



Pileated Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

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FEBRUARY 2006

The article below is the latest installment in a Pileated Post series on people who have helped shape Flathead Audubon and have contributed significantly to communities in the Flathead Valley.



ED PRACH

Conviction, Courage and a Keen Sense of Enjoyment

Ed Prach is a hiker.

That's not all he does of course. Among the well over 1000 outdoor excursions he's logged in his journal since he retired, there are many skiing trips and bicycle rides. But most are hikes and climbs.

Ed has walked most of the trails and climbed 12 of the mountains in Glacier Park as a member of the Over-the-Hill Gang. He's participated in most of the Montana Wilderness Association's (MWA) Wilderness Walks in northwest Montana, on both sides of the Divide. In winter, Ed often returns to his house in Phoenix to hike with the well known Southern Arizona Hiking Club. "I've held continuous membership in the Club for 15 years now," he says proudly, "which makes me one of its earliest members." And many of the hikes recorded in his journal were taken with hiking friends in the Flathead.

Ed was not always a hiker. When he retired from his job as field engineer for General Electric in 1985, he was in good physical shape and had spent most of his working days outdoors. He decided to pick a new activity that would keep him outdoors and in good shape, so he chose hiking. "The secret to a good retirement," he once told me, "is to pick something you enjoy and get good at it." Those who know Ed will tell you that whenever he decides to do something, he approaches the task with vigor, commitment, and a keen sense of enjoyment.

Ed began practicing his hiking skills at Lone Pine, "before there were all those fences," he says. "I wanted to be sure I'd be good enough to keep up on the MWA Wilderness Walks." He did keep up, of course, and has gone on to become an expert hiker.

Along with Ed's love of the outdoors comes his commitment to the conservation of wilderness

and wildlife habitat. One of the first things Ed and his wife Carla did when they came to the Flathead in 1987 was join the Flathead Audubon Society (FAS). "A few years later," he says, "Leo Keane cornered me one day on Big Mountain, and asked me to be on the FAS Board. I had to say yes."

Shortly after he joined the Board, Ferne Cohen asked him to help her organize the programs for the FAS meetings. "I couldn't refuse Ferne," Ed says with a smile. Soon Ferne moved on to other projects and Ed was on his own. He served as Program Chair for five years. During this period Carla frequently took on Hospitality duties for the FAS meetings.

ED PRACH *continued on page 5.*

FEBRUARY

FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

Monday, February 13, 2006: Flathead Audubon General Meeting 7PM at The Summit, conference room #3. Program by Mike Schwitters.

Monday, February 6, 2006: Flathead Audubon Board of Directors meeting, 6PM at 295 3rd Ave. East North, Kalispell.

Sunday, February 12, 2006: Field Trip: A Wander in the Mission Valley (see page 3)

Friday, February 17 – Monday, February 20, 2006: The Great Backyard Bird Count. See www.birdsource.org/gbbc for more information, and instructions on how to participate.

Saturday, February 18, 2006: Field Trip: Bob Rost's Birding Blast (see page 3.)

Wednesday evenings, April 5, 12, 19, 26, 2006: The Beauty of Birds (see page 3).

BIRD OF THE MONTH

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS OUR TRUE HARBINGERS OF SPRING



February seems to be a time when we begin to question the length of our winter. Will Punxsutawney Phil see his shadow on February 2? Will we have 6 more weeks of misty skies and crystalline trees? One of the reassuring events of this month is the reliable return of the Red-winged Blackbirds—Flathead County's true harbingers of spring.

The Red-winged Blackbird (red-wing) is a common summer resident and uncommon winter bird in the Flathead Valley. It is somewhat smaller than an American Robin (approximately 7.5 to 9.5 inches in length). Males are glossy black everywhere except on the epaulets, or shoulders, of the wing. The epaulets are blazing scarlet bordered with a yellowish band. The pointed bill, eyes, and feet are black. Male red-wings do not completely attain full adult plumage until their third year. Females and young look completely different from the dazzling males; they resemble oversized sparrows. The back of a female is blackish brown streaked with buff and chestnut. The head is streaked with buffy eyebrows, brown cheeks, and darker eye stripes. The throat is pale, the breast and belly are whitish with heavy dark streaking.

According to Cornell Ornithological Laboratory, the red-wing's body is adapted to its lifestyle here in marshy areas. Red-wings have sturdy legs with muscles designed to allow them to do the "splits" if they are perched on two different cattails at once. Their feathers are hardy and resist wear and tear as they move about in cattail blades. They have a relatively long intestine, allowing them to digest a wide variety of foods, from grains to slugs.

