

December 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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Chuck Seniawski, Treasurer

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Jack Palma, Audubon Rockies
Board

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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

December 18, 8:00 a.m. – Cheyenne Christmas Bird Count

_____ American Crow	_____ Red-breasted Nuthatch	_____ Dark-eyed Junco
_____ Black-capped Chickadee	_____ White-breasted Nuthatch	_____ House Finch
_____ Mountain Chickadee	_____ European Starling	_____ House Sparrow

Other species: _____

December 18, 5:30 p.m. (5 p.m. Happy Half Hour) – Tally Party for Cheyenne Christmas Bird Count at Bella Fuoco Wood Fired Pizza, RSVP

Eric Dalton and his wife recently bought Bella Fuoco (it means “Beautiful Fire” in Italian) Wood Fired Pizza, 2115 Warren Ave. It will be a warm, cozy place to have the tally party, with the pizza oven going in the back.

Due to the limited seating (25) and kitchen size, you must preorder your dinner by Wednesday evening, **Dec. 15**, by emailing Lorie Chesnut at lwches2@gmail.com. The menu is available at <https://www.bellafuocopizza.com/>.

If you don't plan to join us for dinner, you can drop off your tallies during the “Happy Half Hour” before dinner at 5:30 p.m. or email them to Grant Frost, frostgrant2@gmail.com.

December 19, 8:00 a.m. - Guernsey/Ft. Laramie Christmas Bird Count

If you are going to join the count, please let Jane Dorn know at 307-640-4002. Also call her if the weather turns nasty; Wednesday, December 29 would be an alternate date. Bring water, lunch, warm clothes, binoculars, and a scope if you have one, and whatever you need for a day watching birds at Guernsey State Park, Ft. Laramie National Historic Site, the Oregon Trail Ruts and Hartville.

Birding on your own or watching your feeders? The center point of the 7.5-mile radius count circle is where Highway 26 crosses the Goshen County/Platte County line. Please send in your results ASAP to the count compiler, Jane Dorn, 307-640-4002, linglebird@yahoo.com.

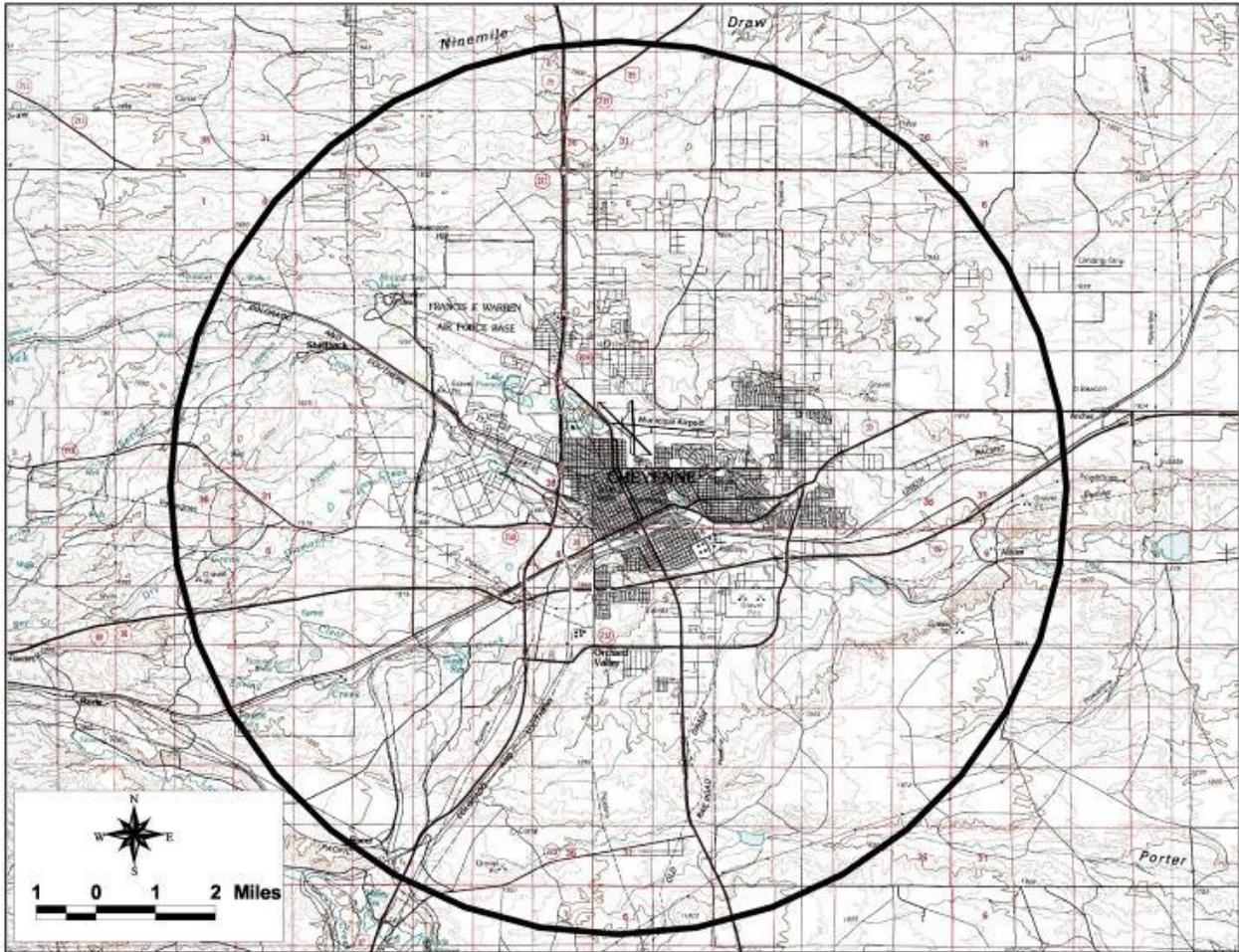
Anyone in the neighborhood of the count area is welcome to meet Jane at 8 a.m. at the Ft. Laramie Post Office, or at 9:30 a.m. at the main entrance to Guernsey State Park.

