



May 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

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

May 7, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. - Family Day – May Flowers at the State Museum – 2301 Central Ave, Cheyenne

We will be there talking about birds and pollinator gardens.

Let your imagination bloom and learn about the world of plants! Make your own potted plant, explore the root systems of your favorite flowers, and meet experts from across Wyoming.

To keep all families COVID-safe, they are requiring timed registration for this event. Use this link to reserve your one-hour time slot for FREE!

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/family-day-may-flowers-tickets-310789308187?aff=Webpage>

May 21, 6:30 a.m. – Annual Cheyenne Big Day Bird Count

Starting at Lions Park, we will cover birding hot spots throughout the Cheyenne area. **If you want to join us later than 6:30 a.m., please call Mark, 307-287-4953, to get a location update.** We also encourage people to report all bird sightings during the 24-hour period beginning at midnight on the free app at eBird.org. The middle of May is the high point of the spring migration of birds to their nesting areas from their winter homes.

We will leave from the Lions Park parking lot between the Children's Village at the Cheyenne Botanic Gardens and the picnic shelter to hike around the park for about an hour or two. We will then head to the Wyoming Hereford Ranch. At about lunch time we will head out to the Agricultural Research Station and the Arboretum west of the Air Force Base.

Bring a lunch or pick one up on the way; bring water and dress for variable weather. Everyone, no matter what your birding skills, is invited. Bring binoculars if you have them. The more eyes we have, the more birds we will see. We may finish the planned routes by 3 p.m. However, you may join us for as long as you wish and leave when you need to.

We will have a Tally Party/pot luck at Barb & Mark's house on Sunday, May 22 at 5 p.m. Come and you can add the species that you saw on Saturday to our list of birds found in Cheyenne on the Big Day Bird Count. Bring your favorite dish to share; iced tea will be provided.

May 22, 1-3 p.m. – Greenway Cleanup

Cheyenne Audubon is hosting a Greenway cleanup event, Sunday, May 22nd. The public is invited to help. The starting location is the parking lot adjacent to the intersection of Van Buren Avenue and Laramie Street (just north of East Lincolnway and east of its intersection with Pershing Blvd.). Work will proceed to the north along Dry Creek.

Trash bags and light-weight gloves will be provided. Participants should wear sturdy footwear (preferably waterproof) and heavy gloves and bring rakes and hoes, if available, for fishing trash out of the creek.

May 24, 6:30 p.m. – Board Meeting

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

May 27, 7:00 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. The count will start in the County Clubhouse's main parking lot.

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



Brown Trasher, one of the spring migrants from last year by Mark Gorges

Join Audubon Rockies (one of the co-sponsors of the BioBlitz) at Guernsey State Park this year to discover this Wyoming gem, survey wildlife, and have a blast with your family and friends! Registration information below.

The Wyoming BioBlitz is a one-of-a-kind opportunity for families, students, and all nature-lovers to learn about plants and wildlife and help scientists survey them. During this weekend-long event, participants will team up with biologists to search for and document as many plants and animals as possible at Guernsey State Park.

For more information and the full schedule go to:
<https://rockies.audubon.org/naturalist/wyoming-bioblitz>

Chapter News



Chapter President's message

Greetings Everyone,

Whew, it's May, finally! April was in like a lion, and out like a lion and no April showers for May flowers. The long-range forecast looks to be dry and windy well into the summer. No significant change in the La Nina pattern in the near future. I think we're all getting tired of the wind. Have you seen the trash in the fence along I-80? That mess alone is reason enough for requiring biodegradable bags.

A quick update on the Native Prairie Islands Project: if you recall, ChangeX awarded CHPAS money to buy a pull behind (4 wheeler or lawn tractor) seeder and native wildflower seed for the Laramie County Conservation District to distribute to the owners of newly subdivided ranchettes in Laramie County. We are happy to say the seeder has arrived and has been working every day.

Our involvement in this project is to slow the spread of invasive plant species in the county, particularly toadflax and cheatgrass, and provide a seedbank of native species that will hopefully spread to adjacent acreages, providing habitat for all sorts of pollinators, birds, and other animals.

