



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Hello, everyone and welcome to our new Audubon year! I'm pleased to bring you a lot of "news!" Your officers and board members do listen to you, and not just to figure out what kind of a "bird" you are! Last year, you told us that the meetings were running too long. Point well taken. So this year, we bring to you a whole new meeting style that will be fun, informative, and much shorter.

All of our upcoming field trips, announcements, events and recognitions of the nice folks who bring treats to meetings will be written up on whiteboards around the edges of the room. The same information (and more) is printed in *The Pileated Post*, our world-famous newsletter and on our world-class chapter website, www.FlatheadAudubon.org. We will rely on you to read these and won't take your time duplicating them during the meeting.

In the past, we have often scheduled two or more "entertainment" sections of the meetings, like Conservation Achievement Recognitions, Bird Brains, etc., in addition to our excellent programs. This year, each meeting will have just one entertainment item, to allow more time for our program presenters. We're hoping that this change will give us more time for questions and answers, too.

Some things will definitely not change. Meetings are still in the Community Room of the Gateway



Community Center (come in the west side door by our banner). You will see the same friendly faces, learn about birds and conservation issues and projects, and of course, we will still have "Bird Sightings."

What else is "news" this year? Our Field Trip chairs, Kathy and Cory, are working on a set of guidelines for our field trips – nothing bureaucratic, just ways to help everybody have a good time and see as many birds as possible. We will roll those out to you soon.

We have a lively and impressive crew of observers who are taking turns at the Hawk Watch site on Mount Aeneas. This year's "new" is a customized app on an iPad that keeps track of all of the raptors with just a tap on the tablet. No more reams of paper forms to fill out or having to wait until season's end to find out how we did! During the afternoon of the Birds of Prey Festival, September 16, we will introduce the new app and offer training for all who think they might like to become a Hawk Watch observer.

We hope you like the "new" Flathead Audubon this year. Our membership drive is coming up soon, and we hope to add lot of new names to our member list and new faces to our meetings. So come out and enjoy the fun. You are bound to have a very "tweet" time!

By Kay Mitchell, President

**IT's MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME!
USE THE FORM ON THE LAST PAGE!**

GET THE PILEATED POST BY EMAIL!
Save trees and money. See the note on the last page.

SEPTEMBER FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

Monday, September 11, 2017. 7 PM Flathead Audubon General Meeting, Gateway Community Center, US Hwy 2 West, Kalispell. See page 3.

Tuesday, September 5, 2017. 6 PM. FAS Board of Directors Meeting, 295 3rd Ave EN. All welcome.

Saturday, September 16, 2017. 7:30 AM-4 PM. Birds of Prey Festival. See page 6.

Saturday, September 23, 2017. 8 AM –5PM Jewel Basin Hawk Watch trip. See page 9.

Saturday, September 30, 2017. 9 AM-noon. Owen Sowerwine Natural Area Workday. See page 4.

BIRD OF THE MONTH

The "All" American Coot

By John Hughes

The American Coot, *Fulica americana*, (*Fulica* from Latin meaning "coot") is truly the "All" American Coot. While conventional range maps indicate the absence of Coots in some states in the northeast and Alaska, an examination of eBird's range map confirms yearly sightings in all continental U.S. states and irregular sightings in Hawaii. This species' range also includes most of western Canada, all of Mexico and Central America and some sightings in northern South America – truly a widespread species. Being so widespread often leads some to dismiss this species. Hopefully this article

will provide some reasons to observe some of the American Coot's behaviors more closely the next time you are in the field.

The American Coot is in the Rail family (Rallidae), which includes other local species like Sora and Virginia Rails. These two species are much more secretive than the American Coot and far less abundant. Coots are medium sized, plump, aquatic birds measuring an average of 15 inches in length and weighing an average of 25.6 ounces with males being slightly larger than females. They have black heads and necks and slate-gray bodies with white, lateral undertail coverts. Most notably, Coots have white bills and white frontal shields. There is often a reddish-brown spot near the top of the shield. Their toes are not webbed like a duck but possess lobes that aid them with swimming and diving and that conveniently fold back with each step when traversing on land.

American Coots are extremely vocal, and their calls are usually the first thing you hear when birding near their habitats. Ornithologists recognize six different vocalizations in adult Coots. These vocalizations include recognition notes, courtship notes, alarm notes, perturbation notes, warning notes and intimidation notes. The reader is encouraged to listen to Coot vocalizations at Cornell's Birds of North America site (<https://birdsna.org>). This wide array of vocalizations is believed to have developed because Coots spend much of their time in dense, emergent vegetation where visibility is poor. Interestingly, due to differences in the male and female syrinx (voice box),

males can be distinguished from females with the female voice being typically low and nasal and the male voice high and clear. Along with calls, Coots will also splash about rather noisily to let their presence be known.



