



## MAVERICK RECYCLER HONORED BY FLATHEAD AUDUBON

Flathead Audubon honored Whitefish recycler Corry Cullen at its February 9<sup>th</sup> meeting, as part of its ongoing recognition of conservation achievements in the Flathead Valley. Cullen, who moved to Whitefish in 2002 after graduating from MSU in photojournalism, started a new recycling service, New World Recycling. By offering recycling pick-up services at your home or business, he offers a new approach that promises to change the way recycling is done here in Flathead Valley.

For \$6 a month Corry will come to your home or business and haul away the junk mail, newspapers, office paper, cardboard, steel and aluminum cans you've saved up over the month for recycling. After about a year and a half in the business, Cory's New World Recycling now makes about 140 such pick-ups each month in Whitefish, and Corry is looking to expand that number.

In addition – and this is where Corry takes things even one step further – for \$10 a month, New World Recycling will *also* pick up your *glass bottles* for recycling in addition to all these other things. For many years, there has not been any recycling of glass offered anywhere here in the Valley because the recycling centers have found they cannot make money on it. The cost of shipping glass to a location where it can be processed is greater than the payment they could receive for the glass they delivered. Corry has stepped in to try to solve that problem.

Corry initially pulverized the glass himself with an old cement mixer. However, that process turned out to be slow and inefficient. Corry found that it took about 2 hours to grind 2 garbage cans of glass, and at the end of this time he had produced only about 4 inches of glass/sand in the bottom of the mixer.

At this point Corry, is simply stockpiling glass that New World Recycling collects, while he moves forward with a plan for generating the approximately \$25,000 needed to buy a glass pulverizer.

Once Corry gets this commercial pulverizer into operation, he would be in a position to expand the recycling pick-up service of New World Recycling to cover not only Whitefish, but to cover all the major communities in the Flathead Valley. With a commercial glass pulverizer, Corry anticipates that he would even be able to process glass delivered to him by other recyclers in Montana, and to revive glass recycling in other areas of this state as well. To help Corry with the project, please contact him.

For all of these accomplishments, Flathead Audubon salutes Corry Cullen, we thank him, and we wish him the best in his continued efforts to provide the Valley with full recycling options. Corry was presented with a year's membership in Flathead Audubon and an Audubon mug.



### MARCH FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

**Monday, March 8, 2004:** Flathead Audubon presents Dale Becker, wildlife program manager for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, who will discuss trumpeter swan reintroduction in the Mission Valley. The meeting will be at The Summit health center in Kalispell and begins at 7:30 p.m.

**Sunday, March 21** Lower Valley waterfowl tour, led by Bob Rost. More on page 5

**Saturday and Sunday, March 27-28** Freezeout Lake Wildlife Management Area Field Trip to watch thousands of snow geese and many other bird species. More on page 5



## CHICKADEE CHATTER

Here in the midst of winter I would like to share one final tale of my journey to the faraway long country of Chile. It is middle of summer in Chile right now. In Santiago, the temperature on Valentines Day was 84F with sunny skies, a bit warm for me, but I will take the sunny skies any day of the year.

And so I bid a wistful goodbye to southern Patagonia, boarded a plane and flew to northern Patagonia and the Chilean Lake District. This part of Patagonia is quite different from the south. Here there are high snow-capped volcanoes that soar into the skies, many of them still active with plumes of smoke rising from their summits. Water is everywhere — it pours from the skies in torrents, and fifteen minutes later there are patches of brilliant blue sky to be seen. Very aptly named the Lake District, dozens of lovely turquoise colored lakes dot the countryside and tranquil rivers flow into them and finally make their way to the nearby Pacific Ocean. From the mountainsides, hundreds of streams and rivulets flow in rushing invigorating torrents.

The countryside in this part of Chile is green and lush as it receives between 100 and 200 inches of rain a year. The forests here are true temperate rainforests. Trees are covered with tiny ferns, lichens, mosses, laces with vines and bromeliads and some grow to enormous proportions. The alerce, for example, is one of the oldest living trees in the world after the bristlecone pine of the American West. These trees can grow up to 170 feet in height with a 13 foot diameter and can live over 3700 years in age. As is true in many places of the world, these magnificent trees were overexploited because of the beauty and durability of their wood and today they can only be found in protected preserves and National Parks. The undergrowth is so thick that you can only walk on established trails that must be maintained regularly or they become overgrown.