December 31, 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.

January 18, 7:00 p.m. – Program: Tanner Hoffman - Mullen Wildfire Community Science Initiative, Laramie County Library, Cottonwood Room

Map of the count circle for the Cheyenne Christmas Bird Count



Chapter News

Chapter President's message



Greetings everyone,

Wow! It's time to flip the calendar page to December. It seems 2021 flew by and now we're to the end and looking forward to 2022. It's been another year of "unprecedented" happenings, we are lucky to live here. As a bonus, we have another week of mild weather, again "unprecedented".

In December, there is no scheduled CHPAS speaker. But December 18th is our Christmas Bird Count. Check out the National Audubon Society's page (<https://www.audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count>) on this event and watch our site (<https://cheyenneaudubon.org/>) for local information. We will meet at the downtown post office (USPS) (2120 Capitol Ave) at 8:00 AM to coordinate groups and places to go.

The tally party will be at 5:30 at Bella Fuoco at 2115 Warren Ave for dinner, stories, and avian counts. The tally party requires a previous reservation as the dining area is small. I know many of you do not live within the 15-mile diameter of Cheyenne; I don't either. But please meet at the USPS and participate with the Christmas Bird Count in Cheyenne. The data collection is important for a number of reasons, and it'll be fun. Plus, you will need a break from the Christmas hubbub by then!

2021 has been a busy year for the CHPAS group. We launched the year with a Habitat Hero workshop; the Dry Creek project with LCCD required much of Lorie's time throughout the summer, and Barb coordinated the Laramie County Master Gardener's garden walk with its Habitat Hero theme. Grant led many field trips locally and in the surrounding area, and Chuck led the Country Club survey every month. Please join us and consider taking a position on the CHPAS board. There are many opportunities to enhance the bird and wildlife habitat in our area through this group. We would love to have you join us.

We have an interesting slate of people lined up for the CHPAS spring speaker series, which we will continue to offer as in-person and Zoom meetings. Watch the website for those announcements.

Wishing you Happy Holidays and a great New Year,

Wanda

CHPAS President

Nels Sostrom (1934-2021)

Nels was an active member of our chapter back in the 1990s (and probably earlier), serving as treasurer. Mark and I first met him in 1989 at the state Audubon meeting in Story.