A wide variety of freshwater wetlands are inhabited by American Coots depending on the season. During breeding season, preferred wetland habitats need two characteristics; the presence of dense stands of emergent aquatic vegetation (preferably cattail or bulrush) along parts of the shoreline and deeper water within the stands during nesting and chick rearing. Many different types of wetlands including

brackish waters and large lakes are utilized during migration. Winter habitats include all of the above along with estuaries, bays and lagoons.

American Coots are primarily herbivorous consuming a wide variety of aquatic vascular plants and algae. They will also eat some grasses and grains. Animals make up a small part of their diet, more so when they are feeding their chicks. Food is gathered while in the water by dabbling or diving. Typically food items are brought to the surface before being consumed with the exception of mollusks or aquatic insect larvae. It is not unusual to find Coots grazing on lawns and golf courses.

While there is some dispute, it appears that most pair bonding and courtship occurs on breeding grounds. American Coots are classified as socially monogamous, and pair bonding is somewhat different between new mates and those that have reunited after a separation. Birds bond and court at their initial meeting by touching bills (billing); followed by bowing of the submissive partner and the presentation of the neck and head; and finally by nibbling where the dominant partner buries its bill in the submissive partner's feathers working its way along the length of the partner's neck, back and breast. Already paired birds respond by bracing at their reunion. Bracing involves swimming rapidly towards each other with the front of their bodies elevated and necks erect. Establishing a territory is the next hurdle once the bond has been formed.

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September Program

Montana Peregrine Falcon Survey

presented by

Jay Sumner

Please join us at 7 PM on Monday, September 11. We will meet in the United Way Conference Room at the Gateway Community Center, off US Highway 2 West in Kalispell, where Jay Sumner of the Montana Peregrine Institute will present a program on Montana's Peregrine Falcons.

The Peregrine Falcon, considered by most authorities to be the fastest animal on this planet, was almost extinct in Montana in the early 1980's. The Peregrine Fund, in conjunction with Federal, State, and private organizations, introduced over 600 young peregrines into Montana. This introduction kick-started the recovery of our Peregrine Falcons.

In 1999, Jay Sumner and Ralph Rogers, bringing combined raptor research experience of over 80 years, and with the help of federal and state biologists, initiated intensive surveys of the Montana peregrine population. Documented over the last 18 years through the efforts of the Montana Peregrine Institute,



Montana Peregrine Institute

data have shown that the population of the Peregrine Falcon in Montana has expanded from 18 nesting pairs in 1998 to over 100 nesting pairs in 2017. However, that the peregrine is an apex predator feeding primarily on riparian birds must be considered. Because of migratory behavior, general mobility, and

proximity to water, these prey species tend to encounter more environmental toxins than do mammals, and Peregrines accumulate these more than do other raptors.

Further, limited data indicate that the migratory destinations of many Peregrines lie south

of the American border in regions of the world where regulation of pesticides, including the chlorinated hydrocarbons, is virtually unknown. Plainly, immediately identifying any major downward flux in populations is crucial, lest infamous history repeat itself.

Conservation Achievement Recognition

Awarded to

Steve Thompson

The Flathead Audubon Society will present Steve Thompson of Whitefish with their Conservation Achievement Recognition at the September meeting. Steve has had an impressive impact on Montana conservation issues since he arrived in Northwest Montana in 1991. Although Steve readily admits he doesn't do well as a "cog in a bureaucracy", he does recognize the importance of collaboration and building relationships to get anything accomplished.

How did a boy from the Rust Belt of Ohio be-

come such a strong advocate for wilderness, the environment and the health of our planet? Steve credits his involvement in the Boy Scouts and his attendance at Deep Springs

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Steve Thompson

Photo by Jake

Remembering Jane Lopp

Jane Lopp passed away April 21, 2017, as a result of injuries sustained in an automobile accident. Because the May issue of the Pileated Post was already in press, the following remembrance of Jane has been included in this issue.

* * * * *

Jane Lopp devoted her energy and talents to serving people – with enthusiasm, with determination, with intelligence, and with kindness. Her vigorous involvement in a large number of service organizations in Flathead Valley, her support for individuals in need, her active participation in state level committees for human rights and social justice, are just some of the ways she worked to make this world a better place. For a more complete account, take a look at her obituary, still available on the Daily Inter Lake website at <http://www.dailyinterlake.com/records/obituaries?text=Jane+Lopp>

The Flathead Audubon Society was privileged to have Jane as a friend and generous supporter.

