



February 2023 "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

Dennis Saville, Vice president

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Chuck Seniawski, Treasurer

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Jack Palma, Audubon Rockies Board

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Education, open

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Grant Frost, Field Trips, Bird Compiler

Mark Gorges, Newsletter, Habitat Hero

Art Anderson, Important Bird Areas

Social Media, Kirk Miller

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

Join our Facebook Group, Cheyenne-High Plains Audubon Society Group

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

February 16 – Library Presentation: Great Backyard Bird Count

Introduction

Thursday, Laramie County Library, 6 to 8 p.m., 2200 Pioneer Ave., Cheyenne.

Chapter members will discuss common birds in our area in preparation for the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC).

Then on Saturday, February 18th at 10:00 a.m., join chapter members in Lions Park at the parking lot for the Children's Village for a bird hike in the park. Everyone, from beginners to experts, is invited to participate.

The GBBC is an annual project to count all birds that can be found locally and globally from February 15th through the 20th. To find out more about the global nature of the GBBC and how you can participate on your own or as a group, go to <https://www.birdcount.org/>.

Spend time in your favorite places watching birds; identify them, count them and submit your list(s) to help scientists better understand and protect birds around the world.

February 21 – Program: eBird Demystified: Tips, Tricks, and Best Practices to Get the Most out of eBird, with Don Jones

Feb. 21, at 7 p.m., at Laramie County Library in the Cottonwood Room, at 2200 Pioneer Ave.

eBird, the world's largest citizen science project, is a powerful resource for birders and ornithologists alike. Despite its growing popularity, learning to use eBird can be intimidating and many birders are not familiar with all the tools and capabilities it has to offer. This presentation will cover all things eBird, including best practices for submitting checklists, using eBird to explore data and plan birding trips, the data review process, and how your eBird observations are being used by researchers in Wyoming.

Don Jones was born and raised in Laramie and has been an avid birder for most of his life. He began volunteering with eBird in 2012 and is now the lead Regional Reviewer for Wyoming. In addition to his work with eBird, Don serves as a member of the Wyoming Bird Records Committee and is currently pursuing a Master's Degree at the University of Wyoming studying sagebrush-obligate songbirds.



The program is also available via Zoom at:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84941419803?pwd=Q1JrbkNyZk15WHpKVmRLZ2lqZFIJQT09>

The Zoom link will also be posted at the Cheyenne Audubon website, <https://cheyenneaudubon.org/>.

February 24, 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.

February 25 – Field Trip: Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge

(Rescheduled from last month) We will tour the visitors center in Commerce City, Colorado, and look for bison, prairie dogs, bald eagles, other raptors and other wintering birds on the refuge.

We will leave from the Lions Park parking lot at the Children's Village at 8 a.m. We will drive south on I-25 to the Arsenal. We should return by 3 p.m., but if you drive, you can leave whenever you need to. Bring water and your lunch if you like.

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



Bald Eagle at the refuge, January 2018, by Mark Gorges

February 28, 6:30 p.m. – Board Meeting

Contact Wanda Manley, cheyenneaudubon@gmail.com, if you would like to participate in helping to plan chapter activities. This meeting will be at the new Conservation District Office.

Chapter News



Chapter President's message

Happy Valentine's Day Everyone,

Winter drags on, but there's always a holiday on the horizon.

I hope you were able to join us for Bob Budd's presentation at the Laramie County Library in January. He is an entertaining speaker and his messages of staying connected to others in our community and staying focused on conserving our wild spaces give me hope for our future.

The gardening catalogs are filling up my mailboxes. It's time to think about planting with a purpose. Veggie gardening is great and with the price of food, almost a necessity. But also plan corridors for wildlife, including birds and pollinators. They all need food, water, cover, and space to raise their young. Provide those things and you will be amazed at what creatures you will see. Some will stay for a while; some are only passing through. Make a priceless contribution to your environment by providing them with the essentials!

There are seeds available from lots of different places, but I think one of the most overlooked places to obtain seed is your Laramie County Library. The seed library is a joint effort of the LCLS and the Laramie County Master Gardeners.

There are traditional veggie seeds available, but the big bonanza is the native seed library. Yes! Seed has been collected from the library's very own pollinator rain garden. It's on the northeast corner of the library parking lot if you haven't noticed it before. It's not particularly interesting right now, but just wait, it will be wonderful when the growing season starts again.

Throw another log on the fire or curl up on the sofa and do some daydreaming about summer. And plan building a corridor just for nature.

Wanda,
CHPAS President

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

Education and Conservation

Science Fair Results

The Laramie County School District #1 Science Fair was held on January 21st. There were fewer projects on display than we have ever seen in past years.