After retiring from the state in 1993, he put more time into his art career. He is survived by his wife Anne and other family members. His obituary is available and condolences may be offered to the family at www.schradercares.com. - Barb Gorges



A painting by Nels in our house

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



8th Annual Cheyenne Habitat Hero Workshop **How to Nurture the Prairie in Town & Country**

Saturday, January 29, 2022, 8:00 am to 4:30 pm

Laramie County Community College

1400 E. College Drive, Cheyenne - Pathfinder Building

Registration: \$25 includes lunch, limit 100 people

Zoom registration for free available for morning talks only.

Morning talks:

Developing a Regenerative Land Use Ethos - Principles and Practices—Aaron Maier, Audubon Rockies Conservation Ranching Initiative Range Ecologist

The Soils in Your Garden and Landscape—Catherine Wissner, Laramie County Extension

Horticulturist

Don't be Buffaloeed into Bluegrass Turf—Jeff Geyer, Laramie County Conservation District Water Specialist

Prairie Birds and Their Needs—Zach Hutchinson, Audubon Rockies Community Naturalist

Afternoon breakout sessions:

- Winter Sowing & DIY Soil Testing
- Individual Site Planning Q&A
- Favorite Native Plants

Registration: To register for the in-person day-long workshop or for the morning Zoom, go to:

<https://rockies.audubon.org/events/how-nurture-prairie-town-and-country>

Sponsored by the Cheyenne-High Plains Audubon Society and Audubon Rockies

For additional information go to: <https://cheyenneaudubon.org/habitat-hero/> or call Mark at (307) 634-0463

Bird News

Project FeederWatch 2021-2022 season began on 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.

Global Patterns of Bird Abundance and Distribution Revealed for 1,009 Species

From eBird News

Every year the eBird Status and Trends project updates the abundance visualizations and range maps with millions of new observations submitted by eBirders to provide the most up-to-date information on the status and trends of bird populations. This year, the team modeled relative abundance for 1,009 species across the globe using data from more than 300,000 eBirders.

Find information about your favorite birds at: <https://ebird.org/science/status-and-trends>.

November 20 – Report: Field Trip to Lions Park, Cheyenne

by Mark Gorges

Twelve people took part in our outing through Lions Park. The two separate Red-tailed Hawks were a treat to see. The first one was an immature bird, this year's young, who very kindly posed for pictures in a tree and never moved as we walked by. The other was an adult who gave us all a few minutes of viewing before flying off. Just as we were getting into our cars to leave, the last 100 or so geese flew in.

8:59 AM - 11:00 AM

Traveling 1.08 miles

16 species

Cackling Goose 39
Canada Goose 160
Mallard 37
Pied-billed Grebe 1
Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon) 2
Red-tailed Hawk 2
Belted Kingfisher 1
Downy Woodpecker 2
Northern Flicker 2
American Crow 13
Mountain Chickadee 2
White-breasted Nuthatch 1
Brown Creeper 2
Townsend's Solitaire 3
House Finch 6
Dark-eyed Junco 8



Immature Red-tailed Hawk by Mark Gorges

View this checklist online at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S97830404>

November 26 – Cheyenne Country Club survey results

By Chuck Seniawski

8:00 AM - 9:43 AM

Protocol: Traveling

3.0 mile(s)

Checklist Comments: 43 degrees. Unusually warm for this time of year. Fairly calm at start, became progressively windier. Sunny. Mark Gorges, Vicki Herren, Jerry Johnson, Ray Milczewski, Chuck Seniawski.

13 species

Cackling Goose 20
Canada Goose 134
Mallard 7
Red-tailed Hawk 1
Hairy Woodpecker 1
Northern Flicker 3
Black-billed Magpie 8
American Crow 13
Mountain Chickadee 4
Red-breasted Nuthatch 2
European Starling 4
American Robin 1
American Goldfinch 2



Black-billed Magpie by Mark Gorges

View this checklist online at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S98167238>

Bird feeding safety: clean feeders, cat fencing, glass obstruction

By Barb Gorges

Winter is the most popular season for feeding birds. The Project Feederwatch season runs early November into April. See <https://feederwatch.org/> to join anytime and add your sightings.

The Christmas Bird Count has a feeder-watching component too. See <https://cheyenneaudubon.org/> to find out how to take part for free in the local count Dec. 18.

Watching birds from your window is an entertaining and affordable, even educational hobby to lighten long winters. But please keep safety in mind.