Through her company Jane Lopp & Associates LLC, Jane provided Flathead Audubon with the opportunity to obtain grants through the Prudential Global Volunteer Days Program. This Program enables a local Prudential agents such as Jane to apply for a \$1000 grant for a nonprofit group when the group organizes and carries out a day of volunteer effort that benefits its local community benefit and also attracts at least a specified number of volunteers. In 2004



Jane sponsored an application on the behalf of Flathead Audubon based on our 2004 Owen Sowerwine Workday. Jane herself was one of the volunteers at this workday – using her wheel-chair accessible van to shuttle workers to the appropriate work sites in Owen Sowerwine. And she brought along some of her company employees to help, including husband Bob – who also, by the way, was the one who actually wrote up the application. The workday attracted enough volunteers and

the application was successful; a Prudential Global Volunteer Days \$1000 grant was awarded to Flathead Audubon that year. In all, FAS received the Prudential grant 11 years until the grant program ended.

Jane also generously provided Flathead Audubon with much needed meeting space. Starting in fall 2004, Jane made the spacious and well-appointed meeting room of the Jane Lopp & Associates Building available to Flathead Audubon for the monthly FAS Board Meetings, and for the occasional meetings of the various FAS Committees.

In addition to this organizational support, Jane gave us her friendship. Greeting Jane at FAS meetings meant a warm handshake, trading stories, sharing laughter, and enjoying Jane's dry humor. It is hard to take in the fact that when Flathead Audubon begins meeting in September, after our usual busy summer, Jane will not be with us. We will miss her greatly.

by Linda Winnie

"Land health is the capacity for self-renewal in the soils, waters, plants, and animals that collectively comprise the land." Aldo Leopold

2017 OSNA Work Day

The long-awaited 2017 annual workday for the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area is scheduled for Saturday, 30 September. We'll gather at the Montessori School on Willow Glen Drive at 9 AM. We'll car-pool to OSNA from Montessori and should be done by noon or a little after.

There are a few of the usual projects that need to be tackled –some trails cleared and mowed, some old fencing removed, and, of course, as always weeds to be addressed. Many hands make light work, so please come with work gloves and wearing old clothes appropriate for the weather. More information

to follow at the September meeting and in the October Pileated Post.

This should be a fun and quick day as well as sprucing up OSNA. If you have any questions or suggestions or directions, please contact Bob Lee at 270-0371 or RML3@centurytel.net or Linda Winnie at 253-7430 or lindawin@centurytel.net.





2018 FAS CALENDAR NOW AVAILABLE!

After a one year hiatus, Flathead Audubon is back with a new phenology calendar for 2018. What is “phenology”? It’s the study of annual events and this calendar has more events than ever! Our knowledgeable Conservation Educator, Dennis Olson, has been busy filling every square.... 365 squares to be exact, chock full of natural history. In this calendar, you’ll find out when elk begin to round up their harems and what a “frog-cicle” is. In addition to the wonderful daily information, each month highlights some of the unique animals (and a bonus ecosystem) found on both sides of the “Crown of the Continent”. While the calendar for

2016 focused on the high alpine areas, the monthly features on this calendar focus on the flora and fauna on and in the slopes, forests, and meadows that extend from the rocky high places of Glacier National Park. We specifically chose beautiful and interesting photos that told a story and Dennis tells these stories below each photo.

These calendars are a perfect addition to your wall and make great gifts for friends and family. Pick them up at Flathead Audubon events and online at the Flathead Audubon website. *by Jake Bramante*

CHIRPS & SQUAWKS

Highlights from May 1, 2017 Board Meeting

- ◆ Heard treasurer’s report. Total assets have increased from last year due mainly to the rising stock market .
- ◆ The 2018 MT Bird Festival will be hosted by FAS with a June 5 special board meeting on the subject.
- ◆ Agreed to donate \$300 to United Way as appreciation for the use of our general meeting room.
- ◆ Heard report that the Birdathon is on track to be done similarly to previous years.
- ◆ Heard report that the Phenology Calendar is printed and the marketing process has been set up.
- ◆ Reviewed and approved the budget for 2017-2018 fiscal year.
- ◆ Heard Education Report from Denny Olson. He participated in or led many events with more to come through the rest of the spring and summer. The programs will have contacted approximately 6000 people. Still need an Education Committee chairperson.
- ◆ Heard that Joe Batts is still trying to get info from National Audubon concerning wording in our Constitution and Bylaw revisions.



Conservation Educator's Niche

By Denny Olson

Normally, the Conservation Educator's role is a bit more laid-back in the summer. The FAS Board suspends its meetings, schools are closed, educational trunks are unavailable during the month of July, and scheduled events wind down after Birdathon, International Migratory Bird Day, Tally Campout and the Montana Audubon Bird Festival. I had great fun MC-ing and judging the bird-calling contest in Great Falls at the state festival. I did a couple of assembly programs as alter-egos Professor Avian Guano and Doc Wild at Hedges School.

