



March 2023 "Flyer" Cheyenne - High Plains Audubon Society

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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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Art Anderson, Important Bird Areas

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Barb Gorges, Programs, Publicity

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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

March 18 – Field Trip – Torrington/Lingle to find the Cardinals

We will leave from the Lions Park parking lot at the Children's Village at 8 a.m. We will drive north on US-85 to the Torrington area, about 82 miles.

We will search the Rawhide Wildlife Habitat Management Area near Lingle for the Northern Cardinal and other birds. On the way back we may stop at Springer/Bump Sullivan WMA to see snow geese and other waterfowl.



1Northern Cardinal by Michele Black (from National Audubon Society)

We should return by 5 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.

March 21 – Program: “High Plains Arboretum Bluebird Nest Box Project” featuring Rustin Rawlings

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

Rustin Rawlings received permission from the arboretum to put up mountain bluebird nest boxes this winter and received a grant from Cheyenne Audubon for materials to build them. He will talk about the purpose of the nestbox project at the High Plains Arboretum, along with information about nest watch and general information about being a nestbox landlord.

Rustin is looking for volunteers to help monitor the eight boxes during the breeding season. He'll talk about his experience bringing other cavity-nesting birds to his Cheyenne backyard and what he has learned. By day he is a physician at the VA medical center.

The Zoom link is:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85905557429?pwd=RDhUeWcvUEIBMHZ2MjlYNnVMSHJXdz09>

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

March 25, 1:00 p.m. - High Plains Arboretum Bluebird Nest Box Project monitoring training

This is a hands-on training opportunity for those who might be interested in helping to monitor the nest boxes at the arboretum or are interested in knowing how it is done. We will meet at the arboretum at 1:00 p.m. located at the Cheyenne Field Station which is west of Cheyenne off of Round Top Rd. at 8301 Hildreth Road.

We will also take some time to look for other spring migrants at the research station.

Registration is free but please sign up with Grant Frost, 307-343-2024, to be notified of any change of plans due to weather, etc. or for more information.

March 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.



Bird box at Arboretum by Rustin Rawlings

March 31, 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.

Chapter News

Chapter President's message



Mountain Plover, drawn by Michelle LaGory

Hello Everyone,

Whew, winter is almost over! Within days we will be back on daylight savings time and the spring equinox is on March 20th. We've paid our dues for spring and summer already. It seems like it has been a remarkable winter in several aspects: snow on the ground most of the winter, more snow than we've seen in a while, and a couple of bitter cold spells.

Spring is always interesting. Like many transitions, spring can be a bit of a tease. It gives you a taste of what is to come and then rips it away. But seeing light in the sky at 6:00 am and 6:00 pm is hope enough for me!

There have been some interesting gardening/environmental meetings this year. The Habitat Hero workshop was excellent this year, either in person or via Zoom. I also Zoomed in for the 9th Annual Landscaping with Colorado Native Plants Conference, sponsored by the High Plains Environmental Center and others. This was also an excellent workshop, particularly the last speaker, Kenton Seth out of Grand Junction, Colorado.

He has some interesting thoughts on planting native plants with no additional water during their establishment period. Colorado is getting serious about creating native, sustainable landscapes in their urban areas.

In August, the America's Grassland Conference, sponsored by the National Wildlife Federation and the University of Wyoming, will be held in Cheyenne at Little America. The link is here: https://www.nwf.org/Our-Work/Our-Lands/-/media/PDFs/Misc/Call-for-presentations-AGC23_FINA_L.ashx I have not attended this conference before, but I am excited to see something of this caliber coming to Cheyenne. The program from the 2019 meeting had some great topics and speakers. Hopefully, some of you will be able to attend this one in Cheyenne.

We need more folks to assist the chapter with planning and organizing activities as we are presented with new opportunities - is that you? If you would like to get involved, please contact Wanda Manley, cheyenneaudubon@gmail.com

So, until next month...

Wanda,
CHPAS President

Cheatgrass Symposium

The Laramie County Conservation District (LCCD) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) – Cheyenne Office, are having a Cheatgrass Symposium for Laramie County on April 1, 2023, at the Archer Complex – Community Building, from 9:00 until 12:00. There is no pre-registration or fee required.