A beautiful native fuchsia called the chilco grows wild all over. It has small bright red and purple flowers that the hummingbirds love. I was fortunate to get pictures of a hummingbird called the Green-backed Firecrown. It was beautiful little female bird who had built her tiny nest of mosses and lichens on a slender beech branch that hung over the trail. Just by chance, I caught a glimpse of green wings as she flew to a bush beside the trail. I walked some ways up the trail so as not to disturb the fragile creature and watched her for many precious moments.

One day, I hired a guide to take me bird-

watching and we went to the island of Chiloe, on the west coast. It was pouring rain by the buckets when we left the hotel but by the time we got to the ferry landing the sun was making an appearance. The only way to get to the island is by ferry and it takes about forty minutes to cross the Chacao channel. On the crossing, we saw fifteen or so huge Peruvian Pelicans flying slowly across the channel. Hundreds of delicate South American Terns were feeding just off of the bow of the ship, white wings flashing in the sun, and here and there, Red-legged and Imperial Cormorants could be seen. Sooty and Pink-faced Shearwaters were present in smaller numbers. Ever present were Kelp Gulls. Swimming in the salty water of the channel were dolphins and sea lions, often near the ferry as it passed. The ferry trip was just the beginning of a wonderful trip, but the best part of the trip to this unique island was to a penguin colony.

It took most of the afternoon to get to the penguin colony and, on the way, we watched elegant Black-necked Swans swimming with their tiny cygnets, long-legged pink Chilean Flamingos and thousands of migratory shore birds. Those included Baird's Sandpipers, Wimbrels, Hudsonian Godwits and Red Knots. These are the shorebirds that we are familiar with here in Montana during their migrations north and south. The sands were alive with birds running to and fro searching for food. The epic journey of many birds ends here at Chiloe, while for others the island is only a stopover as they fly further south.

We arrived at Penguinera Puniuil late in the afternoon after a bumpy, rough drive (very few roads are paved on Chiloe) through green fields with cattle and sheep grazing. We were rewarded with magnificent panoramas from rocky headlands overlooking the ocean and sandy beaches that can only be passed during low tide.

Puniuil is the breeding site for two species of penguins. In a very rare occurrence, both Magellanic and Humboldt Penguins breed here on three small rocky islands just off of the western coast of the island Chiloe. Different species of penguins apparently do not care to nest close to one another and this is one of the only places in the world that two penguin species share breeding grounds.

We donned rough water gear and hopped into a Zodiac (one of those small tough inflatable boats that seem to go just about everywhere) for a half mile trip out into the ocean where a rocky spur juts out of the dark green Pacific Ocean. The sun was low in the sky, the light was golden against the rock and a wind was blowing in off of the ocean. And there on the small island were penguins; hundreds of them. Many were in the water getting ready to jump up on a rocky ledge.

(CHICKADEE CHATTER ..... next page)



## March 2004 Program Trumpeter Swans Nestle into Mission Valley

Flathead Audubon is pleased to welcome Dale Becker to its March 8 meeting. Becker, who is the wildlife program manager for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, will present a slide show on the tribes' trumpeter swan reintroduction program.

Flathead Audubon now meets at The Summit health center, in conference room #3. The meeting begins at 7:30 p.m., with the board meeting beginning at 5:30. The Summit is located on the north end of the Kalispell Regional Medical Complex, at 205 Sunnyview Lane. There is ample parking in the north lot.

Becker, who started the trumpeter swan reintroduction effort in 1996, will discuss the program's early struggles and more recent successes. Of the 68 swans that were placed into the Mission Valley through a captive breeding program over the past two summers, about 55 of them are still around. Most of those birds are overwintering on the nearby Flathead and Jocko Rivers and many of the birds are now pairing up and displaying courtship behavior.

The biggest mortality factors for the birds have been power lines and fences. Becker has been talking with Northwestern Energy about marking the power lines to limit swan mortality.

The elegant trumpeter swan, with a wing span of 6-8 feet, is the largest swan in the world. The bird first breeds at about 3 years of age and mates for life.

Becker has worked with the tribes for 15 years; previous to that, he worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service and as a private contractor. He has bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Montana.

Please come join Flathead Audubon in welcoming Dale Becker. The group will also be honoring longtime Bigfork resident and conservationist Jack Whitney at the March meeting as part of its ongoing recognition of conservation achievements in the Flathead Valley.

## Bird Tubing Extravaganza

On a Saturday in early February, 5 intrepid souls, Linda deKort, Linda Winnie, Sonja Hartmann, Bob Rost and Dan Goehring braved beautiful birding conditions to come to my place and tube birds. After a brief planning conversation, they took over my basement. Linda Winnie sorted and selected the best birds for tubing and passed them on to Bob Rost and Dan, who measured them and cut the tubes, which they passed on to Linda deKort and Sonja, who placed them in the tubes with cotton and accompanying information tags, then

capped the tubes. The whole extravaganza took just under 3 hours. We ran out of tubing material before we ran out of birds. This means that, sometime in the future, a tubing party will happen again.