And then, this year, the gears were shifted and the direction changed. Our FAS-managed, 442-acre Owen Sowerwine Natural Area (OSNA) has been used for occasional education programs, but largely exists as a quiet place for the public to explore, go birding and contemplate. Our OSNA committee has done a wonderful job of creating and maintaining trails, bridges, entry points and kiosks, but they have also noticed problems with the naturalness of the Natural Area. Invasive plants like hound's tongue, Canada thistle and an exotic highbush cranberry are increasing in abundance despite our volunteer efforts. The largest piece of OSNA, the Big Island, has been inaccessible during spring and early summer (which may or may not be a good thing).

And on first impression, in most of OSNA, it seems that our black cottonwoods are not reproducing well. There is an abundance of very old, very large, cottonwoods, and very little recruitment of new trees as replacements. This is concerning mostly because diverse age classes of black cottonwoods are strongly correlated to bird diversity in Western riparian areas.

So, the FAS OSNA Committee, Education Committee and Grants Committee saw the opportunity for some ongoing research into our diversity problem, a new education effort mixed in, and getting the tools

for many other follow-up projects down the road.

I presented our objectives to the Flathead Conservation District in early June, and they generously voted (on the spot!) to fund our need for \$2065-worth of forestry and tree-aging tools. The present point-count cottonwood age-class study is being conducted by International Baccalaureate Students from Flathead High School, as part of their Community Action Service requirement. They are testing the declining cottonwoods hypothesis, and will be presenting a program on the results for our November FAS general meeting. The students are really working hard out there mapping, coring trees and processing data, and I have had great fun training and working with them and am excited about seeing the results of their study.

The project will also be an educational "two-fer". Besides the educational value of conducting good science, five of the high school students will be showing what they do to Hedges 4th-5th-grade students On September 8th, as part of what is becoming our traditional older-to-younger mentoring day in OSNA. **I'm looking for a few Audubon volunteers to help with other activities that day**, and no particular experience is necessary!

Then, on Saturday, September 16, we will be back into the saddle again at the eleventh annual Birds of Prey Festival at Lone Pine State Park – bigger and better than ever! **(See the details about the Birds of Prey Festival in another article herein.)**

Lastly, I get the feeling that I'm wearing out our old standby Audubon volunteers, and I'm looking for more folks to help with some of our education programs. If you know of anyone who might be interested who is NOT on the overworked Board of Directors, please let me know, and I'll get on with the business of charming, cajoling, and recruiting them to help us in our wonderful and important work.

Coming September 16th at Lone Pine State Park: The Eleventh Annual Birds of Prey Festival!

Continuing a tradition started by the family of the late Rod Ash in 2006, Flathead Audubon, partnering with Lone Pine State Park will expand on our big public event of the year starting with bird hikes at 7:30 AM, and exhibits, booths and programs beginning at 9:30 AM. USFS, Glacier NPS, MTFWP, Audubon, and many other organizations will be there with fun activities. Fancy Face face painting will be there to turn you and your kids into "raptors" for the day. Benny's Hot Dogs will have lunch available. The Montana Bird La-

dy will be there with her live Rough-legged Hawk, Prairie Falcon, and a tiny new Saw-whet Owl!

This year's program lineup promises to be very "edutaining". Amy Seaman, Montana Audubon Conservation Program Manager, has been stalking the mysterious Black Swift this summer in the Glacier National Park backcountry, where she and her crew discovered five new nesting areas to bring the total to eleven – the densest concentration of these rare birds in the country! *continued on page 9*

JEWEL BASIN HAWK WATCH IN ITS 10TH YEAR - VOLUNTEERS WELCOME!

Initiated in 2007 by Dan Casey with the American Bird Conservancy and a hearty crew of dedicated hawk watchers, the Jewel Basin Hawk Watch is entering its 10th year of season-long surveys. "It really takes about 10 years of continuous and accurate data collection to begin to see population and productivity trends from one hawk watch site", says Dan Casey, now with Ducks Unlimited in Billings, MT. "This site provides some of the best accipiter data in the northern Rockies and when the data are combined regionally and nationally, we can begin to see important trends by species". This project has been made possible through the generous support of the Flathead National Forest; Plum Creek Foundation; Flathead Audubon Society; Wings in Nature; Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks; and other new 2017 sponsors.

This project needs field volunteers who do not need any prior birding experience. Volunteers do need the ability to hike 1400 feet up the Mount Aeneas trail, use binoculars to spot migratory raptors that fly

by or over the Jewel Basin Hawk Watch, and help the primary observer record data. "These volunteers are essential to keeping track of birds as they fly by", says Barbara Summer, veteran primary observer. "They help with observations, data collection, and also visiting with hikers and others as they pass through the site". This is a job that is really hard to do by one's self, particularly on the busy days", says Summer.

