

# March 2022 "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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Wanda Manley, President

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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, Website

**Advocacy, open**

Terry Harper, Past president

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The **CHPAS Flyer** is published online monthly. Submissions are welcome. The current issue is available online at [www.CheyenneAudubon.org](http://www.CheyenneAudubon.org).

**Contact Us** at [cheyenneaudubon@gmail.com](mailto: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/>

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## Calendar

**March 15, 7:00 p.m. – Program: "The Secret Life of Wyoming's Salamander" with Mason Lee from the University of Wyoming Biodiversity Institute** Cottonwood Room at the Laramie County Library, 2200 Pioneer Ave. It can also be accessed virtually by using this Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81712099819?pwd=Sktac3lrY3ZoZENOVzQvaTFPeFikQT09>

Lee will introduce Wyoming's only salamander species as well as the new Laramie Salamander Migration Initiative aimed at protecting salamanders in Laramie and other Wyoming communities.

Lee is the senior project coordinator for the University of Wyoming Biodiversity Institute. She has a B.S. and M.S. in wildlife sciences and has worked with numerous endangered reptiles and amphibians in Texas and Wyoming.

Mason Lee, senior project coordinator for the University of Wyoming Biodiversity Institute, holds a migrating tiger salamander found in Laramie. Photo courtesy Mason Lee.



### **March 19, 8:00 a.m. – Field trip – Tour of the Wyoming Game & Fish Pheasant Facility near Yoder and birding in that area**

We will leave from the Lions Park parking lot by the Children's Village at the Cheyenne Botanic Gardens at 8 a.m. Carpooling may be available based on Covid guidelines. We will drive north on US-85 about 66 miles to the intersection with County Road 42. Just to the west is the entrance to the pheasant facility where we will start our guided tour.

After the tour we can look for migrating waterfowl in the Springer/Bump Sullivan Wildlife Habitat Management Area. We should return to Cheyenne by 3 p.m. If you drive, you can leave whenever you need to. Bring your lunch, water, and dress for the weather.

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



*Ring-necked Pheasant by Mark Gorges*

### **March 22, 6:30 p.m. – Board Meeting, Windflower Room, Laramie County Public Library, 2200 Pioneer Ave., Cheyenne**

Contact Wanda Manley, [cheyenneaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:cheyenneaudubon@gmail.com), if you would like to participate in helping to plan chapter activities.

### **March 25, 8:00 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](mailto:chuckski@aol.com). The count will start in the County Clubhouse's main parking lot.

### **April 2, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. – State Museum Family Day: Wyoming Wings**

Free, 2301 Central Ave. For young children and their families. CHPAS will have a table with birdwatching activities. Please email Barb if you'd like to volunteer for a shift, [bgorges4@msn.com](mailto:bgorges4@msn.com).

### **April 19, 7:00 p.m. – Program TBA**

Laramie County Library, Cottonwood Room

### **April 29-30 - Bird Photography Using Blinds with Elizabeth Boehm**

Award-winning Pinedale, Wyoming, wildlife photographer Elizabeth Boehm will be presenting a free talk open to the public, "Bird Photography Using Blinds," April 29, 7 p.m., in the

Trout Room of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department headquarters at 5400 Bishop Road. She will discuss different blinds and how to position, set up and use them as well as blind etiquette. She will end with a slide show of her photography. Samples of her work will be available for purchase.

April 30, 7 a.m., Boehm will demonstrate various kinds of blinds at the Cheyenne Botanic Gardens' Paul Smith Children's Village, 710 S. Lions Park Drive, also free and open to the public. She will discuss any other tools needed for comfort and working with the weather conditions.

"As wildlife photographers, we need to be able to conceal ourselves from our photo subjects to catch natural behavior. A variety of blinds can be used to bring the photographer a bit closer without flushing or disturbing the intended bird/wildlife," Boehm said.

Elizabeth Boehm has been photographing birds for more than 20 years and spends most of her time exploring and birding Sublette County, Wyoming. She is always seeking unique images of birds and wildlife in a natural setting. Using blinds, her goal is to be able to approach her subject a bit closer and to capture natural behavior.



Photo courtesy Elizabeth Boehm

She is an award-winning photographer having placed in the Top 10 photos in the North American Nature Photography Association Showcase, first place in the 2019 National Audubon professional bird photo contest, and grand prize in the Wyoming Wildlife Photo Competition along with numerous images published in books and magazines.

