water level. Much of the reservoir was mudflats with Fossil Creek trickling from pond to pond. Then we realized there were four kinds of shorebirds probing in the mud.

American avocets, shorebirds, waded in shallow water. These birds of the western Great Plains are ghostly white with black wings by the time they head south for a winter mostly on beaches, including those in southern U.S. and Mexico. In spring they have cinnamon-pink heads and necks.

No need for special optics to enjoy the many American white pelicans we saw, also white with black wing markings. With wingspans of 90 to 120 inches, they fly in lines, like geese, and sometimes spiral with thermals. Another bird of the Great Plains and Intermountain West, they head south to water that stays open so they can fish.

There were rafts of gulls, almost all ring-billed, also the most common gull around Cheyenne. It prefers to nest inland in the northern states and Canada and winter inland in the south and along the Pacific and Atlantic coasts.

We also found a lesser black-backed gull. In winter they are most common along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, less common inland in the eastern half of the U.S. But the latest range map shows an influx into eastern Colorado. Perhaps the state tourism department invited them to make the trip from their summer homes located anywhere from Iceland to Siberia.

A raft of American coots, each bird the darkest slate gray accented with a bright white bill, was enjoying a day of rest in their migratory trip—or maybe not. Their range map (www.AllAboutBirds.org) shows some can be found year-round in a narrow strip along the east edge of the Rockies from Montana through Wyoming and Colorado.

Western grebes, dark gray from the top of their heads and down the back of their thin necks, but white from their chins to their breasts, were busy diving for small fish. They were stopping over, heading for the Pacific Coast, anywhere from Vancouver Island to Mexico. The range map shows them year-round inland in central Mexico too, but I don't know if that's a population of birds that doesn't migrate or if some northern birds join the locals.

Buffleheads, small black and white ducks, were bobbing around, playing a game of one-upmanship, furiously beating their wings, “standing” on their toes to look large and menacing, while raising their crests of white, then diving. They breed up in western Canada and think much of the U.S., including Cheyenne, is a lovely place to spend the winter.

There was a handful of lesser scaup, another black and white duck, but with a pale blue bill. Breeding from Alaska down to Wyoming, they head south either for the Pacific Coast or the southern states, or even the southernmost tip of Central America, or the Caribbean. Definitely not as cold tolerant as the buffleheads.

Common mergansers, the females sporting their shaggy red-feather crests, mixed with other, sleeker, redheaded ducks, including those known as redheads, plus a few canvasbacks, distinguishable by combined forehead and bill silhouettes forming straight diagonals.

In Wyoming, common mergansers may be seen year-round. Whether the same individuals stick around all year, or the ones from farther north move down for the winter, I don't know.

Redheads breed in Wyoming but this western species likes to go at least as far south as New Mexico.

Canvasbacks breed in central Colorado and north into Alaska, but they head south for winter, some only as far as southern Colorado.

Finally, yes, there were Canada geese and mallards, the most recognizable waterbirds. You will see their permanent flocks and the winter ducks like buffleheads—and birdwatchers—around Cheyenne reservoirs if there's open water this winter.



American White Pelicans stick together at Fossil Creek Reservoir, a Ft. Collins natural area in late October by Mark Gorges

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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