As part of the Birds of Prey Festival on September 16th at Lone Pine State Park (see accompanying article in this issue). Jewel Basin Hawk Watch team is hosting an afternoon session for potential and all volunteers. You will learn simple identification tips, how data are collected and recorded, how to sign up on the Yahoo Group website, and how to get to the site (including potential ride-sharing). Flathead Audubon will also be leading a field trip on September 23 for potential volunteers and others (see Field Trips this issue).
by Gael Bissell

ANNUAL MAY POTLUCK MEETING

The annual potluck dinner and meeting of the Flathead Audubon Society was held on May 8, 2017 at the Whitefish Community Center.

In celebration of Flathead Audubon's 40th Birthday, Kay Mitchell and Linda Winnie introduced the eleven former FAS Presidents and five former FAS Newsletter Editors who were present at the meeting. Pictures of these two groups are on the FAS website ("FAS Presidents and Editors Honored...")

FAS elected President, Kay Mitchell, Vice President, Gael Bissell and a new director, Rod Wallette at our annual business meeting.

Our Constitution and ByLaws committee comprised of Kay Mitchell, Bob Lopp, Bob Lee and Joe Batts proposed changes to our current documents.

The changes are listed in the May newsletter and were accepted at the May 8, 2017 annual meeting.

Dr. Eric Greene of UM presented a fascinating program about Ospreys – explaining Osprey biology and ecology, as well as introducing some of the individual Ospreys he has worked with. He showed some amazing slow motion footage of an osprey diving head first into the water, which displayed how Ospreys dislocate their shoulders on the way down to avoid breaking bones on impact.

FAS Treasurer Joe Batts reports that we netted \$1157.00 from the silent auction. That's \$300 more than last year. Thanks to all who brought items for the silent auction, and to all those who contributed to FAS with their purchases. *by Marylane Pannell*

Flathead Audubon Marches in Bigfork July 4th Parade

Flathead Audubon made its inaugural march in Bigfork's annual parade on July 4, 2017!

Donning costumes from our FAS education trunks and carrying signs about our activities, a dozen members and friends plunged into the 6,000 to 7,000 spectators estimated to have lined Bigfork's Grand and Electric Avenues.

Our little and big birds flapping their wings and our really "Kuhl" owl (Dick Kuhl, that is) were a big hit with children and parents. Marchers were delighted by spectator response to the FAS parade entry. It was a

great way to celebrate our country AND Flathead Audubon! *By Paula Smith*



Spring/Summer 2017 Field Trips Recap

It was another full and exciting spring and summer for birdwatching in the Flathead Valley. We had a lot of fun, observed some excellent birds (lifers anyone?), and saw some beautiful country. **Thank you to all of our wonderful and dedicated field trip leaders!**

Earth Day 2017, April 22: Held at the Whitefish Middle School, this was a huge success. Denny Olson, Barbara Summers and Kathy Ross spent a fun day sharing information about birds and conservation with dozens of folks. Every kid wanted to be a bird!

Forestry Expo 2017, May 6: A beautiful day in the forest with many interested adults and young people passing through our booth to hear about birds, field trips, and conservation issues that Flathead Audubon is addressing. The kids waited in line to be dressed and photographed like a bird. Audubon volunteers made it happen for them!



Smith Lake, May 14: A dozen participants followed Paul Rossi and Cory Davis around the wetlands and lake. 57 species were observed including all three teal species, Wood Duck, Sora, Wilson's Snipe, Red-Necked Grebe, and Sandhill Cranes.

Swan River Wildlife Refuge, May 20: An intrepid foursome got a unique tour of the Refuge with Swan Valley Connections Executive Director Maria Mantas that included many fascinating historical and ecological anecdotes. 61 species were observed!

Camas Road in Glacier NP, May 21: A beautiful day in the park with looks at Fox Sparrow, Vaux's Swift, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Black-backed Woodpecker, and a last minute Harlequin Duck flying under the bridge we were gathered on.



Ninepipes and Pablo Community Bird Festival, May 25: Seven enthusiastic birders were treated to views of young Great Horned Owls, Trumpeter Swans, Red-tailed hawks and many species of waterfowl on a beautiful day in the Mission Valley. After an afternoon of birding, everyone attended the Bird Festival in Pablo. Audubon groups, Native Plant Society, Loon Working group and many other local conservation groups had wonderful educational displays and activities for young and old.

Lubec-Coonsa Creek Area of Glacier NP, June 6: Led by Steve Gniadek and fantastic views of birds, bears, and wildflowers were enjoyed by 10 participants. Great time to hear and learn the different calls of Flycatchers and Sparrows along with the voices of dozens of other migrant song birds. Two beautiful grizzlies crossed our path at a safe distance and the spring wildflower display was beautifully colorful and distracting.