**April 30, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. – Spring Bird Identification: “Meet the Birds!” a class for adults and children 12 and older** (Bring your own lunch) Cheyenne Botanic Gardens Paul Smith Children's Village and Lions Park (Some walking included)

**Pre-registration required/Fee: \$15/Registration via Cheyenne Botanic Gardens/Class limited to 40 participants/The registration link will be activated March 3<sup>rd</sup> at:**  
<https://bpt.me/5390763>

Just before the peak of migration, let Cheyenne Audubon members introduce you to 50 of our local birds. A combination of classroom discussion and short walks, with borrowed binoculars or your own, into Lions Park, a Wyoming Important Bird Area, will make spring so much more interesting for you.

**May 14 – World Migratory Bird Day**

**May 21 – Annual Cheyenne Big Day Count**

**June 10-12 – 2022 Wyoming BioBlitz at Guernsey State Park**

More information soon.

## **Chapter News**

**Chapter President's message**



Hello everyone,

I'm glad to roll the calendar over to March. As a Wyoming native and having lived most of my life in the state, I'm no stranger to the cold, wind, and general unpleasantness winter can bring. However, I can do without the extreme cold we had late in February. It's hard on people, equipment, livestock, and wildlife. We saw and heard the first meadowlark of the season sitting on a fence post a few days before the cold hit. I hope he had a place to hunker down during the cold snap.

I do have a little good news. CHPAS has been awarded a grant through ChangeX (associated with Microsoft). Our project is designed to address the horrific weed problem we have across the entire county (region, and state).

Spraying is not an option in many instances, and mowing makes the problem worse. In an attempt to combat this problem, we are partnering with the Laramie County Conservation District and have put the wheels in motion to increase the number of plantings of native forbs and grasses on small acreages throughout the county. We are calling this the Native Prairie Island Project (NPIP). The thought is to get these islands of native forbs and grasses established and then they will become the seedbank for neighboring properties.

There is a second component of this project where the increased moisture over septic lines will be targeted on the small acreages, and only native forbs will be seeded. Typically, these strips have more moisture because of the leach field near the septic tank. If we can get these areas seeded, they will require little or no extra watering and should be an explosion of color during the growing season, also providing habitat for native pollinators, and again re-establishing the native seedbank. More on NPIP next month!

Wanda  
CHPAS President

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

## **February Program Recap**

### **Study shows I-80 barrier to Wyoming pronghorn migration routes**

by Barb Gorges

The Wyoming Department of Transportation knows where the wildlife-vehicle accidents are most likely to occur along Interstate 80. Years of crash location data seem to indicate several pronghorn seasonal north-south migration routes. There is prehistoric evidence as well showing where Native Americans intercepted migrating herds to hunt them.

Pronghorn, or antelope, as many of us call them, trace their lineage to the Pleistocene era, 2.6 million to 11,000 years ago. Their closest relative, but not very close, is the giraffe.

Ben Robb spoke to Cheyenne Audubon in February about how porous different kinds of barriers are for pronghorn intent on migration in southwestern Wyoming. His study, part of a much larger project, was for his graduate degree from the University of Wyoming.

Pronghorn are already famous for one route, the "Path of the Pronghorn," in the western part of the state, thanks to the work of the Wyoming Migration Initiative, <https://migrationinitiative.org/>.

Ben put radio collars on about half a dozen pronghorn near Table Rock, a modern-day ghost town between Rock Springs and Wamsutter. The pronghorn, all collared between I-80 and the Union Pacific Railroad, meandered within their own territories and never crossed those two barriers.

This is of concern to Ben because the reason pronghorn and other animals migrate seasonally is to find the best living conditions and food, i.e., habitat. Otherwise, they encounter stressful situations such as deep snow in winter.

Ben cleverly relayed the results of his findings as how long on average it would take a pronghorn to safely navigate different barriers. If you were to take a seat next to a barbed wire fence, you would wait 21 hours. Some fence designs catch pronghorn by the ankle when they try to jump,

others might catch them by the head when they try to scoot under. Fences are slowly being retrofitted for safety.

A two-lane state highway takes 147 hours for pronghorn to safely negotiate. I-80 takes 5 years—tough fence and tough trucks.