The topics will be: "History of Cheatgrass, Annual invasive grass growth and phenology, Control Measures, and Cost Share Opportunities". This is an opportunity to learn more about this invasive species and find solutions for your acreage. It is important from a fire safety standpoint, as well as from an ecosystem health standpoint. Come early, there will be coffee and doughnuts.

Education and Conservation

Audubon Rockies' New Classroom Kits for Educators

My name is Ashley Meadows, I am the digital engagement coordinator for Audubon Rockies. Our award-winning educators have spent years creating and compiling fun and engaging education

resources about wildlife found in the sagebrush ecosystem. They've compiled our most popular environmental education resources into convenient new [classroom kits](#). We hope you find these new classroom kits valuable in working with youth in your respective communities, including educators in the school districts!

Since fostering a love of nature at a young age is so important in creating future stewards of the land and wildlife, we'd greatly appreciate your help getting this information out to educators in the Rocky Mountain West. To make it easier, we've created this [toolkit](#) that includes sample announcements and photos that you may use (and customize) for newsletters/email and social media.

If you do order a classroom kit, think about applying for a chapter grant, immediately below.

Chapter Grants

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

Habitat Hero



Our Habitat Hero Workshop on February 4th at LCCC was a huge success. In total, 596 people registered for the event, including 96 for the in-person workshop and 500 for the Zoom webinar. The Zoom webinar sold out and only four in-person tickets remained. The event raised \$2,400 which covered our expenses and left the chapter with a little over \$500 for future projects.

Almost five hours of the workshop were recorded. If you would like to see all or part of it, you can find it at:

https://audubon.zoom.us/rec/share/osCDcuE6xi48QUSMyxkmv2Enq3xWiszlR4_fBaMw-6rlg99rqv64gqci_mzyctsdh.WpUPcsPvOC4_CgBr

Passcode: cM.ip.0J

The following is a summary of the workshop:

Habitat Hero workshop considers prairie restoration as a means for saving water

By Barb Gorges

Earlier this month, the ninth annual Cheyenne Habitat Hero workshop was held at Laramie County Community College. It attracted about 100 in-person registrants and 400 online. The topic was how to garden in a future with less water available.

Keynote speaker Jim Tolstrup, director of the High Plains Environmental Center in Loveland, Colorado, gave us the background on how the high plains plant and animal communities have fared, first under the indigenous people, then trappers, settlers, ranchers, farmers and suburbanites.

Ninety-seven percent of American grasslands are degraded. It means that what we need today is not conservation – there is barely anything left to conserve – but restoration.

Restoration with native prairie plants is obvious for acreage owners. Prairie flowers replacing our urban lawns benefit pollinator species, if not antelope – unless you live near the base.

One attribute of prairie plants is that once established, they don't need irrigation.

The voices of experience included Jim's, with his slide of lush vegetation that is no longer irrigated. Rex Lockman from the Laramie County Conservation District discussed the Native Prairie Island Project that started a seeding program for old and new septic leach fields last year. Nancy Loomis explained how to harvest free water.

Instead of driving over the snow in your driveway, shovel or blow it onto the lawn on either side. Nancy has put in a garden next to her driveway and the water from the snow she places on it means she doesn't have to water it in the summer. She planted traditional groundcovers like creeping phlox, partridge feather and candytuft. Her future garden expansion will favor the natives she encourages at the garden next to Laramie County Library's parking lot.

In Nancy's and my 1950s-1960s neighborhoods, the sidewalk is adjacent to the curb – no green strip in between. It makes total sense to throw the shoveled snow on your lawn or garden instead of in the street – which makes it difficult for people to park in front of your house when they visit anyway.

A fair amount of your harvested snow from your hardscape, walks, decks, driveways, will evaporate on windy days. Plus, it isn't going to sink much into the frozen ground. Obviously, more of the water from spring snowstorms will sink in.

But extra snow cover provides longer protection from our drying winds for your lawn and garden.