Tally Lake Weekend, June 15-17: A little wet for the weekend, but that didn't dampen the good time had by all. As usual the food and fireside conversations were delicious. Forty-four species were recorded including what many thought was a Palm Warbler!

Flathead Lake Biological Station, June 19: see the webpage for this one!

Marias Pass and Eastside of Rockies, June 24: Following our fearless guide, Paul Rossi, 9 participants put in a long day and were rewarded with many excellent birds including Northern Waterthrush, Wilson's Snipe, and Willow and Alder Flycatchers at the Lubec Lake Trail. East of the Mountains, we saw not one, but two (!), dark morph Ferruginous Hawks, Clay-colored Sparrow, and both McCown's and Chestnut-collared Longspurs.

Going Batty! July 28: Approximately 22 people including the leaders and assistants enjoyed perfect weather and lots of bats. As dark fell about 30 bats were mist netted in short order. Sixteen were kept for closer examination and the rest released. All those examined were little brown bats except for one long-legged myotis. Participants were able to get close looks at the individuals as they were weighed, measured, and identified to species. Of special interest was one individual estimated to be 30-40 years old based on the extensive tooth wear. *by Cory Davis and Kathy Ross*



FALL FIELD TRIPS FOR YOU!

All Flathead Audubon field trips are free and open to the public and are geared for all ages and levels of field experience. They are led by area biologists, retired professionals, and some of the best birders in the region. For all Field Trips, dress for the weather, bring binoculars or spotting scope if you have them, wear sturdy footwear, and drive and pull off the road safely. All drivers must have their own vehicle insurance. For more information, contact Kathy Ross at 837-3837 or Cory Davis at 257-3166, or the individual field trip leader listed below. Also, a free brochure, "Birding Hotspots of the Flathead" is available at the Flathead Audubon general meetings and on www.FlatheadAudubon.org.



JEWEL BASIN HAWK WATCH TRIP, Saturday, September 23, 8 AM-5PM. This is a follow-up field trip opportunity for those planning to attend the Jewel Basin Hawk Watch training at Lone Pine State Park on Sept. 16th (see accompanying article) as well as anyone who is interested in seeing migrating fall raptors. The hike to the Hawk Watch site will take approximately 2 hours and is uphill at a moderately strenuous pace. We'll plan to be back at the trailhead by 4 PM and the school by 5 PM. Weather can affect the field trip so dress accordingly. The temperature and winds can make the "feels like" temperature 20-30 degrees colder at the ridge than in the valley. **This trip is limited to 9 people.** If you're interested in participating please call or email Cory Davis (406-257-3166, piranga99@gmail.com)

SANDHILL CRANES AT WEST VALLEY WETLANDS, Saturday evening October 7. Enjoy an evening gathering with the Flathead Land Trust and a large contingent of Sandhill Cranes. The cranes will be congregating in the West Valley and we'll join them. For more details contact Laura Katzman (lkatzman@flatheadlandtrust.org, 406-752-8293).

PROJECT FEEDERWATCH

Do you like to watch birds? Are you looking for a classroom or nature club project? Project FeederWatch may be just for you.

Project FeederWatch is a citizen science project that began in Ontario, Canada in the mid-1970s and partnered with Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology ten years later. It is a winter-long project starting in November and ending mid-April, in which participants periodically count birds at backyard feeders, birdbaths or other local areas with plantings that attract birds.

No particular skill level or background is necessary to participate in the project. Participants will receive a research kit and resources to help attract and identify common winter species including an interactive tool that allows participants to learn about the food and feeder preference of nearly 100 species and how to predict what birds can be attracted to an area. All you have to do is watch your feeder, birdbath or

area as much or as little as you like, record what you see, and send in your data. There is an \$18 fee for U.S. citizens (\$15 for Cornell Lab members) necessary to analyze the data.

The data gathered by people like you will only become more important as predicted changes in climate continue to occur. Check out www.FeederWatch.org where you will find information on joining and access to a free on-line bird identification guide. You can also read about other people's experience since joining FeederWatch.

by John Hughes



Birds of Prey continued from page 6

She will share her adventures with stories and visuals. Dr. Creagh Bruener, a systems ecologist with the University of Montana, will share some of her research on stress and its effect on birds, especially as it concerns life in a changing climate.

Professor Avian Guano, Bir.D., (looking suspiciously like Denny Olson, Flathead Audubon Conservation Educator) will take a humorous sidelong look at "Bird Brains: Avian Intelligence Re-defined". Are we really at the top of the evolutionary tree? And Kari

Gabriel will bring her live birds and show and tell on the natural history of birds of prey.

Our afternoon session will be a two-hour training for new Hawk Watch volunteers. If you want to help us watch and count birds of prey from a ridge-top *at eye-level* this fall (it is spectacular!), join us for a new video and internet training session from 2:00 to 4:00 PM.