I want to thank those who came to help. This is really a valuable way to protect our small teaching collection. As these birds get sorted into the education trunks, they will be available to many groups for use in honing ID skills.

By Bob Lee



*(CHICKADEE CHATTER .....continued)*

Long strands of kelp and other seaweeds I was unfamiliar with rose and fell with the sea swell. When a wave would break on the rock, the penguins would swim close to the rock and jump straight up out of the water. From there they would waddle up to their burrows at the top of the rock, calling at the top of their lungs to let their partner know they were coming.

These black-and-white, two-and-a-half foot tall, flightless birds are very good parents. Usually, both birds will incubate the eggs and tend to the chicks. One bird will go out to sea to feed and the other will tend the nest. It is very touching to watch them when they relieve one another at the nest. They touch bills and coo (not really a coo, more like a cackle) to each other and spend long moments together.

It was a wonderful experience bobbing up and down with the ocean swells in a small boat; a warm brisk breeze blowing, the salty fresh smell of the ocean filling my nose, golden sunlight streaming down from a beautiful blue sky, hundreds of gulls, cormorants, oystercatchers and ducks flying overhead and penguins, PENGUINS, (imagine that) gracefully swimming around the boat. It was a remarkable day, we saw over 50 species of birds and I am still dreaming about penguins.

By Leslie Kehoe

## FROM THE BOARD

LINDA WINNIE, Past President



### Looking Out for Loons with Ankle Bracelets

The chickadees have started to sing "Spring's here," and other birds in the Valley seem to agree. The drumming of pileated woodpeckers now often fills our nearby woods, and at my suet feeders, our several species of nuthatches and woodpeckers are beginning to show up in pairs. The other day three pileateds showed up at the same time and the two males got into a tussle, which sent some feathers flying! Several days ago, I heard the trill song of juncos, and Leslie Kehoe reports seeing magpies performing their courtship ritual. As usual, with the start of February many of our bird species have gone ahead with spring without waiting for the weather.

Returning waterfowl can't just ignore the weather's schedule for spring, of course. They have to wait until the ice leaves their nesting lakes before settling in. Out here at Rogers Lake we're looking forward to that time. As soon as even a narrow corridor of free water opens up on the lake, the mallards and goldeneyes show up, and one or two days later, the loons return. And this year I'm ready to learn more about what those loons are up to than I've ever been able to do before. Because this year, they will be wearing their ankle bracelets.

In July of this last summer, my husband John and I, and some of our neighbors, had the privilege of helping to band the loons on Rogers Lake. The banding team worked in the dark of night, since capturing loons depends on shining a strong spotlight into the birds' eyes to make them freeze in place. Each bird was then scooped up in a large, soft, capture net and taken to shore. There the bird was quickly weighed and measured, and blood and feather samples were taken to allow testing for heavy metal content and DNA analysis. Finally, three colored plastic bands and one metal US Fish and Wildlife Service identification band were fitted onto the bird. We "citizen" helpers handed equipment to the researchers and held flashlights to help them see as they worked. We also were charged with making sure the towel draped over the loon's eyes remained in position when the bird tried to shake it off. Covering the bird's eyes calmed it, and also prevented it from taking good aim with its long, sharp bill.

The researchers were able to capture and band both of the adults on Rogers Lake, and one of the two chicks they were raising here. The next morning, the birds seemed to be slightly annoyed by their new leg bracelets, stretching and shaking their legs once in a while as though trying to adjust them to a more comfortable position. But after a few days, they seemed to ignore the bands and go about business as usual.

Of course, the loon watchers around the lake (include me in that group!) were delighted with the new bands. Now we could tell who was who. We could tell whether it was the male or female that was tending the chicks at a given time, and which was leading the charge when strange loons came to visit. We could keep track of which chick was diving more frequently, which was still being fed by the parents more frequently, and which was adventuring farther away from the parents. We could track changes in each chick's behavior as the summer progressed.

When the loons reappear this spring we will be ready to learn even more. We will be looking to see whether these are the same adults that nested here last summer, whether any of the interloper loons that usually appear in the spring are able to drive off one of the returning adults and take its place, when and for how long each adult sits on the nest ... and much more.

