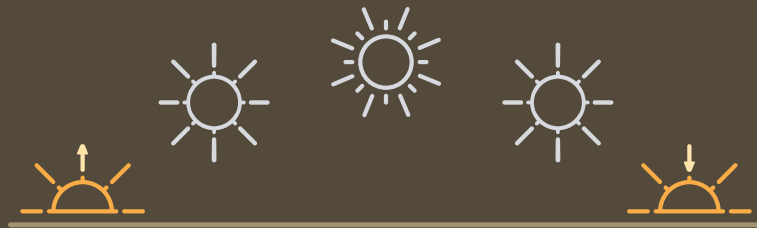


FINDING FEATHERED FRIENDS

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO BIRDWATCHING AT FORT COLLINS NATURAL AREAS



The best time to see birds is just after sunrise and just before sunset.

BIRDWATCHING IS A FUN AND REWARDING WAY TO CONNECT WITH NATURE, whether you're spotting a hawk soaring overhead or listening to the cheerful calls of songbirds in the trees. Fort Collins' natural areas provide a variety of habitats that support hundreds of bird species throughout the year.

BIRDS PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN OUR ECOSYSTEM. They pollinate plants, control insect populations, and help scientists monitor changes to the environment. With just a little patience and observation, you can begin to recognize different species and their behaviors.



Great Blue Heron

OPTIONAL SUPPLIES



Water
bottle



A pair of
binoculars



A birding app
downloaded to
your smartphone
(Merlin, Audubon, eBird)
or a guidebook



If it's sunny, a
hat for shade



American Goldfinch

BIRDWATCHING ACTIVITIES

TAKE A BIRDWATCHING HIKE!

- Walk quietly, listen for calls, and use binoculars to spot birds.
- Try to identify three species and log them in an app!

BECOME A BIRD DETECTIVE!

- Depending on the time of day and weather conditions, it might be difficult to see birds.
- Birds leave evidence behind even when they're hidden!
- Look for clues like nests, feathers, tracks, or woodpecker holes.

COUNT BIRDS LIKE A SCIENTIST!

- Set a 10-minute timer and count how many birds you see.
- Compare results from different locations, times of day, or weather conditions.
- Try visiting the same spot for several days or weeks in a row. What differences do you notice?

RESPONSIBLE BIRDWATCHING TIPS

- Keep a respectful distance and avoid disturbing nests.
- Use binoculars instead of approaching too closely.
- "Take only photos, leave only footprints."
- ***Please leave any feathers you find.***

Northern Flicker

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

- Come to a bird activity with Natural Areas!
- Connect with the Northern Colorado Bird Alliance (formerly Fort Collins Audubon Society) for information about local birds, lectures, and bird walks.
- Get a guidebook. Check one out from your library or visit a local bookstore.
- Check out local bird lists online:
fortcollinsaudubon.org/pages/checklists