Last year we had 350 people show up and participate. Come early if you are a glutton for knowledge and fun! *by Denny Olson*

Steve Thompson continued from page 1

College on the California/Nevada border. This two-year college in the desert, known for training young men for a life of service, whetted his appetite for remote, idiosyncratic places.

He has worked seasonally in numerous national parks and in wilderness, became a newspaper reporter after graduating from Cornell University, and eventually moved to Montana to continue his conservation work. His work in Montana has included the Kootenai/Lolo Accords, the National Parks Conservation Association, 5 years as director of the Cinnabar Foundation, and his latest project is a group he founded, Climate Smart Glacier Country.

Through the group he founded, he hopes to support local climate solutions that save energy and save money, too. Many citizens, Glacier National Park, the City of Whitefish and local businesses are supporting this effort.

Steve is concerned about the "spiral of silence" that currently exists. Most Americans are con-

cerned about climate change but don't talk about it. Through Climate Smart Glacier Country, he hopes to get people talking, doing more and preparing for the future. Besides being the main impetus behind the climate solutions group, Steve has started a business called Climate Place that consults with homebuyers and offers educational seminars for realtors. It is his hope to create a market place for climate smart homes. Based on climate data, prospective home buyers will have the ability to purchase energy efficient homes in locations that will not be severely impacted by climate change.

One cannot help but notice Steve's passion and dedication to conservation. The importance of protecting wild places, the ability to bring diverse people to the table and his current quest to tackle "the elephant in the room" -climate change- make Steve Thompson a worthy recipient of Flathead Audubon's Conservation Achievement Recognition Award. A more detailed article is available on the FAS website: www.FlatheadAudubon.org by Jan Metzmaker

American Coot continued from page 2

Once breeding territories are established, they are defended aggressively, not only among conspecifics (other Coots) but also other species.

American Coots will construct up to nine nests in the course of laying two clutches of eggs and seven nests for a single clutch, with the number of clutches being dependent on latitude. Display nests constructed of coarse materials are built first. One display nest, presumably selected by the female, is further refined to become the egg nest. The egg nest is about a foot in diameter with a one-inch center cup of finer material to hold the eggs. Egg nests float on the water and are attached to emergent vegetation. They require constant attention to keep the waterlogged material from sinking and will typically disintegrate in 48 hours after being abandoned. A ramp is built to facilitate ingress and egress from the nest. The remaining display nests are left to disintegrate or become roosting platforms.

A range of 8-12 eggs is laid at the rate of one egg about every 24 hours. Described as subelliptical or conical to biconical, there is a greater degree of variation in shape between other Coot's eggs than within a single clutch. There is also less variation between the background buff to pinkish color, speckling pattern and speck color within a clutch than between different clutches. These differences allow the parents to distinguish between their eggs and those of conspecific brood parasites or brood parasites of other species. Brood parasites lay eggs in the nest after the initial egg has been laid. Eggs hatch pretty much sequentially about 23 days after being laid meaning the first chick to hatch is the mother's. The mother Coot imprints on the markings of the first young to hatch. Subsequent hatchlings typically follow the same pattern. Chicks that don't match are drowned or pecked

to death. The chicks are precocial and capable of leaving the nest after a short drying period. Coot chicks are covered in a thick black down with long, orange, stiff hair-like down feathers called down ornamentation. Down ornamentation along with brilliant head coloration consisting of a nearly bald scarlet crown, orange bill and blood-red shield stimulate the parents to feed begging chicks. Chicks lose all down ornamentation within four days. Once a few chicks hatch, the mother takes them to a newly constructed nest called a brood nest leaving the male to brood and defend the egg nest. Due to the sequential nature of hatching times, the egg nest is often abandoned before all of the eggs hatch. The chicks are closely guarded and fed by the parents. Between 30 and 60 days, the chicks become more independent and at 75 days can fly. They are driven from the parent's territory after 80 days.

Historically, numbers of American Coots have decreased in the east, but they have extended their breeding populations in the west and are considered a species of least concern. Certainly they are dependent on healthy wetlands, and efforts to preserve and renew our wetlands are necessary for their wellbeing.

We are fortunate to have abundant opportunities to observe and listen to this interesting species. Try to distinguish the male and female vocalizations the next time you hear the "All" American Coot.



Jake Bramante



Thank You!

...to those below who have made donations to Flathead Audubon May through August 1, 2017.

Osprey

Julie Baldrige

Snowy Owl

Karen M Worst-Comeaux & Craig Comeaux

Merlin

Frank & Linda de Kort
in memory of Bill Jensen

Sallie & Allan Gratch

George Scherman

Penny Deleray Taylor
in memory of Jane Lopp



northdelawarehappenings.com



Wikimedia.com



allaboutbirds.org

Glass Recycling Has Moved!