It is not just the loon watchers at Rogers Lake who will have this new identification advantage. The banding here was part of a major loon banding effort that took place last July in northwest Montana. Over a period of 8 nights, teams of loon researchers visited 13 different lakes located west of Kalispell (including the Thompson Chain), in the lower North Fork area, and the Seeley-Swan drainage. They tried primarily for family groups and managed to capture, measure, and band 32 common loons. As a result, other loon watchers in this corner of Montana will also be able to follow the movements and behavior of individual loons during the coming spring nesting and summer chick rearing seasons.

*(LOONS, continued on next page.....)*



## IN SEARCH OF BIRD WATCHERS

**SUNDAY, MARCH 21. LOWER VALLEY WATERFOWL TOUR** Join Bob Rost, one of the Flatheads's premier birders, for an approximately four-hour birding trip visiting wetland sites in the Somers area. Bob says we'll see "thousands of ducks"—dabbling ducks and early spring arrivals such as Pintails and Scaups (a chance to compare Greater and Lesser). Also expect to see Tundra Swans. Meet at the Somers Recreation Area (Somers Bay boat ramp) on Highway 93 at 8:30 a.m. For more information contact Bob Rost, [mobob@cyberport.net](mailto:mobob@cyberport.net) or 387-2255.

**SATURDAY & SUNDAY, MARCH 27-28: FREEZEOUT LAKE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA FIELDTRIP** Migrate over to Montana's premier migration stopover! In past years, more than 40 bird species, including thousands of Snow Geese have been counted. Call leader to arrange carpool. Leave at 10:30 a.m. Saturday from the Tidyman's parking lot in time to watch geese arrive at Freezeout Lake that evening. Stay overnight at the Bella Vista Motel in Choteau. After watching the geese leave the lake Sunday morning, head for home in time to arrive in Kalispell by 5 p.m. Contact person: Dan Casey, 857-3143 or [caseys4@centurytel.net](mailto:caseys4@centurytel.net)

**SATURDAY, APRIL 3: SECOND LOWER VALLEY WATERFOWL TOUR.** This four-hour tour of wetland sites in the Somers area features a variety of resident and migrating waterfowl, including recent spring arrivals—at least 20 species in all. Participants can expect to see some unusual birds, such as Eurasian widgeons, as well as ducks engaged in courtship behavior, and local raptors and songbirds. Meet at the Somers Recreation Area (Somers Bay boat ramp) on Highway 93 at 8:30 a.m. For more information contact Bob Rost, [mobob@cyberport.net](mailto:mobob@cyberport.net) or 387-2255.



### *(LOONS.....continued)*

In addition, data on these loons will be gathered as they migrate and over-winter on the Pacific coast. This information will help provide more effective protection and management for Montana's common loons. The new data taken from Montana's loons will also be used in a national long-term and large-scale study to assess contaminant burdens (in particular, mercury poisoning), population characteristics, genetic relationships, migration patterns, and other natural history aspects of the species.

So as spring comes, each of us needs to be on the lookout for those new ankle bracelets on our returning common loons.

Remember that each of those loons got three plastic color bands. On an adult bird, two of those color bands were put the left leg. The remaining color band plus the metal USFWS band was put on its right leg – the color band above the metal band. Each juvenile bird got its metal band on its left leg, below one of its color bands, and its two remaining color bands on its right leg. So by simply spotting the metal band and checking which leg it is on, you can tell whether it was banded as an adult or a juvenile.

There is a number on the metal band that is unique to each bird, so if you can get close enough to read the number (good luck!) you can get positive identification of the bird. The bird's three color bands can also be used for identification. The code here is in terms of which color appears in which position (upper or lower) on each leg, and which bands have part of the color scratched away to form a white spot or line. Some of these detailed scratches might be hard to see, but noting the colors of the bands and their positions on the legs, plus knowing what lake the bird is on, will identify it with high probability.

If you see a common loon with leg bands, write down what you observe. (If you're like me, it is easy to get such details mixed up.) Then, see if you can get a better look with a spotting scope, or even by hopping into a boat and working closer to the bird on the water. (But don't go so close that you disturb it.) Again write down what you see. (The voice of experience again.) Finally, relay your information to Gael Bissell, Chair of the Montana Common Loon Working Group (Kalispell, 751-4580) or Kristi DuBois, Non-game Coordinator for Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (Helena, 406-542-5551).

Wishing you a birdful spring.



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The **Bigfork Bird Festival** returns this year, with the dates set for June 11, 12 & 13<sup>th</sup>, 2004. The festival is in its second year and will be based out of Marina Cay Resort in Bigfork. The committee is finalizing seminar topics and a keynote speaker. Leslie Kehoe will be working on the field trips and will be looking for volunteer guides. The festival is sponsored by the Bigfork Area Chamber of Commerce, which makes a donation to Flathead Audubon for help with organizing and for providing volunteer guides. Pricing for the festival this year will be "a la carte" so that more people can attend.