There is another way for you to harvest snow away from your hardscape areas. Let last year's garden growth act as snow fence that collects blowing snow in drifts.

However, I recommend removing vegetable garden vegetation because those plants are prone to diseases. Consider replacing them in winter with other obstacles for collecting snow.

The most thought-provoking presentation was by Cheryl Miller, from the U.S. Geological Survey. She has a groundwater demonstration setup that reminded me of an ant farm. Sand and dirt were pressed between two clear vertical panels. Tubes inserted vertically represented wells. Food coloring representing pollution in one well could be seen to migrate into a neighboring well that was being pumped.

The representation of a stream was kept flowing by snowmelt and stormwater runoff as well as groundwater. Pumping nearby wells caused it to dry up.

Cheryl showed why septic systems need to be monitored so that they don't adversely affect wells for drinking water. The same can be said for nitrates from over-fertilization.

I think the take-home for rural as well as urban residents and gardeners is that groundwater is precious and maybe shouldn't be wasted on landscaping, especially when there are low water alternatives for lawns and flower gardens.

Zach Hutchinson from Audubon Rockies gave us an update on the development of a pollinator survey we can use in our home gardens. Michelle Bohanan gave us a pep talk on winter sowing, and provided the jugs, soil and native seed to try it at home.

We are already talking about a theme for next year's workshop: getting back to basics. How do you restore, or install, a piece of prairie on your property?

Meanwhile, check the Habitat Hero information available at Audubon Rockies and Cheyenne Audubon websites.

This spring, look for native prairie plants for sale, but not the fancy varieties at the big box stores. Try shopping online at the High Plains Environmental Center's plant sale featuring 150 straight native species. It starts March 31 and continues into September.

Place your order and then drive down to Loveland in the next day or two to pick it up. Be sure to allow time for a walk around the demonstration gardens there. It's hard to believe only the new transplants are irrigated.

Barb Gorges, author of the book, "Cheyenne Garden Gossip," and the blog <http://cheyennegardengossip.wordpress.com>, writes a monthly column about the joys and challenges of gardening on the High Plains. Contact her at bgorges4@msn.com.

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>

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Young Birder Event 2023

This year's event will be held June 29-July 2 in Ithaca, New York. The Young Birders Event aims to bring together teenagers with a passion for birds and an interest in pursuing a career that connects with birds. You'll meet people who have successful careers that involve birds in a variety of ways from ornithological researchers and tour leaders, to audio specialists and computer scientists.

All high school-aged birders are invited to apply (students entering grades 9-12 in the fall). Please fill out an application and send it in by March 31st, 2023. For additional information and applications go to: <https://ebird.org/news/the-cornell-lab-young-birders-event-2022>.

Mark your Calendars – 13 May Global Big Day

Global Big Day is an annual celebration of the birds around you. No matter where you are, join us virtually on 13 May, help celebrate World Migratory Bird Day, and share the birds you find with eBird. For more information, go to: [Global Big Day—13 May 2023 - eBird](#)

Due to weather concerns, there was no field trip or Country Club survey in February.

February 17-20 - Great Backyard Bird Count results

Here are the statistics from this year's GBBC:

World: Species: 7497 Checklists 318,300

United States: Species 665 Checklists 192,300

Wyoming: 94 species 358 checklists 23 Counties

Laramie County: 34 Species 32 checklists 10 Observers

Combined checklist for Laramie County (34 Species)

Cackling Goose

Canada Goose

Mallard

Common Goldeneye

Common Merganser

Rock Pigeon

Eurasian Collared-Dove

Northern Harrier

Red-tailed Hawk

Rough-legged Hawk

Coopers Hawk

Belted Kingfisher

Downy Woodpecker

Hairy Woodpecker

Northern Flicker

American Kestrel

Blue Jay

Black-billed Magpie

American Crow

Common Raven

Mountain Chickadee

Red-breasted Nuthatch

European Starling

Horned Lark

Townsend's Solitaire

American Robin
House Sparrow
House Finch
American Goldfinch
Lapland Longspur
American Tree Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco
Song Sparrow
Western Meadowlark



*By summer, young Black-crowned Night-herons are fishing along the edge of the lake at Holliday Park.
Photo by Mark Gorges.*

Birders get look behind the scenes, find more eBird perks

By Barb Gorges

eBird has come a long way since its debut in 2002.