Red-wings have many vocalizations. The common "okalee" song is to warn other males off the territory and to attract mates. The "chip" call is given by males and females in many situations as a general contact call and alerts group members to danger. There is also the "chap" call, "sputter" call, "twitter" call, and whistle. By logging onto Journey North (www.learner.org/jnorth/tm/spring/WelcomeRWBB.html) you can hear these interesting vocalizations and track the annual return of the red-wings.

In January most red-wings are still on wintering grounds in the Southern and Central U.S., putting on fat for the coming spring migration. In February male red-wings that breed here start to migrate north. This is when we will hear the first trumpets heralding spring ("O-KA-LEEE") and see the characteristic territorial displays as they balance on the highest marsh plant and spread their tail and wings, exposing their scarlet epaulet feathers. Early March is the peak male migration with females arriving later in the month. In April we can observe extravagant male territorial behavior while the females are nesting and first eggs are hatching. The open-cup nest is built low to the ground. An average of 3 eggs are laid and are incubated for 10-12 days. Birds are exceptionally wary when crows or hawks fly over nesting marshes at this time. Cornell Ornithological Lab reports that the Red-winged Blackbird is a highly polygamous species, with one male having up to 15 different females making nests in his territory. The females are also not bound to one mate; many of the eggs in a nest so fiercely defended by a territorial male may actually be sired by neighboring males. By May, many young are hatching and will fledge by 14 days old. Re-nesting and rearing young keep red-wings very busy the whole month of June. Nesting is finishing up by early July, and adults are starting to molt. By August, most young have fledged and are on their own. This is the peak month for molting body and flight feathers. The birds will remain inconspicuous during this vulnerable time. In September birds gather in large feeding flocks, putting on fat in preparation for migration and winter. And in October, migration is complete. In November and December, "our" red-wings are back in the Great Plains feeding in huge flocks, though some stragglers may remain. According to Dan Casey, these wintering birds are usually in flocks around reliable food sources such as feedlots and consist mostly of juvenile males. Over the past 10 years, Flathead Audubon members have found an average of 215 red-wings on the Bigfork Christmas Bird Count, with a high count of 519 in 1999.

The mature males will be returning to the wetlands of the Flathead soon. If you are fortunate to have a wetland close by, listen for their proclamations and be assured that spring is in the air.

By Linda de Kort

February 2006 Program

SEEKING THE RARE BIRDS OF ALASKA**One Birder's Approach to Getting Good Birds on a Budget!**

With Mike Schwitters

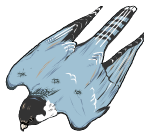


Accomplished birder Mike Schwitters will detail his ten-year effort to add exotic Asian species to his life's list by volunteering with several wildlife agencies in Alaska. The effort has taken Mike to several Alaskan outposts from the Bering Sea to the Aleutian Island chain to do wildlife surveys. The culmination of his effort has been five years of migration seasons in the outer Aleutians. Alaska is one of the world's most important breeding areas for birds. It is where Old World and New World species meet. The amazing annual long-distance migrations of diverse species to breed in Alaska play an important role in the Arctic ecosystem. Mike will illustrate a good number of those good birds with slides at our February program.

Mike is retired from his first career in the U.S. Air Force and from a second career managing Chateau's Skyline Lodge retirement apartments. He has lived in Chateau for over 20 years where he has enjoyed the birds of Freezeout Lake and the Rocky Mountain Front. Mike and his wife Connie have three grown children. Connie has accompanied Mike on a number of his adventures and has also built her own impressive list of birds.

February Field Trips**Sunday, February 12, 2006**

A Wander in the Mission Valley. We will spend a most of the day in the beautiful Mission Valley wandering the byways of the valley in search of wintering migrants and winter denizens. In years past we have seen snow buntings, a variety of hawks, several owl species, a falcon or two and, even, a chilly American robin. There is always a surprise or two. We will meet at the Park 'n Ride at the intersection of Hwy 93 and Hwy 83 near Somers at 8:00AM. Bring a lunch and winter weather gear. Please contact Leslie Kehoe to sign up for the trip at 837-4467.

**Saturday, February 18, 2006**

Bob Rost's Birding Blast. Bob will lead this trip somewhere in the Flathead Valley and will tailor it to where the best birds are being found towards the end of February. Meet Bob at the Park 'n Ride at the intersection of Hwy 93 and Hwy 83 near Somers at 8:00AM. You might want to bring a lunch and dress for the weather. Please contact Bob Rost at 837-2255 for further information.

LOOKING FOR A FLOCKMASTER

Flathead Audubon recently contracted with Pixel Solutions to develop an Internet website for us, and the development is moving swiftly.

