



# August 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.*

### Officers and Committee Chairs 2022-2023

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

**Social Media, open**

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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**Watch for your Annual Chapter Dues Renewal letter in the mail in the next couple of weeks.**

## Calendar

### August 16, 8:30-10 p.m. – Bat Walk with the Biodiversity Institute in Cheyenne

Join the Biodiversity Institute and Bat Conservation International to learn all about local bat species and go on a short stroll to listen for bat calls. You may even get the chance to see one as they fly overhead!

All ages welcome. Registration is required and is restricted to 20 people.

For more information, to register, and to find out where to meet you must contact Mason Lee and let her know how many people will be in your party. Contact her at: [mlee37@uwyo.edu](mailto:mlee37@uwyo.edu)

## August 20, 8 a.m. – Field Trip: Turtle Rock birding hike

We will leave at 8 a.m. from the Lions Park parking lot between the Children's Village at the Cheyenne Botanic Gardens and the picnic shelter. We will be hiking about 3 miles on trails and uneven ground.

Bring a lunch (if you want), water and dress for variable weather. We expect to be back to Cheyenne by about 1 p.m.

We can expect to see hawks, woodpeckers, ravens and other corvids.

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.



*Common Raven by Mark Gorges*

## August 23, 6:30 p.m. – Board Meeting

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

## August 26, 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](mailto:chuckski@aol.com). The count will start in the County Clubhouse's main parking lot.

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## Chapter News



### Chapter President's message

Greetings Everyone,

Bella Fuoco has gone native, native wildflowers that is! Owned by Kelly and Eric Dalton since 2021, they serve up the best wood fired pizza imaginable. Eric has a strong interest in creating and sustaining habitat for pollinators and birds, even in the middle of Cheyenne.

Their restaurant is located at 2115 Warren Avenue and is undergoing a transition from typical landscaping to a native landscape. In the front, Eric has taken out sod and then seeded with the Native Plant Island Project (NPIP) native wildflower seed mix developed in partnership with CHPAS and the Laramie County Conservation District (LCCD).

The area he started with is looking great and he has plans to add a bench for waiting customers and replace more sod next year. The City of Cheyenne is expected to replace curb and gutter all the way up Warren Avenue, and when that is completed, Eric will tackle the hell strip between the sidewalk and street.

If you go around the north side of restaurant, you will find an outside seating area. On the east wall of the patio is a fabulous mural done by Jordan Dean. You will notice the western wheatgrass, Indian paintbrush, and showy milkweed are all big and bold, and native plants! Kudos to Eric and Kelly for having a better vision of what urban habitat can look like.



*Bella Fuoco by Lorie Chesnut*

Now that CFD is over, take the time to pop over to Bella Fuoco, have a great meal (they have gluten free pizza and it is fabulous) and enjoy the patio area before the colder weather sets in. See photos taken at Bella Fuoco here: <https://cheyenneaudubon.org/native-prairie-islands-of-cheyenne/>

Wanda,  
CHPAS President

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

## **Native Prairie Island Program**

*From Laramie County Conservation District*

The Laramie County Conservation District is starting a Native Prairie Island Program which aims at reestablishing small “islands” of native prairie plant species across Laramie County. This is a collaborative effort sponsored by the Microsoft Community Development Team through their Change X Community Challenge Grant and shared with our partners, the Cheyenne High Plains Audubon Society.

Together LCCD and CHPAS are focusing on increasing native pollinator species that are not as common as they once were in Laramie County. These species have subtly disappeared from the landscape for multiple reasons, but with our efforts, we look to increase small islands through revegetating disturbed pasture around county homes and especially, their leach fields. Leach fields can range in size from 1,500-4,000 square feet and augment soil moisture around the structure, giving a distinct advantage to the vegetation that occurs there.

Our strategy is to focus on these spaces because of the additional moisture they offer, aiding in the success of our goals. For those who want to expand native wildflowers across their chunk of Wyoming, they can simply add our pollinator seed mix to their grass seed when reseeding their one to four acres of pasture.