Why don't pronghorn make use of I-80 underpasses at exits like mule deer do? A few will, including the ones here in Cheyenne that use the wide-open Randall Avenue underpass. But they are animals of the high plains that have evolved exceedingly powerful eyesight for spotting predators and exceedingly rapid retreat for escape (55 miles per hour). Tunnels are uncomfortable. Besides, in 402 miles across Wyoming, I-80 exit underpasses are mostly clustered around towns and cities.

Overpasses built for wildlife and landscaped to reflect the local terrain have been successfully used in Wyoming and elsewhere by wildlife adapted to open spaces. They've also been successful at reducing death and injury for both wildlife and people. I-80 needs a few.

You won't hear about pronghorn problems along I-25 north of Cheyenne because there are no pronghorn there—no sagebrush for them.

It's been a little more than 50 years since the completion of I-80. Has it acted as a genetic barrier? Over time, two populations of one species separated by say, a mountain range, will begin to differ, but not for pronghorn, not yet. And based on those spots along I-80 at high risk for pronghorn accidents, the pronghorn haven't forgotten their migratory routes, not yet.

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## Education and Conservation

### Chapter Grants

For information on our chapter education and conservation grants, see our chapter website at: [www.cheyenneaudubon.org](http://www.cheyenneaudubon.org).

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## Habitat Hero



### The Cheyenne Botanic Gardens Habitat Hero Demonstration Garden captured wind-blown snow, allowing its moisture to seep into the garden

Within a month, green leaves and maybe even flowers from crocus and other spring-blooming bulbs will begin to appear, as well as a few bees.

Later, volunteers will begin to cut back last year's dried stems, chop them up and leave them in place as mulch. Some flowerheads may still have seeds for the birds or some that will sprout.



Photo taken Feb. 26, 2022, by Barb Gorges

## **Bird News**

### **Audubon Rockies' Blog**

For stories, news, birding information, activities, and more related to birds and bird conservation in Colorado, Wyoming, and Utah, go to <https://rockies.audubon.org/blog>.

### **The World According to Sound**

On April 24th, The World According to Sound is going to take you on a sonic exploration of all things avian.

You will hear the world's most complex songs, a series of antiphonal duets, slowed down birds, extinct birds, loud birds, quiet birds, and birds that sound like laughter. We will also listen to the human side of things, and what makes our relationship to birds so unique. There are over 10,000 species of bird, and this audio event pays homage to that.

The show is 80 minutes long and live streamed to people all over the country. Everyone who gets a ticket is mailed an eye mask to wear during the show, which helps focus your attention on the sounds. The program is designed for headphone listening and engineered so you will be totally immersed in the sounds, whether it be a flock of birds taking off all around you or a mated pair duetting back and forth off in the distance.

To make this show, The World According to Sound teamed up with BirdNote and Cornell's Lab of Ornithology. After the program, there will be a live Q&A with a member of the lab who will answer any questions you have about birds and sound.

The World According to Sound has shared a discount code with us to get 25 percent off the \$25 tickets. Just enter the code "BirdsEncore25," when you purchase tickets here at <https://www.theworldaccordingtosound.org/tickets/birds-5rn2x>.

And for a sneak listen to some of the sounds you will hear in the show, listen to any of [these radio episodes](#) that The World According to Sound made with BirdNote.

### **February 18-21 – The 25th Great Backyard Bird Count results from our 3-county chapter area**

from eBird reports

Laramie County 21 people  
38 checklists  
Cackling Goose  
Canada Goose

Northern Shoveler  
Gadwall  
Mallard  
Northern Pintail

Green-winged Teal  
Canvasback  
Ring-necked Duck  
Common Goldeneye

Common Merganser  
 Rock Pigeon  
 Eurasian Collared Dove  
 Northern Harrier  
 Sharp-shinned Hawk  
 Bald Eagle  
 Red-tailed Hawk  
 Rough-legged Hawk  
 Great Horned Owl  
 Belted Kingfisher  
 Downy Woodpecker  
 Northern Flicker  
 American Kestrel  
 Blue Jay  
 Black-billed Magpie  
 American Crow  
 Common Raven

Black-capped Chickadee  
 Mountain Chickadee  
 Horned Lark  
 Red-breasted Nuthatch  
 White-breasted Nuthatch  
 European Starling  
 American Robin  
 House Sparrow  
 House Finch  
 American Goldfinch  
 American Tree Sparrow  
 Dark-eyed Junco  
 Song Sparrow  
 Goshen County 1 person 1  
 checklist  
 Canada Goose