As a means of collecting scientific bird data by offering birders a place to save their bird lists, Cornell Lab of Ornithology invented an ingenious bit of community (or citizen) science and it just keeps getting better.

Anyone can go to eBird.org and sign up for free. The website, under the Help tab, has tutorials on how to enter your bird sightings.

Don Jones, University of Wyoming graduate student studying sagebrush songbirds, and Cheyenne Audubon's February guest speaker, said that for Wyoming, 15,000 different birdwatchers have submitted 200,000 checklists so far. Wyoming eBird data was recently added to the Wyoming Natural Diversity Database.

Globally, as of the 20th anniversary May 2022, 820,000 eBirders contributed 1.3 billion observations.

Since scientists are expected to use eBird data, there is a review process. Once I received a polite email from the regional reviewer asking if I had indeed seen 49 black-crowned night-herons at Holliday Park, and if so, could I send more information.

When I explained that it was a breeding colony that has been there for years (and is still there, but a bit diminished as the park loses the big cottonwoods), my report was accepted. Today, I can look up that night-heron sighting on eBird and tell you it started May 29 at 7:45 a.m. and I saw 220 birds of 15 species while walking 1.5 miles in an hour.

Don, a volunteer eBird reviewer for 10 years, explained that if the reviewer doesn't think you have enough information to verify the entry, the entry can stay on your list but it won't be publicly available. Don's been in that boat, especially when birding abroad when he's discovered he's made identification mistakes. But then he was able to fix them.

The globe is divided into review areas. We are in the Laramie/Goshen counties area. Volunteer reviewers familiar with the bird life here, like Don, set a filter for each species specifying which months it might be seen and maximum number seen at one time. The number is higher for a migratory species during migration months than during breeding months when birds spread out and become secretive.

Filters do change over time. Perhaps an invasive species like the Eurasian collared-dove has moved in or another species, like the dickcissel, is becoming rarer.

In the last few years, eBird has added new perks for birdwatchers. One is signing up for notices for birds you'd like to see.

For instance, I can generate a list of species I haven't seen in Laramie County but others have – target species. My 87 target species seem to be a lot of rarities – species unlikely to be seen here, but maybe common elsewhere. For instance, eBird has only three reports of prairie warbler, an eastern species, in Cheyenne, in 2000 and 2001. I have a much better chance of finding native burrowing owls last reported in 2022.

Once you know what birds you want to see, you can sign up for alerts. There are two kinds. Rare Bird Alerts are for species the American Birding Association considers rare for your area of interest. If I sign up for Needs Alerts for Laramie County, I'll be alerted whenever someone reports a species I haven't seen here yet.

Note: When eBird says "Laramie," they mean our county, not our neighboring town to the west.

eBird is handy for preparing for a birding trip to an area you aren't familiar with by showing where publicly accessible hotspots are and generating a list of species for you. You can see the latest observations.

You can even generate a multiple-choice species identification quiz for a location at a particular time of year, either with photos or bird sounds.

After your trip, you can pull together all the checklists you submitted and add notes and photos to make a "Trip Report" to save and share.

Under the Science tab are all sorts of wonderful interpretations of eBird data: Visualizations of bird abundance, abundance trends, migratory route animations plus improved range maps showing breeding, wintering and migration areas for each species.

There's the list of published studies using eBird data. There were 160 peer-reviewed publications in 2022, like this one: "Bai, J., P. Hou, D. Jin, J. Zhai, Y. Ma, and J. Zhao (2022) "Habitat Suitability Assessment of Black-Necked Crane (*Grus nigricollis*) in the Zoige Grassland Wetland Ecological Function Zone on the Eastern Tibetan Plateau." *Diversity* 14(7)."

It's incredible to think we birdwatchers, while having fun watching birds all over the world, with just a little extra effort, maybe using the mobile app, can contribute knowledge that helps birds. For questions about eBird in Wyoming, contact Don at djones46@uwyo.edu.

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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