With that project in mind, it is imperative that we STOP MOWING THE PRAIRIE. It is the same thing as massive overgrazing with livestock. If the native grasses are not allowed to complete their life cycle, they will die out and cheatgrass will move in, and cheatgrass is extremely flammable. Even in the height of summer, native grasses will be green at the base, indicating some moisture in the plant. But cheatgrass will dry off to the ground, making it very flammable.

If you are unsure of what to do with your piece of the prairie, please email me at our chapter address, Cheyenneaudubon@gmail.com. I'm happy to come and look at your situation and I know several other talented land managers in the county who would also help you understand the ecology of your place. In the meantime, walk your property and see what the plants are already doing. If you are not an acreage owner, take a stroll on state or federal land and connect with nature.

Wanda,
CHPAS President

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



Wanda, far right, with the new seeder.

April Program Recap – Sage Grouse update

By Barb Gorges

Daly Edmunds, Audubon Rockies director of policy and outreach, gave us an overview of the life and times of the Greater Sage-Grouse. She reminded us that 38 percent of them live in Wyoming and they are dependent on sagebrush. They gain weight in winter eating sagebrush!

Daly also reviewed the history of sage grouse conservation, including the first report of concern by state agencies in 1953 and the 2015 management plan that kept them from being listed as threatened or endangered species.

However, since 2015 there has been a 40 percent decline in the sage grouse population. With the change in federal administration in 2016, there were 10 times as many acres leased for oil and gas production on priority sage grouse habitat. The current administration is reducing the number of acres the Bureau of Land Management is offering in priority habitat for the June lease sale. In Wyoming there are already 9 million acres leased and 5 million acres developed, said Daly.

CHPAS member Vicki Herren, retired sage grouse coordinator for BLM, is working as a consultant on the "Greater Sage-Grouse Plan Implementation Monitoring Report." It is expected to be out this summer. In addition to disruption of habitat by oil and gas and other development, the change in wildfire frequency and intensity (more of both due to climate change) means sagebrush can be converted to invasive plants like cheatgrass, which cannot feed or shelter sage grouse.

Daly told us that our letters to agencies supporting sage grouse do make a difference. They act as a barometer of interest for politicians. The recent call for sage grouse comments that ended in February gathered 24,000 form letters, 1900 substantive letters and 260 unique letters.

It is difficult to keep up with the public comment periods for various issues. It is best to sign up for notices from your favorite conservation organization. Even if you only have time to click on the form letter, it's a vote for what's important to you. You can subscribe to Audubon's Action Alerts here: <https://rockies.audubon.org/get-involved/advocacy>.

Education and Conservation

Chapter Grants

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

Habitat Hero



Habitat Hero Garden at the Cheyenne Botanic Gardens

By Mark Gorges

In April the Habitat Hero Committee and other volunteers put in a little over 20 hours cutting down the dried stalks from last year's growth and chopping it all up for mulch. The standing brown vegetation helped collect and hold what meager snows we had last season.

Because of the dry weather the daffodils and tulips have been struggling. But the grape hyacinth looks good. There are a lot of green sprouts coming back from last year and seedlings coming up from the plants that went to seed last year.

Watch for what happens as they grow.

Bird News

Bird Migration Maps

This is migration season for birds heading north to their summer breeding grounds. Here is a fun activity. To see near real time maps of bird migration in North America go to the map at <https://birdcast.info/migration-tools/live-migration-maps/>

May 14 – World Migratory Bird Day and Global Big Day

Be a part of birding's biggest team! Global Big Day is an annual celebration of the birds around you. No matter where you are, join us virtually on 14 May, help celebrate World Migratory Bird Day, and share the birds you find with eBird.

Participating is easy—you can even be part of Global Big Day from home. If you can spare 5 or 10 minutes, report your bird observations to eBird online or with the free eBird Mobile app. If you have more time, submit several checklists of birds throughout the day. You never know what you might spot. Your observations help scientists better understand global bird populations through products like animated abundance maps brought to you by eBird Science.

Last year, Global Big Day brought birders together virtually from more countries than ever before. More than 51,000 people from 192 countries submitted 134,000 checklists with eBird, setting four new world records for a single day of birding. Will you help surpass last year's records? How ever you choose to participate, please always put safety first and follow local guidelines.