Any input or suggestions for seminars or speakers would be very much appreciated. For further updates, stay tuned to this newsletter or check [www.bigforkbirdfestival.com](http://www.bigforkbirdfestival.com) for updates on the event. Happy Winter! Andrea Goff, Executive Director of the Bigfork Area Chamber of Commerce, email: [chamber@bigfork.org](mailto:chamber@bigfork.org) or call 406-837-5888.

We never exhaust our abilities by using them.  
Anonymous

*He who, by reanimating the old, can gain knowledge of the new is fit to be a teacher.*  
Confucius

### Flathead Audubon to host Teacher Workshop

Have you ever wanted to explore the topic of birds with your students, but have not felt comfortable diving into this subject without assistance?

Join Montana Audubon and the Flathead Audubon Society for a workshop at the Kalispell Montessori School on March 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>. Topics covered will include an introduction to Place-Based education, tips for leading field trips, teaching techniques for identifying birds and methods and activities for incorporating the study of birds into a classroom unit. University credits and OPI credits are being offered.

Participants will be introduced to many teaching materials available to teachers free of charge from Flathead Audubon, including a bird costume, a Common Birds of the Flathead box, a

Hummingbird box, and the Songbird Blues Kit. Programs such as Birds Beyond Borders, an educational exchange program linking schools in MT with schools in Oaxaca, Mexico, and Project FeederWatch, a curriculum focused on collecting data from your own birdfeeder outside your classroom will be highlighted. Flathead Audubon will also work to support teachers in their classrooms as they initiate a bird curriculum unit, by connecting teachers with trained Community Naturalist Volunteers, also involved in the workshop and willing to assist with classroom activities or field trips. For more information on the workshop, please contact Vonnie McDonald at 756-1556.



### Beauty of Birds

The 2004 Beauty of Birds class will be each Wednesday in April at Flathead High School. This year, Bob Lee and Ansley Ford are coordinating the class. Over the four Wednesday evenings, we will explore birding, bird life, and behavior, as well as identifying some local birding areas. Guest speakers will broaden the dimensions of the class. Speakers for this year are Beth Benjamin, Denver Holt, Elly Jones and Neal and Pattie Brown. The classes are scheduled for 6 – 8 p.m. every Wednesday in April at the auditorium in Flathead High School. We will also have an optional field trip to a local hotspot on a weekend. The cost is a mere \$10 for people living in the school district and \$20 for those outside the district. Call Debby at Flathead High School to sign up. For more information, contact Bob at 758-6879 (work), 257-0363 (home) or e-mail at [Robert.Lee@fws.gov](mailto:Robert.Lee@fws.gov). Keep Wednesdays in April open and come join the fun.



## Owen Sowerwine Committee Report

The OSNA committee held a community meeting to receive input on the OSNA master plan. We have the opportunity to amend the current plan to take in new information or changes which affect the resources of the Natural Area. People spoke at the meeting, phoned, and emailed us their concerns and suggestions. On January 24, 2004, we presented input and recommendations from the OSNA neighbors, the general public, and the OSNA committee to the Montana Audubon Board of Directors. Wishing to complete more research on the key issues of horse and dog use, the MT Audubon board asked the MT Department of Natural Resources & Conservation to postpone the biennial status report on the master plan until the research results came in. That data is due in the near future.

The community members who commented will receive a postcard soon, thanking them for providing input and informing them of the delay. When we receive word from MT Audubon, we will get in touch with the commenters, letting them know about the final recommendations being submitted to DNRC. We'll keep our members updated on our progress in future issues of this newsletter.

Brent Mitchell, Committee Chairman

## Community Naturalist Program in search of Volunteers

Do you enjoy the natural world, and enjoy sharing your passion with others?

Flathead Audubon is in search of volunteers to get involved with their Community Naturalist Program. These volunteers would be available to help teachers K-12 teach about birds and other natural history topics in the classroom and the field. Often teachers want to share these topics with their students, but do not feel comfortable diving into these subjects with out some assistance, or having a helping hand on a field trip. Volunteers do not need to be birding experts to share their love of the natural world.

Flathead Audubon and Montana Audubon will be hosting a workshop at the Kalispell Montessori School, free to volunteers, on March 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> for both classroom teachers and Community Naturalists. What a great way to learn more about birds yourself! The focus of the workshop will be an introduction to place-based education, and other strategies for teaching effectively, leading field trips, basic birding skills, activities to take to the classroom, and an overview of Audubon materials available to volunteers and teachers for teaching about birds. Interested? Contact Sonja Hartmann at 387-4150.



