

December 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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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 17 – Cheyenne Christmas Bird Count (Meet at the downtown Post Office at 8 a.m., 2120 Capitol Ave.)

Or be a field observer on your own.



Winter count by Barb Gorges

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

Grant will have a list of regular spots within our count circle and will encourage people to spread out to specific areas so that we

can have good coverage of all hot spots first thing in the morning to assure a good count on the number of each species in the Cheyenne area, i.e. the number of geese before they all start flying around.

If you are doing an area assigned by Grant, please start there by 8 a.m. Throughout the rest of the day, you are free to look for birds anywhere within the Cheyenne count circle—see map on Page 3.

Record numbers of each species you observe and the amount of time and distance you walk and the amount of time and distance you drive. Keep track of where and when you saw species of note so we can tell if you counted the same bird or flock as someone else.

For your report, compile the total number of individuals of each species and include all your travel information. Come to the tally party with your results or contact Grant Frost, CBC coordinator, 307-343-2024, frostgrant2@gmail.com.

Attend the CBC tally party at 5:30 p.m. (see info below)

Be a feeder watcher.

CHEYENNE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT FEEDER-WATCHER DATA SHEET

Directions:

The feeder(s) you intend to watch on **Dec. 17** must be within the “count circle,” an area defined by a 15-mile diameter circle centered on the Capitol building in downtown Cheyenne. See the map on Page 3.

Identify and count the number of each species that visits your feeder on the day of the count. Record only the maximum number seen at any one time. For example, if a single house finch visits your feeder 10 times, but you never actually see more than one house finch at a time, then that counts as one house finch seen, not 10.

Record the total hours spent observing the action at the feeder. It is not necessary to watch the feeder the entire day. Even if you can only watch for 15 minutes, we’re still interested in receiving your data.

Please report the species and number observed ASAP to Grant Frost, Cheyenne CBC compiler, at 307-343-2024 or by email, frostgrant2@gmail.com.

Date: Dec. 17, 2022

Name: _____

Phone: _____ Feeder(s) watched for _____ hours and _____ minutes.

Species list: _____

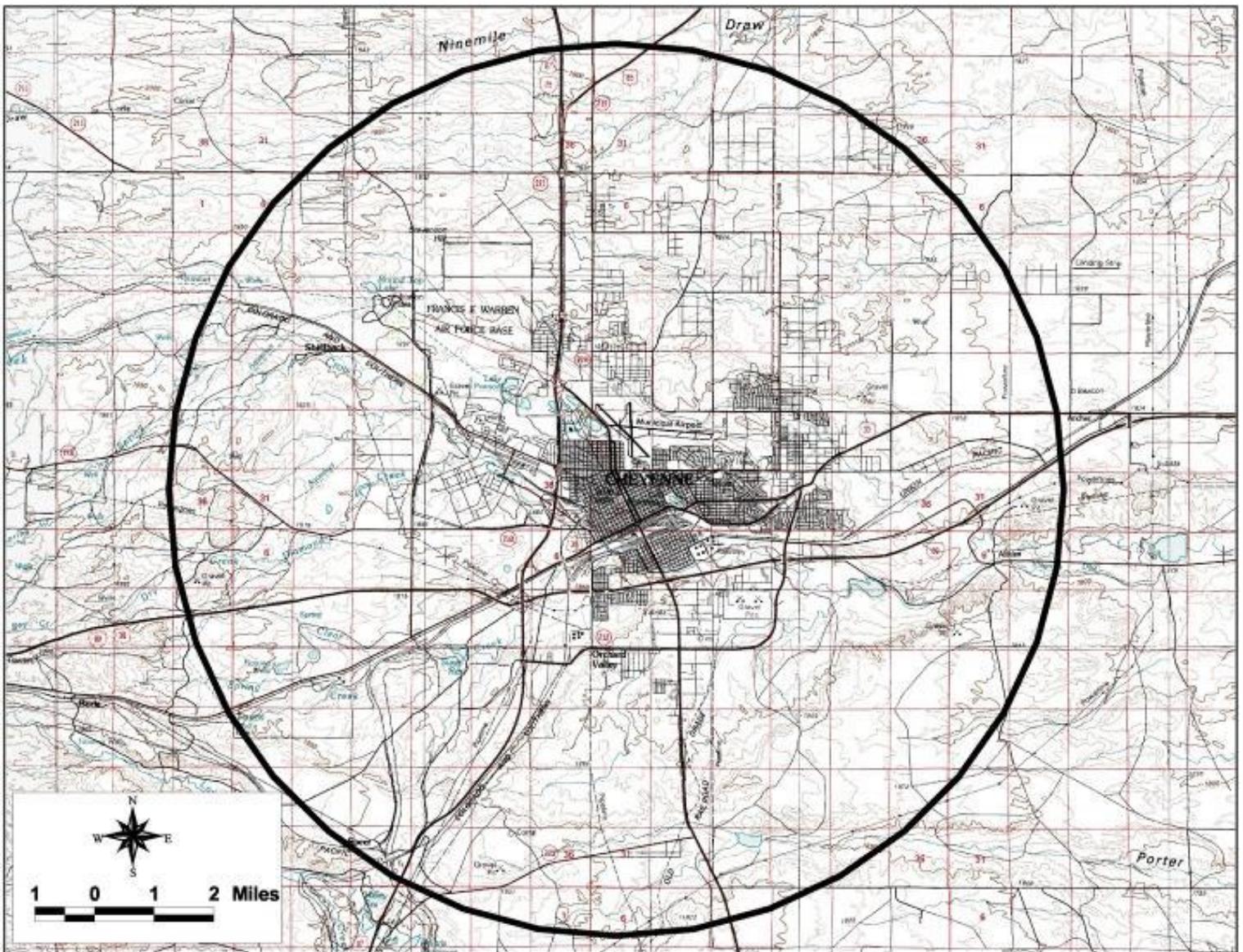
December 17 – CBC Tally Party, 5:30 p.m., Perkins (1730 Dell Range Blvd.)