For more information go to: <https://ebird.org/news/global-big-day-2022>

May 15-22 - Audubon Rockies Birdathon

From Audubon Rockies

We hope you'll be able to join us for the Birdathon and maybe bring a friend or two! Have you [registered](#) yet? We'll be counting birds for a cause for one full week in May to raise money for our conservation efforts in Colorado, Wyoming, and Utah. Birdathon is our most fun and engaging fundraiser of the year. You can participate in one of three ways—and for those who are ambitious, you can do all three!

1. Register yourself as a participant and invite your friends, family, and network to support your efforts to see as many bird species as you can between [May 15-22](#).
2. Create or join a team!
3. Support a staff member or friend in their efforts by donating to their page.

There's no better time than spring migration to get out and experience the joy of birds and help to protect them and the places they need. Mark your calendar, grab your binoculars, load the Audubon app on your phone, and get ready for Birdathon 2022! Learn more and register now at <https://p2p.onecause.com/audubonbirdathon/event/audubon-rockies>. It'll be here before you can say "Mountain Bluebird."

If you are unable to participate in Birdathon but would still like to support birds in the Rockies region, you can also make a donation at the registration site above.

April 15 – Report: Sharp-tailed Grouse Lek Viewing

by Mark Gorges

It was a cold and windy morning; We had six full vehicles on this trip The first grouse we saw were a few on the tops of power poles.

At the lek site we saw three species:
Sharp-tailed Grouse 24 All on the lek site
Long-billed Curlew 15 Moving through a ploughed field
Western Meadowlark 3

The other birds that we recorded while driving included:

Sharp-tailed Grouse
Mourning Dove
Northern Harrier
Red-tailed Hawk
Northern Flicker
American Kestrel
Horned Lark
Western Meadowlark
Red-winged Blackbird



Grouse at the lek by Mark Gorges

April 29 – Cheyenne Country Club survey results

By Chuck Seniawski

7:00 AM - 9:15 AM

Protocol: Traveling

2.41 mile(s)

Checklist Comments: 45 degrees. Calm for first hour, then windy. Art Anderson, Grant Frost, Bill Gerhart, Mark Gorges, Stacey McReynolds, Ray Milczewski, Chuck Seniawski, Pete Sokolosky. Highlights included spotting an American Bittern and a flock of White-faced Ibis, and watching a Red-tailed Hawk harass an adult Bald Eagle.

34 species

Canada Goose 12
Blue-winged Teal 1
Northern Shoveler 1
Mallard 9
Redhead 2
Ring-necked Duck 27
Lesser Scaup 17
Eurasian Collared-Dove 6
Mourning Dove 2
Killdeer 1
Ring-billed Gull 2
California Gull 4
American Bittern 1
Great Blue Heron 2
White-faced Ibis 18
Bald Eagle 1
Swainson's Hawk 1
Red-tailed Hawk 1
Hairy Woodpecker 1



American Bittern at the Country Club by Mark Gorges

Northern Flicker 7
Merlin 1
Black-billed Magpie 6
American Crow 8
Mountain Chickadee 1
Barn Swallow 2
Red-breasted Nuthatch 1
European Starling 6
American Robin 10
House Finch 1
Song Sparrow 1
Lincoln's Sparrow 1
Yellow-headed Blackbird 1
Red-winged Blackbird 13
Common Grackle 6



White-faced Ibis at the Country Club by Grant Frost

View this checklist online at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S108370424>

April 30 – “Meet the Birds” bird ID Class

By Mark Gorges

Saturday morning was a little windy, but 10 students came out for the class. We had 50 common local birds to identify and discuss. Breaking those down into groups, we first covered waterfowl, shore birds and wading birds. Then we went out to the lake to see what was on the water.

Our next group included mostly raptors, scavengers and the blackbird family. After lunch we started on smaller perching birds. Taking a break, we went to see what we could find in the trees. We wrapped up by talking about bird ID resources and showed some examples of what can be found at eBird.org.

Of course, there were discussions about other related birds and questions from the participants. Following is a list of the birds seen in the park by the class.

Canada Goose
Mallard
American Coot
Ring-billed Gull
Double-crested Cormorant
American White Pelican
Black-crowned Night-Heron
Northern Flicker
American Crow
Mountain Chickadee
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
House Sparrow
House Finch
Yellow-rumped Warbler

April 29-30 - “Bird Photography Using Blinds with Elizabeth Boehm”

On Friday evening Elizabeth dazzled us with her specular bird photography for nearly two hours. She showed us pictures of the different types of blinds that she uses for her photography: a car blind, a wearable blind, a tent-like popup blind, and a floating blind. Throughout her talk she had bird pictures and stories about her adventures while taking the pictures.