*What the Caterpillar calls the End of the World, the Master calls a Butterfly. Richard Bach*

## Butterflies, Anyone?



Have you ever wanted to learn more about butterflies? Audubon has been approached by the North American Butterfly Association to get involved in setting up an annual butterfly survey in the Flathead. Chris Tonkinson and Byron Weber of Missoula have set up a Montana count calendar schedule, with a tentative date of Saturday, July 17<sup>th</sup> for Kalispell. A group of three people or more is appropriate. Beginners and children are welcome and NABA membership is not required to participate. A three-dollar donation per person is requested and applied to publishing the annual survey report. They will also provide 2004 count day instruction and reporting to NABA.

There have been counts established in six Montana counties, up from two in 2000, with interest in involving Kalispell and Blackfoot Valley area residents in 2004. Additional program and state count information can be found at [www.naba.org](http://www.naba.org). If you have interest in helping to organize a local butterfly count, contact Sonja Hartmann at [prather@digisys.net](mailto:prather@digisys.net) or 387-4150.



**FLATHEAD AUDUBON MISSION STATEMENT**  
 THE FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY IS A LOCAL CHAPTER  
 OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY.



- OUR MISSION IS TO CONSERVE BIRDS, WILDLIFE HABITAT AND ECOSYSTEM DIVERSITY.
- AWARENESS AND APPRECIATION OF THE NATURAL WORLD IS PROMOTED THROUGH EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND ADVOCACY PROGRAMS.
- WE WORK WITH DIVERSE GROUPS AND AGENCIES TO ACHIEVE SOUND DECISIONS ON NATURAL RESOURCE ISSUES.
- OUR COMMUNITY OUTREACH INCLUDES SCHOOL PROGRAMS, WORK PROJECTS AND FIELD TRIPS.
- WHILE FOCUSING OUR EFFORTS IN NORTHWEST MONTANA, WE BELIEVE IN THE PROTECTION OF THE EARTH AND ALL ITS INHABITANTS.

**Raptor of the Rockies Founder Honored**

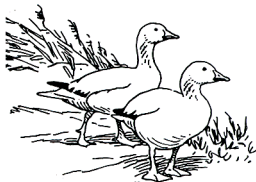


Raptor rehabilitator Kate Davis was honored as the “Wildlife Professional for 2004” by the Ben Meadows Company, a company that supplies equipment for the forest, wildlife, civil engineering and surveying professions. Each year, they honor a “wildlife professional,” who can be nominated by anyone.

Kate founded Raptors of the Rockies, a bird rehabilitation facility in the Bitterroot Valley. She is described as a “goodwill ambassador, educator, artist and physical therapist to all things avian.” Besides a cash award, Kate’s photo appears on the cover of the 2004 Ben Meadows catalog. For the complete report on the tribute to Kate, see <http://www.benmeadows.com/custserv/outdoorpro04.htm>

The Flathead-Kootenai Chapter of the Montana Wilderness Association presents **The Best of the International Wildlife Film Festival** at the O’Shaughnessy Center in Whitefish, Friday, March 12, at 7p.m. Adults \$5, children under twelve \$3, and kids in wildlife costumes are admitted free. The feature film is “Snake Killers, the Honey Badgers of the Kalahari.” There are also films on Snow Geese, Talking with Animals, and Natural Trax - music videos composed entirely from animal sounds. The movie party includes the Mad Cowboy Bake Sale and the Big Yeehah Raffle. Thank you for supporting your local chapter of the Montana Wilderness Association!

Pattie Brown



To see a world in a grain of sand  
 And heaven in a wildflower  
 Hold infinity in the palm of your hand  
 And eternity in an hour  
 William Blake



Flathead Audubon has been notified of 3 summer jobs for Loon Rangers, available to students who are currently attending any Montana College or University. Job locations are:

- \* Thompson Chain of Lakes
- \* Blackfoot-Clearwater
- \* Kalispell

**HELP WANTED**

There is a full job description for each position. Contact Gael Bissell at MT Dept of Fish, Wildlife & Parks to learn more about these jobs. Gael can be reached at 751-4580 or [gbissell@state.mt.us](mailto:gbissell@state.mt.us) on weekdays. If you know a student who would be interested in being a Loon Ranger, please pass this on to him or her.