Kirk Miller and Barb Gorges did the judging for the chapter's annual Audubon awards for outstanding projects dealing with environmental issues and wildlife. They found only one project suitable for the award.

The winner was Natalie Loomis, a 5th grader from Mrs. Love's class at Baggs Elementary. Her project was "Saltwater Mayhem", looking at whether plants could be grown in different concentrations of saltwater. Considering that the West is experiencing an extended drought, could ocean water be used to grow plants.

Chapter Grants

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

Habitat Hero



9th Annual Habitat Hero Workshop “Landscaping for Water Realities on the High Plains”

Learn how native plants can help us
adapt to a drier future and support pollinators

Feb. 2nd is the last day to register for the workshop. Registration is capped at 100 in-person, but free virtual registration is also available.

Winter sowing

Get your winter sowing outside by March 1 so seeds have plenty of exposure to cold. This method is particularly suited to native perennials. See

<https://cheyennegardengossip.wordpress.com/2016/03/21/winter-sowing/>.

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>.

Subject: It's time to party - raptor style!



The Rocky Mountain Raptor Program wishes to invite you and your friends to our 30th Annual Gala & Benefit Auction on February 25th, 2023 from 5-9pm!

For more info and to buy tickets, go to:

<https://rmp.ejoinme.org/https://rmp.ejoinme.org/2023auction>

This will be our first all-out Gala since 2020. We're excited to share our successes as we celebrate 35 years of service in the NOCO region.

Check out the excellent time we have planned for you:

- Meet many of our Educational Ambassador raptors face-to-face.
- Exciting silent and live auction with nearly 100 items to explore. Bidding is also online!
- Gourmet dinner with wine or beer included.
- Gorgeous educational displays to peruse.
- Auctioneer and comedian Taryn Atlas will be there to entertain all night long and host the live auction.
- Dress up and have fun at the photo booth by Craig Vollmer photography.
- This event provides funding to support RMRP's efforts in rehabilitating injured eagles, owls and hawks, keeping raptors safe in the wild, and providing life-changing conservation education. Come see these amazing creatures up close!
- We hope that you will join us for this amazing event!

Guernsey-Ft. Laramie Christmas Bird Count Results

By Jane Dorn

It was certainly not the best count we've seen. We didn't see any evidence of Avian Flu in the count circle, but we have seen several bunches of dead geese in corn fields near Torrington. The food crop was pretty meager this year. No cone crop on the ponderosa pine for the second year in a row, and the juniper berries were spotty with lots of bare trees. All of Gray Rocks and all of Guernsey Reservoir were frozen and the rivers had lots of ice.

The two of us (including husband Bob) did the best we could under the circumstances. We had snow and fog in the afternoon which also reduced visibility.

We did two days of scouting, one before the count day and one after to try and bring the total species numbers up a bit. But even with all that extra effort our numbers were definitely lower than average.

Species and numbers are as follows:

Canada Geese - 2793, Gadwall - CW, Mallard - 102, Green-winged Teal - 30, Common Goldeneye - 103, Barrows Goldeneye - CW, Hooded Merganser - 3, Common Merganser - 3, Eurasian Collared Dove - 144, Great Blue Heron - 1, Goldeneye Eagle - CW, Bald Eagle - CW, Red-tailed Hawk - 3, Rough-legged Hawk - 1, Belted Kingfisher - 2, Hairy Woodpecker - CW, Northern Shrike - CW, Pinyon Jay - 3, Steller's Jay - 10, Blue Jay - 9, Black-billed Magpie - 8, American Crow - 5, Horned Lark - 50, Black-capped Chickadee - 7, Red-breasted Nuthatch - 1, Townsend's Solitaire - 19, American Robin - 149, European Starling - 284, Cedar Waxwing - 2, House Sparrow - CW, House Finch - 67, American Goldfinch - 3, American Tree Sparrow - 5, Dark-eyed Junco - 33, Song Sparrow - 1, Red-winged Blackbird - 1

January 21 – Field Trip Report

Due to expected weather in Denver, the field trip destination was changed to the Wyoming Hereford Ranch in Cheyenne. Only four birders braved the cold but sunny day.