For the tally party have ready the numbers of each species you observe and the amount of time and distance you walk and the amount of time and distance you drive. Keep track of where and when you saw species of note so we can tell if you counted the same bird or flock as someone else.

Please contact Mark Gorges at 307-2874953 if you plan to attend the Tally Party so that we can arrange for enough room.

After the tally party contact Grant with any species that you see three days before or three days after December 17 that were not listed at the tally party. They are entered in the CBC data as “Week of the Count” species.

Map of the count circle for the Cheyenne Christmas Bird Count



December 30, 8:00 a.m. – Country Club Bird Survey

Contact Chuck Seniawski to be on his email notice list: 307-638-6519 or chuckski@aol.com. The count will start in the Country Clubhouse's main parking lot.

January 1 - 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; she will set 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.

Chapter News



Chapter President's message

Merry Christmas Everyone!!

I'll be brief this month. I wanted to update you all on the trials and tribulations of Zoom. Yes, it's been a rough and rocky road this year. We were finally able to purchase Zoom Pro, but it has not been the be-all and end-all for our particular needs. Zoom Pro is not the same thing as the free Zoom we have all been using during the Covid era. It has a few special, aggravating idiosyncrasies of its own. That being said, I think we finally have the kinks (and there have been many) worked out.

At the January meeting with Bob Budd speaking about his new book, "Otters Dance: A Rancher's Journey to Enlightenment and Stewardship", we should have Zoom fully operational. Yes, that means you can watch Zoom live, and we will post the recording on YouTube, and we will have the correct link in the newsletter and on the webpage!! Hooray!

And because sometimes there is no end to the fun, we have to get the audio issues figured out for the next Habitat Hero workshop in February.

Thanks for your patience, remember we are a volunteer organization.

Wishing you all the best the holiday season has to offer,

Wanda,
CHPAS President

November's program notes: Cheyenne's tenuous water supply

By Barb Gorges

For its November program, Cheyenne Audubon invited Sarah Bargsten to speak. She is the water conservation specialist for Cheyenne Board of Public Utilities which provides residents with water and sewer services.

Statewide news stories have been discussing how several southern Wyoming cities, including Cheyenne, are dependent on water from west of the Continental Divide, part of the Colorado River watershed. If the current drought conditions continue, states farther down the river can demand more water from upstream states. For more information about the Colorado River situation, see <https://www.cheyennebopu.org/Cheyennes-Water/Water-Conservation/Water-News>.

To comply, a state like Wyoming can tell entities with the most junior water rights to give up their water. Cheyenne depends for 70 percent of its water supply on junior (fairly recently acquired) water rights in the Colorado watershed. How is that possible since we are east of the Continental Divide?

Years ago, Cheyenne built a system that harvests water on the west side of the divide, in the Medicine Bow and Laramie mountain ranges, and transports it by tunnel into streams on the east side, like Crow Creek, storing it in reservoirs like Granite and Crystal. It's a little more complex than that. Read the full description at <https://www.cheyennebopu.org/Cheyennes-Water/Water-Supply>. There are also a series of city water wells west of the city.