Now we are looking for someone interested in becoming a web-based Flockmaster. The initial discussions on the design have included the ability for different individuals, such as committee chairs, to be able to update specific areas of the webpage. Therefore, the Flockmaster duties would be more oversight and coordination than actual input and updating of the webpage, although there would also be some of that as well. The final webpage should be online within a month.

If you are interested or just want more information, please contact any of the Website Committee: Bob Lee (RML3@centurytel.net), Mike Fanning (shrdlu@centurytel.net), Gail Sullivan (gussulli@netscape.net) or Linda Winnie, chair (lindawin@centurytel.net)

From Bob Lee

The Beauty of Birds

Spring is just around the corner, and so is the 2006 Beauty of Birds series!

Wednesday evenings in April we will be meeting at Flathead High School to hear from local birding experts, learn common songs and calls, and brush up on bird identification. The classes will have something for everyone, and everyone is welcome, from beginning birders to experts! Please call Flathead High School at 751-3500 to sign up or facilitator Ansley Ford at 857-6788 for more information. Hope to see you there!



From Ansley Ford

EXPLORING IN WINTER

By Bob Lopp, FAS President



It is the weekend at last! But, it is snowing/raining, a playoff game is on the tube, (can't miss it), and yet I want to do some birding. I know the birdfeeder crowd so nothing new there. Yes I have lots of books but I don't feel like reading. What can I do!

"Surf's up!" at least on the computer! Otherwise known as doing several things at once! Watch the game, do some birding, baby sit the grandkids and still look like I am doing something serious! It doesn't get better than this! The big question is which birding site on the computer. I go to "Favorites", open the "Birding" folder and surf through the list. Here are some of my favorite spots:

www.birds.cornell.edu

www.birding.com

www.americanbirding.org

www.americanbirdcenter.com/abc-montana.html

www.stokesbirdsathome.com

www.birdwatching.com

www.birdsource.org

Google will give you a huge list!

From the computer I can travel the world or access technical ornithology papers. If you do not have a computer yet, remember that the libraries in Kalispell, Whitefish, Columbia Falls and Bigfork have many available for the public and great people to help you learn how to use them on the internet.

At the January Flathead Audubon Board Meeting, it was approved to go ahead with the development of a website for Flathead Audubon. Once it is operational, the site will list field trips, programs for the meetings, issues of interest, and bird sightings. The web site can easily and regularly be updated with new information and links to other sites. This is a major step into the 21st century for Flathead Audubon but it will increase the attraction to younger people who use the web for most of their information. Just as the cell phone has taken over communication, the web is now the common source of instant information. Flathead Audubon needs to be on the web! Two weeks ago I received an out of state e-mail asking for information about birding in the Flathead. Soon I can direct them to our web site!

Book Review

Cities in the Wilderness by Bruce Babbitt
(Island Press, 2005), 187 pages,

Cities in the Wilderness is sub-titled *A New Vision of Land Use in America*. Bruce Babbitt was Secretary of the Interior during the Bill Clinton administration, and was the Governor of Arizona from 1978 to 1987, having previously served as Attorney General of the state from 1975 to 1978.

The five chapters proved to be an easy read with an illuminating look at the nature of Babbitt's dealing with environmental matters as a pivotal player in the political process. Following an introductory prologue, he starts with the problem of Everglades restoration and moves on to subjects involving the southwest, especially Southern California; the Midwest and farm policy; the Chesapeake Bay area and water issues; and finally to the myriad of concerns that affected decisions made by the Clinton administration regarding areas in the west such as the Upper Missouri River Breaks among many others. Throughout the book one is given an insight into how such legislation as the Endangered Species Act, the 1872 Mining Law, and the Clean Air Act play a part in enhancing or hindering the process of environmental politics.



The consequences for wildlife such as the California gnatcatcher, the willow flycatcher of the southwest, the ferruginous pygmy owl, the desert tortoise and the gray wolf are all part of the narrative. Interestingly, Babbitt informs us that it was not until the end of the Clinton administration that the co-leader of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, William Clark, finally was awarded his commission as Captain of the Corps of Discovery. This is but one of the many tidbits that await a potential reader's interest.

Finally, in the Epilogue, Babbitt cites examples of and suggestions for effective land use planning. Sadly, his call for stronger federal leadership in land use planning is not likely to come about in a positive way during the present administration, and he has a few words to say about that as well.

By Ed Prach

Thanks to Wal-Mart



The Wal-Mart Foundation recently presented Flathead Audubon Society \$125 to be used for educational outreach. We are grateful for this contribution which will be put towards maintaining our teaching materials and expanding our programs.