Eurasian Collard Dove  
 Downy Woodpecker  
 House Sparrow  
 House Finch  
 Pine Siskin  
 American Goldfinch  
 White-crowned Sparrow  
 Platte County 1 person 1  
 checklist  
 Townsend's Solitaire  
 House Sparrow  
 American Goldfinch  
 American Tree Sparrow  
 Red-winged Blackbird

In Wyoming, 96 species were reported in 415 checklists. To see the results from the rest of the country and the world, go to: <https://ebird.org/qbbc/region/world/regions>.

**February 19 – Report: Birding trip to “Raptor Alley”**

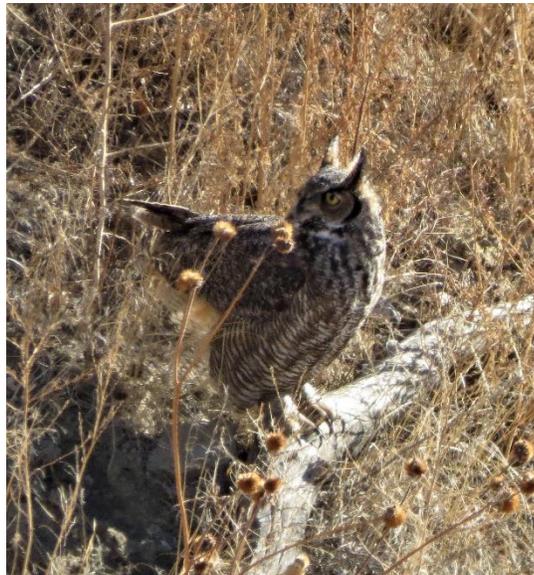
by Mark Gorges

We had 24 people participate in the trip. The weather sunny with no wind. We started at County Road 100 in Nunn, Colorado and drove about 35 miles mainly on gravel roads.

Here is a list of what I saw and recorded between 9 and 11:33 a.m.

14 species

Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon) 2  
 Eurasian Collared-Dove 15  
 Northern Harrier 1  
 Bald Eagle 1  
 Red-tailed Hawk 4  
 Rough-legged Hawk 3  
 Ferruginous Hawk 2  
 Great Horned Owl 2  
 American Kestrel 1  
 Prairie Falcon 1  
 Black-billed Magpie 6  
 Horned Lark 39  
 European Starling 20  
 Western Meadowlark 14



*Great Horned Owl at one of our stops. By Mark Gorges*

View this checklist online at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S103050872>

**February 27 – Cheyenne Country Club survey results**

By Chuck Seniawski

7:50 AM - 10:00 AM

Protocol: Traveling

2.8 mile(s)

Checklist Comments: 34 degrees. Sunny. Light breeze. Grant Frost, Bill Gerhart, Barb

and Mark Gorges, Vicki Herren, Carol Mayer, Chuck Seniawski, Pete Sokolosky, Roy West.  
13 species

Canada Goose 33  
Mallard 2  
Red-tailed Hawk 1  
Northern Flicker 3  
Black-billed Magpie 11  
American Crow 13  
Mountain Chickadee 5  
Red-breasted Nuthatch 2  
Brown Creeper 2  
European Starling 1  
House Sparrow 2  
House Finch 6  
Pine Siskin 2



*Northern Flicker was hammering on a light post at the Country club, by Mark Gorges*

View this checklist online at  
<https://ebird.org/checklist/S103894266>

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## **Raptors entice birdwatchers to make cold, early start to follow “The Nunn Guy”**

*By Barb Gorges*

A Cheyenne Audubon field trip in mid-February, starting at a frosty 8 a.m., usually attracts only a handful of diehards. But throw the word “raptor” into the publicity and suddenly there are 20-some people milling around in the parking lot at Lions Park, anxious to go see eagles, hawks, falcons and owls.

Or maybe it was the thought of travelling south to a balmy climate. Our destination, “Raptor Alley,” starts in Nunn, Colorado, 30 miles south of Cheyenne. And it was balmy—50 degrees, sunny, no wind and dry gravel roads.