Proper soil preparation and watering can hasten your site’s germination, but it’s not necessary for overall success. We are offering free native pollinator seed packages depending on your interest. To participate in the program, we ask that you follow a few simple rules which should aid in accomplishing our goals.

Landowners should contact the LCCD Range and Wildlife Specialist ((307) 772-2600) for a site evaluation of your leach field and pasture to determine the probability of successfully germinating our native prairie pollinators.

Why are native prairie plants important and why would you want them? Well for starters, native pollinators such as bees, butterflies (including monarchs) and numerous birds are benefitted by their presence. If you enjoy watching this class of wildlife, you would do well to get a patch started. Second, the mix we are using is native to this county and used to our climate, meaning you won’t have to baby these plants. Third, our mix is for all growing seasons, meaning you’ll enjoy a splash of color from spring through fall. Lastly, these plants help infiltration through their diverse root structure and some, known as legumes, even fix nitrogen that benefits the growth requirements of other grasses and forbs.

These plants were here originally for a reason, we would like them to make a big come back and help the brown and gold state display some different color at your home on the range.

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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



## Habitat Hero Garden at the Cheyenne Botanic Gardens

*By Barb Gorges*

Nettie and Isaiah at the Cheyenne Botanic Gardens think our **Habitat Hero garden is ready to go fenceless!** This is its 5<sup>th</sup> season and it is pretty full. We'll see how it goes. Pulling fence will probably be a volunteer opportunity after CFD.

Zach Hutchinson, Audubon Rockies' Community Science Coordinator, is planning to move to Cheyenne this fall. He has already started a **community science survey of our Habitat Hero gardens** this summer. You can join us at the CBG to see how many kinds of insects we can find. Please email Zach if you'd like the dates and times for surveys at: [Zach.Hutchinson@audubon.org](mailto:Zach.Hutchinson@audubon.org).

The next Cheyenne Habitat Hero **Workshop is Feb. 4, 2023, at LCCC**. I have inquiries out for a speaker with range ecology and restoration experience who can speak to small acreage owners about their bits of prairie. If you have any people to suggest, please let me know.

Isaiah asked me if we would like to **adopt the flower bed to the right**, adjacent to our current bed. This bed is growing a bunch of rocks that would need to be removed and would need irrigation added. The BPT money could help buy plants. And we'd have panels of fencing available to reuse to keep the bunnies out until the plants are established (I think the fox family is helping with the bunny problem too). It's approximately the same size as the current garden. The current garden takes less than an hour a week during the growing season (trash and a little bind weed removal) and the annual cutting back in spring (about 20 hours).

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## Bird News

### News from Audubon Rockies

Be sure to check the Audubon Rockies blog page for up-to-date news on conservation issues in our part of the West. Go to: <https://rockies.audubon.org/blog>

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

*By Mark Gorges*

Over 100 people took part in the BioBlitz that weekend. Barb and I drove up for the day on Saturday and helped out, leading birding trips.

It was a hot day, in the high 90's by afternoon. Our scheduled hikes were multipurposed. We had specialists with us in plants and insects, so participants could keep their eyes in the sky or on the ground and everywhere in between.

We ended the day with a picnic featuring Audubon certified hamburgers from the Conservation Ranching Initiative; get up to date on that program at:

<https://rockies.audubon.org/ranching/articles/habitat-management-assistance-western-wyoming>.

Here are a few of my bird pictures from that day.



*Osprey*



*Common Merganser*



*Barn Swallow on nest*

## **June 18 – Red Mountain Field Trip report**

*By Mark Gorges*

Six of us went in two cars to the Red Mountain Open Space just south of the Wyoming state line. We hiked almost 4 miles in a little over 3 hours.