# BIRD OF THE MONTH

## Hardy Winter Visitors: Redpolls

Winter visitors to our forests and feeding stations, Common and Hoary Redpolls are among the hardiest of the songbirds. In fact, Audubon's *Encyclopedia of North American Birds* says these small finches can survive colder temperatures than any other songbird. Both the Common Redpoll (*Carduelis flamma*) and the Hoary Redpoll (*Carduelis hornemanni*) breed in the subarctic forests and tundra scrub and venture into Montana only during the winter months.



Common Redpoll (detail)  
by Larry McQueen

One way that Redpolls survive frigid weather is to store seeds in their crop—a relatively large throat pouch located about midway down their neck. The ability to store extra food during nightfall and severe weather allows them to conserve energy. After filling their crop, Redpolls will often fly off and find shelter from frigid weather in dense coniferous foliage. There, they will settle into the protected spot and swallow the seeds at their leisure. They will often adopt a fluffed-up ball posture that reduces heat loss.

Testimony to their hardy nature, the birds can be spotted bathing in icy creek water or burrowing into wet snow. The birds can be quite tame and easily approached. The very small finches with the red cap or “poll” and black chin are difficult to distinguish from each other. In general, the Hoary Redpoll has a “frostier” or paler appearance than the Common Redpoll. Another distinguishing feature (if you can get a close look) is the Hoary's lack of streaking on its rump and undertail coverts. The male Common Redpoll usually has a rosy breast and sides, much brighter than the Hoary. Both Redpolls have a distinctive facial profile, with a small conical bill and a face that looks foreshortened or “smushed.”

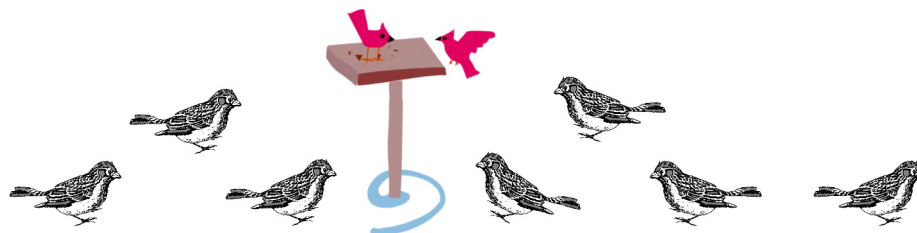
Of the two, Common Redpolls are much more common in northwestern Montana, with Hoary Redpolls occasionally spotted within the flocks of Common Redpolls. During both the Kalispell and Bigfork Christmas Bird Counts, only one Hoary Redpoll was spotted on each count. That's compared to 109 Common Redpolls on the Bigfork count and 21 on the Kalispell count.

Redpolls move about their wintering ground in large flocks, settling down to feed on seeds and buds of birch and alder or at feeders. When they are perched, listen for their *swee-ee-eeet* call that is described as similar to, but coarser than, the call of the American Goldfinch. The flocks usually leave for their northern nesting ground by mid-March.

Redpolls are known for their tendency to roam. Fluctuations in food supply cause these finches to travel great distances to find suitable forage. These “irruptions” cause the birds to become abundant in areas where they have been uncommon or rare for several years. A Common Redpoll banded in Fairbanks, Alaska, one winter was recaptured 3,000 miles to the east near Montreal, Quebec the next winter.

For more information on these hardy little birds, check out Cornell's new online bird guides at: <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/programs/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide/>

Information for the article was gathered from *The Sibley Guide to Birds*, *The Birder's Handbook*, *Birds of North America*, the Cornell site listed above and the Audubon Society *Encyclopedia of North American Birds*.



# KALISPELL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Dan Casey, of the American Bird Conservancy and a Flathead Audubon board member, has led Christmas Bird Counts in northwest Montana for many years. Dan submitted this year's final tallies.

The Flathead Audubon conducted our 5<sup>th</sup> annual Kalispell Christmas Bird Count on January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2004. Despite temperatures as low as -13°F, and a high of only 5°, we had a good turnout, with 25 people covering the circle, centered at Reserve and Highway 93. Our species total of **60** was slightly below our average (63), owing mostly to the frozen water conditions and low bird activity in the cold weather. But we still found a few rarities (e.g. **Hoary Redpoll**), and one new species for the count, a **Lincoln's Sparrow**. We set or tied new count high totals for another 15 species (totals in **bold**, below). These included 6 Merlins, 114 Gray Partridge, 586 Mourning Doves, and 11 Pine Siskins. A report of 8 **Purple Finches** and the Lincoln Sparrow are still under review by the Montana Bird Records Committee.