Elizabeth emphasized the ethics associated with photographing wildlife. She explained the precautions she takes to avoid disturbing birds so that she is taking photos of her subjects in calm, natural settings.

Early Saturday morning we gathered at the Children's Village at the Botanic Gardens where she demonstrated each of her blinds. Grant Frost volunteered to try out the floating blind in the pond.



Grant, in waders, trying out the blind. Photos by Mark Gorges

How power production underlies bird problems and other bird news

By Barb Gorges

Last month you may have read that a subsidiary of NextEra Energy will be paying a hefty fine for killing eagles at its wind developments, including Roundhouse, on the southwest edge of Cheyenne. The company took a big gamble by not applying for an eagle "take" permit. The permit would have required expenditures, but now the company will have to spend money on remediation plus the fines.

Three years ago, I signed up to be party to the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality's hearing on Roundhouse, representing Cheyenne Audubon. I still get the occasional registered letter with news about changes to the Roundhouse development plan.

I wasn't surprised to get a call from Ryan Fitzpatrick, my main Roundhouse contact. It sounds like the company may be installing a system to sense raptors approaching wind turbines so the turbines can be shut down before slicing an eagle. That's the system at the Top of the World wind farm. Ironically, bald eagles are increasing in number, however golden eagles are not faring as well.

Avian influenza reached Wyoming last month, in poultry and wild birds. I've been following the story day by day through my favorite birding institutions, including the National Audubon Society and Cornell Lab of Ornithology. It seems to be travelling with migrating waterfowl, maybe affecting songbirds. It might be a good idea to put away the bird feeders for a while, instead of having to scrub them frequently. We usually take ours down for the summer anyway.

If you find any dead birds, report them to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. Pick them up the same way you do dog droppings: grasp the bird with your hand gloved in a plastic bag. Then pull the bag carefully inside out over the bird and seal the bag shut.

I don't know if bird flu is transmissible to cats, but this would be a good time to start keeping your cats indoors so they won't eat dead birds.

Good news for sage grouse and the diverse group of people who in 2015 worked so hard to come to an agreement on the policies to protect primary habitat areas in Wyoming. The number of oil and gas parcels offered for lease has been reduced on critical sage grouse habitat for the Bureau of Land Management's next sale. There are scads of current leases that are not being drilled so don't blame sage grouse for high gas prices.

But we really need to drop the conventional use of fossil fuels as soon as possible, not just because it is getting too warm for cute little pikas living on our mountain tops.

Let's consider the cost of air pollution to humans. It isn't healthy to breathe emissions from tailpipes and smokestacks or smoke from the increasingly frequent wildfires attributed to warming climate.

There's wildfire destruction itself. I saw concrete examples recently while driving to Louisville, Colorado. On one side of four-lane-wide Dillon Road there is a very nice residential area that burned down to the concrete foundations that are now shaded by dead black trees. The houses on the other side of the street are safe, so far.

Mark's and my sons are doing their part for fighting climate change. Both drive electric cars. We plan to follow suit as soon as we need to replace a car.

Going electric is only going to help birds if the source of the power doesn't produce climate-warming pollution or slice them with turbine blades or cover grasslands and deserts with solar panels. To me, it looks like the most harmless alternative is solar panels on existing infrastructure. There's a million square feet of roof on our Lowe's distribution center. There's a nearly quarter-mile-long, south-facing wall on the new eastside Microsoft installation. Could Cheyenne be forward thinking enough to write building codes that require buildings to produce power?

These are my daydreams this spring as I watch my first flock of white-crowned sparrows flit from shrub to shrub along Crow Creek on its way to the mountains to nest.

May 21 is the Cheyenne Big Day Bird Count and once again Cheyenne Audubon, www.CheyenneAudubon.org, will document the diversity of avian migration for the scientific record. Think about joining us. Someday, someone will examine our records, hopefully documenting increasing diversity here on out as we get a handle on our power problem.

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 bqorges4@msn.com.



Federal golden eagle (above) and bald eagle protection measures indirectly protect other kinds of birds as well. Photo by Elizabeth Jaffin, Audubon Photography Awards.

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