New World Recycling has moved its glass recycling drop-off location to just south of Kalispell. This will continue to operate as a fee-based facility, \$10 per 32 gallon container of glass. The fee helps maintain the facility and equipment for crushing glass, and the profit margin for the drop-off site is zero.

The new glass recycling drop-off is at 3452 Hwy 93 South, in a big yellow building next to the Western States Cat building, open Monday-Friday, 9AM-5:30PM, and Saturday 10AM-2PM. Only container glass (jars and bottles) are accepted -- no drinking glasses, window glass, or ceramics.

Note that the Glacier Park Lodges recycling site also accepts glass: 1014 1st Ave W., Columbia Falls (just west of Montana Coffee Traders), open 24 hours, no charge. The glass drop off bins are located behind the big building.

For other news related to recycling in Flathead Valley, and for a full list of what can be recycled where, visit www.wastenotproject.org.

Woodpeckers Drilling Holes in Your House?

If this is happening to you, you may want to read what MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks has to offer. On their website, under Living With Wildlife, is a whole section on woodpeckers and how to deal with them. Check it out online at: <http://fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/livingWithWildlife/woodpeckers/default.html> or pick up the brochure at your local FWP office.



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SPECIAL GIFTS

I wish to help make Flathead Audubon's vision a reality. Here is my contribution to the continued success of our chapter.

- Eagle Donation, \$1000+
- Osprey Donation, \$500+
- Snowy Owl Donation, \$250+
- Merlin Donation, \$100+
- Kestrel Donation, \$50+
- My Own Vision, amount of my choice



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The FAS activity which most interests me is:

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- Owen Sowerwine Natural Area
- Scholarships and Grants
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Water and Microbes – September 5th at Science on Tap

“Water and microbes: The tiny engines that keep the world habitable,” a talk by Dr. Matt Church, will be featured at the next session of *Science on Tap – Flathead*, September 5, 6 PM, at the Flathead Lake Brewing Company. Dr. Church is an Aquatic Microbial Ecologist at the Flathead Lake Biological Station.

For more information about the *Science on Tap* series visit www.scienceontapflathead.org/.



Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

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The Flathead Audubon Society is affiliated with Montana Audubon and the National Audubon Society. Flathead Audubon meets on the second Monday of each month from September through May. Meetings start at 7 PM and include a featured guest who presents a conservation or nature program. The Board of Directors meet the Monday preceding the general meeting, at 6 PM at 295 3rd Ave. EN, in Kalispell. Both meetings are open to all.

THE PILEATED POST is published September through May and is sent to members of Flathead Audubon Society as a membership benefit. For membership information or address change, please call Mike Fanning at 862-8070. To receive this newsletter electronically, email your request to: lindawin@centurytel.net. Deadline for newsletter copy is the 18th of each month. Contact newsletter editor at 755-1406; email submissions to: lindawin@centurytel.net

Website: www.FlatheadAudubon.org

Conservation Educator - Denny Olson: auduboneducator@gmail.com

FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY DIRECTORY

OFFICERS

Table with 4 columns: Position, Name, Email, Phone. Includes President Kay Mitchell, Vice-President Gael Bissell, Secretary Marylane Pannell, and Treasurer Joe Batts.

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Table with 4 columns: Committee, Name, Phone, Email. Includes Conservation (Lewis Young), Education (Vacant), Field Trips (Kathy Ross), Finance (Mike Fanning), Donations (Mary Nelesen), Hospitality (Lois Drobish), Membership (Mike Fanning), and Owen Sowerwine (Linda Winnie).

Table with 4 columns: Role, Name, Phone, Email. Includes Newsletter (Linda Winnie), Nominations (Bob Lee), Program (Bob Lee), Publicity (Jan Metzmaker), Sales (Jill Fanning), Refuges (Kathy Ross), and Website (Jake Bramante).

DIRECTORS

Table with 4 columns: Term, Name, Email, Phone. Includes 2015-2018 (Jan Metzmaker), 2015-2018 (Jake Bramante), 2016-2019 (Cory Davis), 2016-2019 (Barbara Summer), and 2017-2018 (Rod Walette).



MONTANA AUDUBON

P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624 443-3949 www.MTAudubon.org
Interim Executive Director: Norane Freistadt norane@mtaudubon.org
Board Member representing FAS Bob Lee rml3@centurytel.net 270-0371



FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY Membership Individual or Family

- Basic Membership \$25 Pays for newsletter and operating costs
Supporting Membership \$40 Extra \$15 funds local projects such as Conservation Education and Owen Sowerwine Natural Area
Additional Donation of \$
To: Education Fund, Owen Sowerwine Fund, Wherever needed

Total \$

You may renew or join online on our website:

http://www.flatheadaudubon.org/

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