If the drought continues, Cheyenne may try to buy water from other sources like farms and ranches with more senior water rights. But since a third of Cheyenne's water goes to watering landscaping, a ban on watering trees and lawns would probably be the first choice.

For more about water-wise gardening, check out Cheyenne Audubon's Habitat Hero information and Feb. 4, 2023 workshop, <https://cheyenneaudubon.org/habitat-hero/>. Sarah also mentioned Pacific Gas and Electric has information online: [https://pge.docebosaa.com/learn \(search Plant Talk\)](https://pge.docebosaa.com/learn(search%20Plant%20Talk)).

Sarah said in a follow-up email, "Someone asked 'what can we do?' That question means so much to me because it reminds me why I'm doing what I do... because people out there care and want to help! So, to better answer the question I should have said, "Please spread the word. Talk to people and let them know where Cheyenne gets our water. Talk about your concerns. Listen to others' concerns. And come up with ideas."

For information about Cheyenne's free indoor fixture retrofit program, see <https://www.cheyennebopu.org/Cheyennes-Water/Water-Conservation/Water-Smart>.

Contact Sarah at sbargsten@cheyennebopu.org or 307-637-6415.

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

Education and Conservation

St. Mary's School

In early January the chapter will be helping a class at St. Mary's learn more about birds and how to use binoculars.

Chapter Grants

A grant for \$500 was approved at the last chapter board meeting. Rustin Rawlings will be building bluebird boxes and installing them as an official Bluebird Trail at the High Plains Arboretum just west of Cheyenne.

The project is being done as part of Nest Watch. NestWatch, developed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, is a nationwide nest-monitoring program designed to track status and trends in the reproductive biology of birds, including when nesting occurs, number of eggs laid, how many eggs hatch, and how many hatchlings survive.

We will be looking for volunteers to help set up the boxes and to assist with monitoring their use through the spring and summer. If you are interested in being contacted about helping, please contact us at cheyenneaudubon@gmail.com, leaving your contact information.

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

Habitat Hero

Cheyenne Habitat Hero Workshop is Feb. 4, 2023, at LCCC

We have our keynote speaker lined up, Jim Tolstrup, Director of the High Plains Environmental Center in Loveland, CO.

Our agenda will include groundwater, wildflower seeding, rain gardens, pollinator monitoring, winter sowing, lunch and more.

Hopefully registration will be open on December 19th; information will be online at <https://cheyenneaudubon.org/2022-habit-hero-workshop/> (You can go to that site now to see the full agenda). Registration will be limited to 100 in-person participants, but remote participation will be available.



Bird News

News from Audubon Rockies

Check out 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>

National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count - Live updates

After December 17th, as results are sent in for Christmas Bird Counts around the world, the results can be found at netapp.audubon.org/cbcobservation/

November 19: Curt Gowdy, Field Trip report

It was a sunny but windy fall day for the five people who came out for the field trip. Once we got into the trees the wind did not bother us.

We started out on the paved trail behind the visitor center; that open area was the worst of the wind with few birds sighted. Moving down into the Finn's Forest trail we were out of the wind and saw a variety of birds. It was there that a Prairie Falcon put on a great show for us, gliding back and forth along a ridge for about five minutes.

Our last hiking was at the Twin Bays Picnic Area. We drove out of the park past Crystal Reservoir, picking up a few more species along the road.

Nine species were seen in the areas around Granite Reservoir:

Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon) 13
Hairy Woodpecker 1
Prairie Falcon 1
Steller's Jay 1
Clark's Nutcracker 2
Common Raven 3
Mountain Chickadee 8
Pygmy Nuthatch 6
Red Crossbill 4



Hairy Woodpecker by Kirk Miller

Driving out toward and around Crystal we saw about 20 Black-billed Magpies working on a gut pile and a Redhead and a Bald Eagle on the reservoir.

November 25 – Cheyenne Country Club survey results

By Chuck Seniawski
7:58 AM - 10:00 AM

Protocol: Traveling

3.0 mile(s)

Checklist Comments: 34 degrees. Clear skies. Virtually no snow. Grant Frost, Barb and Mark Gorges, Vicki Herren, Jerry Johnson, Sue Lowry, Chuck Seniawski, and Sue and Roy West.

15 species

Canada Goose 155

Northern Harrier 1 Beautiful "Gray Ghost" male

Red-tailed Hawk 1

Northern Flicker 1

Merlin 1 male

Black-billed Magpie 7

American Crow 13

Mountain Chickadee 2

Red-breasted Nuthatch 2

White-breasted Nuthatch 2

Brown Creeper 1

European Starling 5

Townsend's Solitaire 1

House Finch 7

Dark-eyed Junco 15



Red-tailed Hawk by Mark Gorges

View this checklist online at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S123154779>

Unusual birds “on the road” this fall, including around Cheyenne and southeastern Wyoming

By Barb Gorges

On Nov. 9, a friend called to tell me she heard a story on KUWR, Wyoming’s National Public Radio affiliate, about a Blackburnian warbler that blew across the Atlantic to an island off the southwest British coast, exciting birdwatchers.