Cleanliness

Whether you choose a tube feeder, hopper feeder (looks like a little house), cage (for blocks of seed or suet) or platform feeder, make sure it is scrubbable.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology recommends every two weeks taking feeders apart and brushing out all the detritus and washing them in a diluted bleach solution. You can use your dishwasher instead. Rinse feeders well and let dry thoroughly before refilling.

Wear gloves when handling dirty feeders or wash your hands afterwards.

Seed that gets wet can harbor mold and bird diseases. If you notice any finches with disfigured faces, it's time to take down all your feeders for a week to temporarily disburse (social distance) the flock while you get them clean.

The one best seed—most nutritious and most popular—for our local seedeaters is black oil sunflower seed. But unless you can afford to buy hull-less, you will have moldering hulls below the feeder. If you feed one of the bird seed mixes, there are a lot of seeds in it our birds won't eat, and they also end up making a kind of mat you'll want to rake up regularly. At our house we hang the feeders over the patio and sweep often.

Finches like nyjer ("thistle" that doesn't sprout) seed. It is very fine, requiring tube feeders with smaller holes or a fabric "sock." The hulls are tiny and blow away. If you put out suet, make sure the weather is cold to keep it from going rancid—or dripping.

Window strikes

Birds have a hard time identifying glass. They see the reflection of sky and vegetation, smack into your window and die or are severely injured, becoming a snack for other animals. Or if two of your windows on opposite sides of your house line up, they may think they can fly through.

Your regular window screens can break the reflection and soften the impact. There are other strategies and stickers that can be stuck to the outside of the glass (see <https://abcbirds.org/glass-collisions/stop-birds-hitting-windows/>).

The easy strategy is to place your feeders within three feet of your favorite bird-watching window—or even stick a suction-cup feeder on the window itself. That way, when the sharp-shinned hawk startles your flock, none of them will be moving fast enough to hurt themselves bumping into the window.

Cats

Our cats love bird-feeding season. They sit on the windowsill for hours, entranced. But if you haven't made your felines into indoor cats yet like Lark and Lewis, please don't feed the birds.

What about the neighbors' cats? That's tricky. You might be able to convince neighbors that indoor cats are safer, healthier and more fun and that they could then take up bird feeding like you.

Realistically, you are going to have to cat-proof your birdfeeding station. While it is good to have cover, shrubs and trees, near your feeder so seed-eating birds can escape hawks, you don't want it so close cats can pounce on birds feeding on the ground.

You might try encompassing the area under the feeder, where the birds feed on the ground, with a short fence—one you can step over. The idea is that while a cat can sneak up on a flock unobserved, having to leap the fence will give the birds the visual warning they need to escape.

Water

Water is another way to attract birds--if you can keep your winter birdbath clean. It also has to stand up to freezing and thawing (unless you add a heater) and it needs to be easy to remove ice from or clean, like a flexible plastic trash can lid.

Birds should be able to reach the water when perched on the rim. Or if there is a sloping edge or sloping rock, birds will also be able to walk in for a bath.

Squirrels

Our fox squirrels are entertaining, but they can destroy birdfeeders and scarf down all your birdseed. We have a tube feeder that shuts down when any animal heavier than a finch sits on it.

Funnel-shaped barriers can be mounted on the pole below a feeder and/or placed over the top of a feeder, especially one that is hanging. Our feeders hang from the underside of our patio roof.

You can also distract squirrels by feeding them peanuts nearby.

Timing

Decide how much seed you can afford. Put seed out at the times of day you are most likely to enjoy watching your feeder. Being consistent will bring the most visitors, but if your seed isn't available, the flock will move on to one of their other regular daily stops.

More information

The Feederwatch.org website is a fantastic free resource. You can find out what birds are seen in our area, each species' favorite foods and the best types of feeders for each.



A white-breasted nuthatch approaches a feeding port on a tube-type bird feeder. The weight of squirrels or big birds like starlings on the feeder pulls the cage down and the metal leaves block the ports.

A northern flicker enjoys pecking at a block of sunflower and millet seed. The block is also popular with downy woodpeckers, mountain chickadees and nuthatches.



Downy woodpeckers are usually seen searching tree bark for dormant insects, but they also enjoy pecking at blocks of seed. The red spot on the back of its head indicates this is a male.

(Photos 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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