We spent more than an hour hiking upstream through a riparian area, being constantly distracted by birds. The remainder of our time was in drier, shrubby foothills where we saw a few birds but also ran into a family of Black-tailed Prairie Dogs.

27 species (+1 other taxa)

Mallard 2  
Mourning Dove 5  
Common Nighthawk 2  
hummingbird sp. 1  
Killdeer 1  
Golden Eagle 2  
Say's Phoebe 1  
Black-billed Magpie 1  
Common Raven 1  
Tree Swallow 3  
Violet-green Swallow 1  
Cliff Swallow 7  
Rock Wren 6  
House Wren 3  
Brown Thrasher 1  
American Goldfinch 9  
Lark Sparrow 1  
Vesper Sparrow 3  
Song Sparrow 1  
Spotted Towhee 22  
Yellow-breasted Chat 3  
Western Meadowlark 3  
Bullock's Oriole 2  
Red-winged Blackbird 5  
Brown-headed Cowbird 2  
Common Yellowthroat 1  
Yellow Warbler 5  
Lazuli Bunting 4



*Black-tailed Prairie dog by Mark Gorges*



*Lazuli Bunting by Mark Gorges*

View this checklist online at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S113263227>

## July 15-18 – On-line BioBlitz summary

By Mark Gorges

The on-line BioBlitz covered the entire state with participants working on their own wherever they happened to be in Wyoming. In our chapter area (Laramie, Platte and Goshen Counties) there were 20 observers who reported their findings. They submitted 129 observations which included 102 species. They included plants, insects, spiders, birds and mammals.

My best finds included:



*Tree Swallow*



*Western Meadowlark*



*Widow Skimmer*

## June 24 – Cheyenne Country Club survey results

By Chuck Seniawski

6:48 AM - 9:23 AM

Great day! Good numbers of species and individual birds. Grant Frost, Vicki Herren, Jerry Johnson, Sue Lowry, Chuck Seniawski, Pete Sokolosky.

35 species (+1 other taxa)

Canada Goose 15 4 goslings, several juveniles almost the size of adults

Wood Duck 1 Male

Gadwall 10

Mallard 26 16 ducklings

Eurasian Collared-Dove 5

Killdeer 1

Ring-billed Gull 1

California Gull 10

gull sp. 4

Double-crested Cormorant 8

American White Pelican 4

Turkey Vulture 2

Swainson's Hawk 3 May have been more. Several flyovers, at least 3 distinctly different such that they were separately identifiable.

Red-tailed Hawk 1

Downy Woodpecker 1

Northern Flicker 4

Western Wood-Pewee 1

Black-billed Magpie 27 Multiple juvenile

American Crow 11 2 juvenile

Mountain Chickadee 4

Barn Swallow 3

Cliff Swallow 2

Red-breasted Nuthatch 1

Marsh Wren 1

European Starling 60  
American Robin 12  
House Sparrow 6  
House Finch 5  
Red Crossbill 14  
American Goldfinch 3  
Yellow-headed Blackbird 3  
Western Meadowlark 2  
Red-winged Blackbird 21  
Common Grackle 10  
Great-tailed Grackle 1 male  
Common Yellowthroat 3

View this checklist online at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S113671156>

## July 29 – Cheyenne Country Club survey results

By Chuck Seniawski

Jul 29, 2022 6:50 AM - 9:01 AM

Checklist Comments: Beautiful day. Grant Frost, Bill Gerhart, Mark Gorges, Vicki Herren, Jerry Johnson, Chuck Seniawski.