At the main Hereford Ranch
Cackling Goose 100
Canada Goose 300
Gadwall 3
Mallard 6
Eurasian Collard-Dove 4
Eastern Screech-Owl 1
Downy Woodpecker 1
Black-billed Magpie 3
Mountain Chickadee 4
European Starling 40
American Tree Sparrow 3
Dark-eyed Junco 20

At Hereford Reservoir #1
Cackling Goose 100
Canada Goose 800
Common Goldeneye 6
Rough-legged Hawk 1



Eastern Screech-Owl by Grant Frost

January 27 Cheyenne Country Club survey results

by Chuck Seniawski

8:00 AM - 9:57 AM

Protocol: Traveling

3.02 mile(s)

Checklist Comments: 30 degrees. Snow cover about 98 percent. Bill Gerhart, Vicki Herren, Kirk Miller, Chuck Seniawski and Woody Woodworth.
9 species (+1 other taxa)

Canada Goose 1
Red-tailed Hawk 1
Downy Woodpecker 2
Northern Flicker (Red-shafted) 1
Northern Flicker (Yellow-shafted x Red-shafted) 1
Black-billed Magpie 15
American Crow 24
Mountain Chickadee 2
Townsend's Solitaire 1
Dark-eyed Junco 11
and a porcupine

Habitat leasing to provide new tool for Wyoming conservation

By Barb Gorges



Ranch land can provide important wildlife habitat, photo by Barb Gorges

Bob Budd dropped the name of a new conservation tool during his book talk for the Cheyenne–High Plains Audubon Society last month. So I asked Bob for more details a few days later.

The new habitat leasing program Bob mentioned is like conservation easements but short term and lower price per acre.

First, let's look at what a conservation easement is. Wikipedia has an extensive definition showing it dates back to the 1950s or earlier, but to summarize, an interested landowner finds willing partners to pay him or her not to use their land for certain purposes.

Those certain purposes are most often development or subdivision, especially on farm and ranch land. Because the acreage can no longer be subdivided under a conservation easement, the property loses the value associated with subdivision.

The consenting landowner (it's always a voluntary agreement) is paid for conserving the land. Who pays the landowner? In Bob's experience as executive director of the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust, a state agency, in setting up some of these, it can be a mix of money from a non-profit organization like The Nature Conservancy, a farm or ranch organization, and government agencies including the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource and Conservation Service (NRCS).

The conservation easement becomes part of the property, passed along to the next owner.

The landowner may recognize the conservation value of their land and seek the easement. The buyers of the easement confirm the conservation value and the financial value through an extensive appraisal process.

The land could be valuable for wildlife. Or maybe for other ecological services such as absorbing precipitation to decrease flooding downstream, instead of increasing impervious pavement.

Around here, raising beef cattle doesn't pay as well as selling land for homesites. A rancher may be lucky enough to improve their bottom line by leasing some of their property for windfarms, solar farms or oil and gas development. Up until now, a conservation easement was one of few ways to be paid for providing wildlife habitat. But they are a hard sell because they are forever.

Well, now we will have habitat leasing. The details are still being ironed out, but Wyoming will be piloting the concept this spring. Simply, a landowner can sign a contract for a period of years, maybe 10 or 15, and receive an annual payment in return for maintaining their acreage to benefit habitat, migration routes and/or other ecological services.

It could be habitat for a species of concern, with an agency contacting the landowner to see if they want to sign up.

For this pilot program, Bob has been working with NRCS and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. The habitat they are interested in is the seasonal migration corridors that have caught the public's attention.

The Wyoming Migration Initiative has identified routes that are used by deer and antelope year after year as they move north from their wintering grounds to higher elevation breeding grounds and back again in the fall.

These routes have to provide forage for the travelers, or they will fail to breed successfully. The animals don't seem to find new routes when there are obstacles.

So, protecting the historic migration routes with habitat leasing seems like a fair transaction for both the rancher and the wildlife.

Forty years ago, when I was in college studying natural resources and then range management, environmentalists and ranchers seemed to be on opposite sides of the fence, especially on topics like wolf reintroduction. But the wildlife folks and the ranchers have found they have much in common. Here in Wyoming, for instance, they have been successful in collaborating on how to help sage-grouse.

Bob has been there on the sage-grouse work. He's the ranch-raised kid who, as he explains in his new book, "Otters Dance," used to run feral through the willows, watching the birds and frogs.

In his previous job as the ranch manager for The Nature Conservancy's Red Canyon Ranch near Lander, Bob worked out ways to keep cows and wildlife happy simultaneously. He knew his stream restoration worked when a family of otters moved in.

The ranchers Bob knows are knowledgeable about the wildlife on their places and always interested in learning more.

I remember Bob saying one time when Mark and I visited Red Canyon Ranch that when the environmentalists visited, they wanted to see the cows and find out how many there were. Visiting ranchers wanted to see the endangered plants.

Bob, himself, is a special kind of person. Pick up his book at the Wyoming State Museum, Game and Fish headquarters, the Cheyenne Frontier Days museum or online and see what I mean.

He can take the fence down between two opposing camps. With him riding herd on this habitat leasing pilot, I'm pretty sure it can be successful.

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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