Our Totals:

# BIGFORK CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Compiled by Dan Casey

The 30<sup>th</sup> annual Bigfork Christmas Bird Count was held Saturday, Dec. 20<sup>th</sup>, 2003. We had 34 people in the field. In spite of an all-day fog, we had our second highest species total, with 86 counted. New to the count were a (origin uncertain) **Whooper Swan**, and a **Swamp Sparrow** in Somers. Other highlights included 1 **Hoary Redpoll**, our second consecutive **Long-tailed Duck** (at Bigfork), and new record high counts for 10 other species (numbers in **bold**), including 6 "Harlan's" Red-tailed Hawks. A report of a **House Wren**, which would be our second ever on the count, is still under review by the Montana Bird Records Committee (it is listed below as wren, species.)



Pied-billed Grebe	1	American Coot	477	Winter Wren	1
Horned Grebe	7	Killdeer	1	Marsh Wren	<b>4</b>
Red-necked Grebe	1	Wilson's Snipe	<b>1</b>	wren, species	1
Western Grebe	2	Ring-billed Gull	5	American Dipper	3
Great Blue Heron	7	Herring Gull	cw	Golden-crowned Kinglet	32
Tundra Swan	63	gull, species	5	Townsend's Solitaire	8
<b>Whooper Swan</b>	1	Rock Pigeon	125	American Robin	1
Canada Goose	1506	Mourning Dove	<b>132</b>	Bohemian Waxwing	728
Green-winged Teal	2	Great Horned Owl	3	Northern Shrike	3
Mallard	388	Northern Pygmy-Owl	1	European Starling	74
Gadwall	3	Belted Kingfisher	10	American Tree Sparrow	77
Canvasback	2	Downy Woodpecker	27	Song Sparrow	<b>29</b>
Ring-necked Duck	23	Hairy Woodpecker	9	Harris's Sparrow	<b>3</b>
Greater Scaup	8	Northern (R-s) Flicker	<b>106</b>	<b>Swamp Sparrow</b>	1
Common Goldeneye	200	Pileated Woodpecker	19	Dark-eyed Junco	76
Barrow's Goldeneye	23	Horned Lark	10	Snow Bunting	42
<b>Long-tailed Duck</b>	1	Gray Jay	<b>10</b>	Red-winged Blackbird	342
Bufflehead	36	Steller's Jay	1	Brewer's Blackbird	143
Hooded Merganser	81	Blue Jay	1	Pine Grosbeak	21
Common Merganser	153	Clark's Nutcracker	1	Cassin's Finch	7
Bald Eagle	40	Black-billed Magpie	172	House Finch	260
Northern Harrier	9	American Crow	43	Red Crossbill	16
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2	Common Raven	<b>214</b>	White-winged Crossbill	19
Northern Goshawk	cw	Black-capped Chickadee		Common Redpoll	109
Red-tailed Hawk	7		554	<b>Hoary Redpoll</b>	1
<b>Red-tailed</b> (Harlan's) Hawk	6	Mountain Chickadee	99	Pine Siskin	158
Rough-legged Hawk	26	Chestnut-backed Chickadee		American Goldfinch	<b>236</b>
Merlin	1		47	Evening Grosbeak	77
Gray Partridge	18	Red-breasted Nuthatch	94	House Sparrow	78
Ring-necked Pheasant	<b>112</b>	White-breasted Nuthatch	1		
Ruffed Grouse	7	Pygmy Nuthatch	79	TOTAL SPECIES:	87
Wild Turkey	398	Brown Creeper	17	TOTAL INDIVIDUALS:	7948



Flathead County has a drop off box for recycling rechargeable batteries. Please adhere to the restrictions that follow. The Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporation (RBRC) can help you recycle your portable rechargeable batteries. These batteries are commonly found in cordless power tools, cellular and cordless phones, laptop computers, camcorders, digital cameras, and remote control toys. RBRC recycles the following battery chemistries:

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Small Sealed Lead (Pb), weighing less than 2 lbs. /1 kg

The drop off box is located at 1035 First Avenue West in Kalispell (the Health Department Building). If you would like more information about this service, contact Alfred Papillon, Flathead County Emergency Medical Services - Training, at 751-8191.

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**MARCH 2004**



The Flathead Audubon Society is affiliated with the National Audubon Society and meets on the second Monday of each month from September through May. The regular meeting starts at 7:30 p.m. and includes a featured guest who presents a conservation or nature program. The regular monthly meeting is preceded by the Executive Board meeting. Both meetings are open to all those interested.

**THE PILEATED POST** is published September through May and is sent to members of the Flathead Audubon Society as a membership benefit. For membership information or address change, please call Mike Fanning at 862-8070.

**Deadline for newsletter copy is the 20th of each month. Contact newsletter editor at 756-5763; email submissions to pileatedpost@hotmail.com**

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