25 species  
Canada Goose 8  
Wood Duck 1  
Gadwall 2  
Mallard 39  
Eurasian Collared-Dove 3  
Mourning Dove 2  
California Gull 4  
Double-crested Cormorant 4  
Snowy Egret 1  
Black-crowned Night-Heron 1  
Northern Flicker 7  
Black-billed Magpie 21  
American Crow 17  
Mountain Chickadee 3  
Cliff Swallow 3  
Red-breasted Nuthatch 2  
European Starling 2  
American Robin 19  
House Sparrow 3  
House Finch 20  
American Goldfinch 16  
Song Sparrow 2  
Bullock's Oriole 1 female  
Red-winged Blackbird 15  
Common Grackle 3



Wood Duck, ellipse plumage, by Mark Gorges

View this checklist online at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S116032362>

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**Merlin's "Sound ID" uncovers hidden birds**

*By Barb Gorges*

Learning to identify birds by sight is simple: page through the field guide until you see a bird that matches or go birdwatching with someone who knows more than you.

One shortcut is the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's free Merlin app. You give it the bird's specs: relative size, color, behavior/habitat, and it gives you a short, illustrated list of possibilities. You can also give it a bird photo from your phone (including a photo of the screen on the back of a camera) and hit "Get Photo ID."

Learning to identify a bird by song or call is easy here on the edge of the Great Plains. Our most common birds vocalize while walking on lawns and prairie, sitting on bare branches and fence posts, swimming on water or soaring above. I can see robins chirping, crows cawing, house finches singing, collared-doves moaning, house sparrows cheeping.

It turns out I'm missing the birds that like to hide in vegetation but can still be heard. I've always thought that some winter I would sit down with a compilation of western bird song recordings and memorize them. Hasn't happened in the last 30 years.

But now Merlin has a new feature, "Sound ID." It came out last summer as part of the free app, but it's this summer people are talking about it, even our Airbnb host, for whom it sounded like his gateway drug to birdwatching addiction.

The first step is to download the Merlin app, for Android or iOS. Then open the menu (those three little lines stacked up) and choose Bird Packs. Install the one for "US: Rocky Mountains." This helps Merlin give you better choices. You can change it if you visit elsewhere.

Choose "Sound ID" from the home screen. Tap the microphone icon and hold out your phone towards the bird sound you hear. Closer is better, but start recording where you are first, in case moving closer scares the bird away. I found that Merlin doesn't hear everything I hear.

Merlin creates a spectrogram of what it hears and it scrolls across the top of your screen. Eventually, it creates a list of the birds it is hearing, including a photo of each. Each time Merlin hears a species, it highlights the name so you can connect sound and name. Also, if you click on the bird, you'll get a list of other recorded sounds you can compare for that species, to double check Merlin's accuracy.

Early one morning recently I stood on a corner in my neighborhood recording and watched as half a dozen bird names filled my screen. But wait—great-tailed grackle? We have them in Cheyenne, usually at the country club and the air base, but I have not heard their loud, raucous calls on my side of town. How do I tell Merlin I heard common grackles instead? But I will still give every shiny blackbird's tail a closer look.

On the other hand, while I was hiking the Headquarters Trail at the end of July, Merlin told me I was hearing a warbling vireo. I hardly ever see them so I have never perfected identifying them by sight, but now that musical warbling in trees along a creek will have me considering them when I hear it again.

And there's more. You can add these sound recordings to your eBird checklists. You can see if it's a bird already on your life list. Or Merlin will generate lists of birds where you plan to travel. It can sort them by most common at the top of the list. And for the most competitive birders, it can generate a list of birds they haven't seen in that area—their target species.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology can tell you how all this magic happens. Mostly, it is from the crowd-sourced data from its community scientists all over the world. Us birdwatchers.

Some 30 years ago, Beauford Thompson, a sixth-grade teacher at Davis Elementary School, told me we would have hand-held devices that would help us do all kinds of things. I was imagining typing notes, maybe a digital day planner. Now I use my smart phone for video calls, photographing and identifying flowers, reading books, tracking hikes, finding recipes and cafes, and counting birds.

Recording birds could become another time-eater. Learning bird songs and calls and contributing to the global avian knowledge is worthwhile. But let's not forget to sometimes go outside and enjoy the world empty-handed again.

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).



*Western Kingbird, singing, by Mark Gorges*

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