Red-winged Blackbird

Natural Areas Department
Departamento de Áreas Naturales

970-416-2815

Rangers
Guardaparques

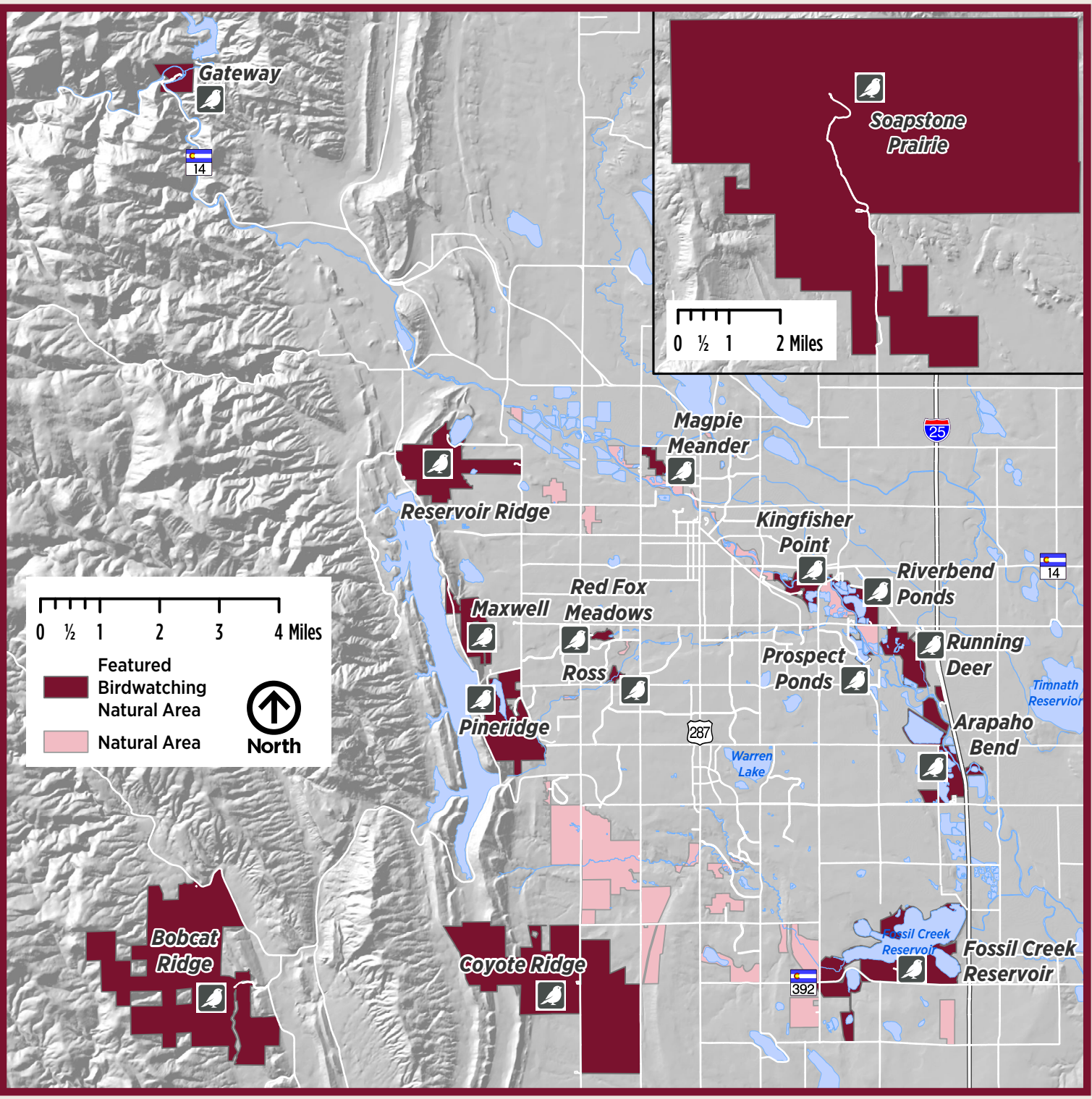
970-416-2147

Life-threatening emergency
Emergencias donde pelagra la vida

911

fcgov.com/naturalareas
fcgov.com/naturalareas/espanol
naturalareas@fcgov.com

BIRDING MAP



In 2018, the City of Fort Collins, in partnership with the Fort Collins Audubon Society and the National Audubon Society, designated areas along the Cache la Poudre River and Fossil Creek as an Important Bird Area (IBA). This means the area provides important habitats for birds, including places to nest or rest during migration. Over 300 bird species have been spotted in these natural areas, making them a crucial part of bird conservation in Colorado.

NATURAL AREAS WITH WATER (LAKES, RIVERS, WETLANDS)

BEST SPOTS: any natural area along the Poudre River, Running Deer, Prospect Ponds, Fossil Creek Reservoir, Riverbend Ponds, Dixon Reservoir at Pineridge, Arapaho Bend, Gateway, Kingfisher Point

COMMON BIRDS: great blue heron, belted kingfisher, American white pelican, red-winged blackbird, mallard, osprey, green-winged teal, Bullock's oriole, Canada goose, numerous species of warblers and other songbirds during spring migration

Visit Riverbend Ponds and spot osprey diving in the water to catch fish!

NATURAL AREAS WITH PRAIRIE / GRASSLAND ECOSYSTEMS

BEST SPOTS: Soapstone Prairie, Coyote Ridge, Bobcat Ridge, Reservoir Ridge

BIRDS TO LOOK FOR: red-tailed hawk, western meadowlark, Swainson's hawk, horned lark

NATURAL AREAS IN THE FOOTHILLS & MOUNTAINS

BEST SPOTS: Bobcat Ridge, Gateway, Reservoir Ridge, Maxwell, Pineridge

BIRDS TO LOOK FOR: Steller's jay, mountain bluebird, spotted towhee, turkey vulture, black-billed magpie, American dipper, bobolink

During early summer, bobolinks use the fields at Reservoir Ridge Natural Area to raise their young. It's one of the few places in Northern Colorado they can be seen! Take a walk along the trail, starting at the Overland parking lot. Can you hear their distinctive, bubbly, and melodic call?

URBAN NATURAL AREAS

BEST SPOTS: Red Fox Meadows, Ross, Magpie Meander

BIRDS TO LOOK FOR: American robin, black-capped chickadee, northern flicker, house finch, nighthawk, great-horned owl

Go for a picnic at sunset and listen to the birds as they nest for the night. Hear the nighthawks overhead as they fly through the sky, catching insects.

BIRD BEHAVIOR AND IDENTIFICATION TIPS

When birdwatching, listen for songs and calls – many species are heard before they are seen! Take time to let an app listen to the sounds and identify them for you. Then, turn the app off and test your knowledge.



LOOK AT KEY FEATURES, SUCH AS SIZE, SHAPE, COLOR PATTERNS, AND BEHAVIOR TO HELP IDENTIFY BIRDS.

GREAT BLUE HERON: Tall bird with a long, spear-like bill, elegant S-shaped neck and long legs.



RED-TAILED HAWK: Large body with broad, rounded wings, a hooked beak, and reddish tail. Belly is mostly light-colored with a dark band on chest. Call is loud and high-pitched, and is often used as the sound of an eagle in film.



BOBOLINK: Small, sturdy body with a short, pointed beak, a slightly rounded back, short tail, and long narrow wings. Call can be described as “melodic” or “robotic”.