Scholarships Awarded

Flathead Audubon has awarded scholarships to middle-school students Cody Phelps, Aaron Otwell, and Taylor Johnson, to help fund their participation in this year's Mountain Mentors Program at the Ravenwood Natural Science Center in Bigfork. Every other weekend in January and February the boys will learn such outdoor skills as camping, tracking, wilderness first-aid and primitive tool making, participate in outdoor activities such as hiking, cross-country skiing, and snow-shoeing, and gain experience at setting and achieving goals. Each session also contains a heavy dose of nature study. The last weekend includes overnight winter camping.

ED PRACH *continued from page 1.*

When Ed stepped down from Programs in 1997, he turned his job and his tradition of excellent programs over to Leo. Ed remains active in FAS. You will still see him at most of the meetings—a shock of white hair, a wide smile, a twinkle in his eyes, chatting with someone about his latest hike.

Ed's love of hiking and his commitment to conservation also led him to become active in MWA. He was Secretary of the local chapter for eight years, and participated in many board projects in that period.

While hiking has brought Ed great enjoyment, it has also presented him with his greatest challenge. In July 2000 Ed was tackling Mt. Reynolds in Glacier Park with a group from the Over-the-Hill Gang. He'd done this hike two times before, but this time he was working in heavy weather, and was taking a new route as he made for the saddle between Heavy Runner and Mt. Reynolds.

Suddenly Ed lost his footing. He fell off a ten-foot ledge, then tumbled down a rocky slope for another 100 feet. By the time Ed hit the bottom he'd fractured 6 vertebrae, shattered his left leg, punctured a kidney, and broken his nose. Later the doctors told him the fall would have killed an ordinary 75-year-old man. But Ed was in great physical shape before the fall. And he was fortunate to have a member of Search and Rescue and a retired California Highway Patrolman among his 5 hiking companions. These two stabilized his condition and kept him alive for more than 4 hours until the ALERT helicopter arrived.

Ed was in critical condition for 1 week, and then in ICU for 2 more; initially it looked like his leg would have to be amputated. Slowly he recovered, and by the end of September he went home, his neck and back in a brace, his leg in a frame. Ed began to tackle the job of getting back on his feet, approaching his physical therapy with his usual determination and courage. By January 2001, now in Phoenix for the warmth, he tried riding his bicycle. The ride went fine, but he fell while trying to dis-

mount and fractured a bone in his thigh. Once again it was doctors, crutches, and physical therapy, as he worked his way back to mobility once more.

By early spring of 2001, Ed could do some cross-country skiing. In early summer, he went for his first serious hike since the fall. He set out to climb up Columbia Mountain with his good friend Loren Kreck. He went very slowly and had to stop often, but they made it to the top. "Loren was so patient," Ed says with a shake of his head. Coming down was even harder. "At one point my legs just wanted to stop working. Loren was so good. He just stopped and waited with me until I was able to go on." Later hikes that summer were still hard, but he was getting better.

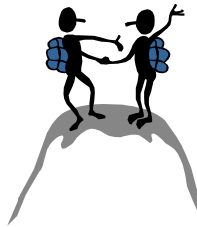
Ed will never forget his return to the Over-the-Hill Gang that summer after his accident. When he walked into the Spruce Park Cafe where the Gang gathers before its weekly hikes, the whole group stood and applauded, and dubbed him "the miracle man."

In the six years since his fall, Ed's courage and tenacity have been tested twice more. A few years after he got back on his feet, Carla passed away. "After being married to her for 54 years," he says, "it is very hard to be without her."

Then last year this inveterate hiker had to have both knees replaced by artificial ones. Ed is still testing out these new knees to see what they can do. He took some short hikes this fall, and will be trying out cross-country skiing and snow-shoeing this winter. The goal is, of course, to be ready to try more ambitious hiking when summer comes. Meanwhile, Ed has decided to expand his repertoire of athletic activities. At 81, he has begun to take dancing lessons.

Ed is approaching his new challenge, dancing on two artificial knees, in the same way he approached hiking and recovering from his fall, indeed, in the same way he has approached life in general—with vigor, commitment, courage, and a keen sense of enjoyment.

By Linda Winnie



ABC SPONSORS CATS INDOORS CAMPAIGN

Are you . . .

Tired of your neighbor's cats killing birds and other wildlife on your property?

Concerned about the health and well-being of your outdoor cat?

Interested in learning how to turn your outdoor cat into a contented indoor pet?

Concerned about the impact of cats on wildlife in your local park or community?

Interested in getting local cat ordinances passed to address cat overpopulation?

. . . Then you should investigate *Cats Indoors! The Campaign for Safer Birds and Cats*.