It’s ironic that this eastern North American bird was named by a German zoologist for an English naturalist, Anna Blackburne (1726-1793). She never saw a live specimen, but her name seems appropriate because the 5-inch-long male burns with a flaming orange throat and head on a body that is otherwise black and white.

We’ve had a few Blackburnians accidentally find their way to Wyoming. At eBird.org, under the Explore tab, you’ll find that Mark Gorges, my husband, was the last to record one in Wyoming, a female, on May 28 at Wyoming Hereford Ranch.

Warblers typically eat insects, so the lost warbler Mark saw could find them in late May. Warblers leave the north in September and October when cold weather limits their food supply.

However, beginning Nov. 11, Chuck Seniawski has had a pine warbler visiting his Cheyenne feeder nearly every day through Nov. 27, so far. This is another lost eastern North American species – and it is way late for an insect eater.

Pine warblers, according to Doug Faulkner’s “Birds of Wyoming,” published in 2010, are “vagrants.” Their normal migration, breeding and winter ranges in the Eastern U.S. and southeastern Canada are nowhere near Wyoming.

However, Doug wrote, every fall there is at least one reported in Wyoming, usually between mid-August and mid-September. Doug’s only winter report was a pine warbler that spent five days in December 1988 eating peanut butter at a feeder in Gillette.

Chuck says his pecks at his sunflower feeders, hunts on the ground underneath and uses the birdbath. He isn’t sure if the bird is eating seed bits or finding something else. When he posted a

photo, Don Jones, eBird regional data reviewer in Laramie, who spent four years back East, agreed with his identification. Also, Chuck had just seen one in Central Park in New York City.

Pine warblers look a little like a female or a winter-plumage male American goldfinch, yellowish with dark wings with two white wingbars, so maybe we should all examine our feeder birds more closely.

Serious birders stake out reservoirs during fall migration, including the Laramie Plains Lakes. Jonathan Lautenbach was rewarded with being the first to record two king eiders, sea ducks, Nov. 12 through 18 at Lake Hattie. He reported they were a female and a juvenile male, plain brown. The adult male, not seen, would be half white and half black with a bright yellow-orange “bill-shield” on its forehead.

eBird shows these king eiders as the first to be recorded in Wyoming. Doug Faulkner does not list them at all in his 2010 book, which is a comprehensive review of bird sightings up until that point.

King eiders breed in the Arctic, across northern-most Canada. They winter around coastal Alaska and northeastern Canada, but there are frequent winter sightings in lower 48 states, most often coastal, and they are also usually female and juvenile birds.

Cheyenne birder Grant Frost was probably checking Sloans Lake in Lions Park for interesting ducks and other waterbirds when he came across a small flock of bushtits Nov. 3 and again Nov. 27. “Peterson’s Field Guide to Birds of North America,” published in 2020, describes their habitat as brushy woodlands and pine-oak forests of the southwest.

But if you look closely at Peterson’s range map, it shows this thin line of purple (meaning year-round resident) drawn up the Front Range of Colorado, practically pointing to Cheyenne. More bushtits may be in our future. Look for pale brown and gray, 4.5-inch-long birds building sack-like hanging nests.

Grant also found a blue-headed vireo at Lions Park Nov. 1, and it was last seen there Nov. 3 by Vicki Herren. Vireos are much like warblers, eating insects, but also fruit in winter. This species breeds across Canada, through New England and down through the Appalachians. It winters along the southeast coasts of the U.S. It’s possible that the birds from western Canada would head south through Wyoming to get to the Texas Gulf Coast. They are just hard to pick out from other vireos and warblers bouncing around in the trees.

Unusual bird observations submitted to eBird automatically get flagged. You are asked to

write a description of your observation and submit a photo if you can. Someone appointed by eBird for that area will decide whether your record becomes public.

These days eBird and the Wyoming Bird Records Committee work together. Find out more about the committee at

<https://wybirdrecordscommittee.wordpress.com/>.

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.



This female Blackburnian warbler, photographed at the Wyoming Hereford Ranch May 28, is considered a “vagrant” in Wyoming because it is a long way from its normal range in eastern North America. The female’s throat is a paler orange than the male’s. *Photo by Mark Gorges*

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