We met our tour guide, Gary Lefko, “The Nunn Guy,” at the Soaring V Fuels gas station/store. A seasoned trip leader knows how important it is to start a birding trip with empty bladders, especially in the nearly treeless farm fields of eastern Colorado.

Gary was also prepared with raptor identification handouts, good thinking because Mark and I discovered just before we left Cheyenne that many in the group considered themselves novice bird watchers.

Caravanning is not the ideal way to introduce people to birds. With carpooling, we pared down the number of vehicles to nine. When we joined Gary, he used handheld radios to tell our car what he was seeing and then I texted a message to one person in each vehicle, such as “Red-tailed on the pole on the right up ahead.”

Our end point was Pierce, Colorado, 5 miles south on U.S. Highway 85, but 30 miles as we shuttled back and forth along the county roads spaced on a 1-mile grid.

Gary later sent me his bird list from the trip and even though Mark and I were only two cars behind him, he counted more raptors than we did:

Northern Harrier 2  
Bald Eagle 2  
Red-tailed Hawk 6  
Rough-legged Hawk 4  
Ferruginous Hawk 3  
Great Horned Owl 4  
American Kestrel 2  
Prairie Falcon 3

We also documented rock pigeon, Eurasian collared-dove, black-billed magpie, horned lark, European starling and western meadowlark—14 of them!

Gary frequently pulled over and jumped out of his trusty Subaru to train his spotting scope on a raptor in a lone treetop, on top of a utility pole or floating in the sky, giving everyone a chance to take a look. We may not have walked any miles, but we had plenty of exercise climbing in and out of our vehicles.

Raptor Alley is Gary's invention and the genesis can be traced back to his wife giving him a bird feeder nearly 25 years ago. He bought 14 more feeders, but what hooked him, made him go buy binoculars and a field guide, was seven Monk parakeets visiting his feeders. The feral, bright green, tropical birds made themselves at home in Colorado Springs for a while.

Relocating to the outskirts of Nunn (current population 586) in 2002, Gary has now identified 135 bird species around his house. He's also just a couple miles from the western border of Pawnee National Grassland, a 30 by 60-mile tract administered by the U.S. Forest Service that is famous in international birding circles.

In some ways, Gary fits the stereotype of the birding loner, patrolling Weld County roads in search of avian rarities, but he also wants to spread the joy of birdwatching. When his mother told him years ago about the Florida birding trail, his first thought was, "Colorado needs one!"

Birding trails, routes like Raptor Alley, are mapped with notes about accessibility, conditions and birding highlights. Modern versions are on the internet and who better than Gary, an IT professional and web designer, to provide it. He started out with a five-county area he called the Great Pikes Peak Birding Trail. I have a t-shirt from that iteration.

It evolved into the Colorado Birding Trail, <https://coloradobirdingtrail.com/>, run by Colorado Parks and Wildlife. You can find "Raptor Alley" on the map, click on the link and get mile by mile directions and helpful hints like, "Be careful pulling onto the shoulder of roads, as many are soft and you could get stuck."

Gary has identified 23 raptor species hanging out there in the winter. Why there? Good prey base—lots of rodents, and lots of perches for watching for them.

Along the way, Gary picked up graduate courses from Colorado State University in conservation communication and a certificate in non-profit administration. Gary's project for his certificate involved a whole new venture, setting up the Friends of the Pawnee National Grassland, <https://www.friendsofthepawneegrassland.org/>.

Part of that is an iNaturalist project to document the plants and wildlife, <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/birds-and-more-of-the-pawnee-national-grassland>. iNaturalist is global, community-based science, a perfect fit for a man with a personal mission to bring people to nature.

Thanks, Gary, for taking us to visit your birding "patch."



*Gary Lefko (white shirt) hands out raptor identification tip sheets to birdwatchers gathered in Nunn, Colorado, Feb. 19 before leading them on a tour of Raptor Alley. Photo by Barb Gorges.*



*Gary Lefko (white shirt) points out a raptor perched on a utility pole in the distance to some of the birdwatchers following him on a tour of Raptor Alley near Nunn, Colorado, Feb. 19. Photo by Barb Gorges.*

Barb Gorges is the author of "Cheyenne Birds by the Month," [www.YuccaRoadPress.com](http://www.YuccaRoadPress.com). Her previous columns are at <http://cheyennebirdbanter.wordpress.com>. Contact her at [bgorges4@msn.com](mailto:bgorges4@msn.com).

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