This campaign was initiated by the American Bird Conservancy to end the unnecessary suffering and death of birds and other wildlife caused by free-roaming domestic cats. ***Cats Indoors!*** seeks to educate cat owners, decision makers and the general public that free-roaming cats pose a significant risk to birds and other wildlife, suffer themselves, and pose a threat to human health.

While exact numbers are unknown, scientists estimate that nationwide, cats kill hundreds of millions of birds, and more than a billion small mammals, such as rabbits, squirrels, and chipmunks, each year. Cats kill common species such as Cardinal, Blue Jay, and House Wren, as well as rare and endangered species such as Piping Plover, Florida Scrub-Jay, and California Least Tern.

There are more than 77 million pet cats in the United States. A 1997 nationwide poll showed that only 35% are kept exclusively indoors, leaving the majority of owned cats free to kill birds and other wildlife at least some of the time. In addition, millions of stray and feral cats roam our cities, suburbs, farmlands and natural areas. Abandoned by their owners or lost (stray), or descendants of strays and living in the wild (feral), these cats are victims of human irresponsibility due to abandonment and failure to spay or neuter pets. No one knows how many homeless cats there are in the U.S., but estimates range from 60 to 100 million. These cats lead short, miserable lives.

Loss of wildlife habitat and fragmentation due to human development provides cats and other predators easier access to wildlife forced to live on smaller tracts of land. Rather than havens for wildlife, these areas can be death traps.

Cats Indoors! encourages cat owners to keep their cats indoors and advocates laws, regulations, and policies to protect cats and birds, including the humane removal of free-roaming cats from areas important to wildlife.

To read more about this important topic or to download a color brochure and poster, please visit www.abcbirds.org/cats

Information for this article was downloaded from www.abcbirds.org



A Wind Turbine That Does Not Chew Up Birds

One of the primary environmental drawbacks of the propeller wind turbines is that they kill birds. The tips of the blades spin much faster than the wind speed, chopping through the air sometimes at speeds of 200 mph and birds generally just don't see them coming.

The new TMA vertical axis design flows with the wind, at the speed of the wind. "It looks like a building to the bird," said Ronald Taylor, COO of Terra Moya Aqua, Inc. "We've never seen a dead bird at our test site." Likely this is because birds normally fly into solid walls. Also, because of their lower speed, the TMA turbines produce much less noise than the propeller counterpart. The company has been able to secure permission to install their turbine in several Cali-

fornia counties where propeller turbines are banned because of the known bird carnage. Apparently there is no data concerning impacts to bat populations.

Another advantage, which is very important to many people, is that the device can be painted to better blend in with its environment. Not being chipped by wind-driven sand or other small fragments of matter, the paint will last longer. Because it stands much shorter, about half the height of a comparable propeller design, the visible impact on the landscape is much smaller as well.

More information is available at

<http://opensourceenergy.org/textlstvw.aspx?LstID=99b82ae5-287f-4bb4-868d-2a44417a564b>.

From Bob Lee



CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS RECORD MANY FIRST-TIME SPECIES



Birders from all over northwest Montana joined together over the holiday season to scour the landscape for birds and gather data for the five traditional Audubon Christmas Bird Counts of this area. Below are summaries of results of the counts. The numerical tallies of the counts are on page 8.

Bigfork (December 18, 2005): In the 32nd annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count at Bigfork, 29 people braved temperatures as low as -17F, but enjoyed a sunny day. We found 8,351 individual birds of 81 species on count day, and another 7 species during count week. Although no new species were found (read further), leaving our cumulative list at 142 species, it was just the second time that Trumpeter Swan, Gyrfalcon and Snowy Owl (5!) were seen on the count. Other rarities included our third-ever Northern Saw-whet Owl and Spruce Grouse (2); 2 White-throated Sparrows, and 35 reported Cackling Geese (which are still under review and would be new to our count list). We set new high count totals for another 9 species (totals in bold on page 8). Our count of 251 Ring-necked Pheasants was more than double our previous high, although our Wild Turkey count (just 218) was the lowest since 1985. Although they were reported during count week, this was just the third time in 32 years that Pine Siskins were not found on count day. (From Dan Casey)

Kalispell (January 1, 2006): We once again had our best turnout ever for the Kalispell count, with 47 observers out in the field in hospitable New Year's Day weather. As a result, we found >13,000 individual birds of 68 species, and added 4 new species to our 7-yr cumulative list for the circle, which now stands at 96 species. These included a well-described a Glaucous Gull at the landfill, a Peregrine Falcon off Columbia Falls Stage Road, 2 Chestnut-backed Chickadees, and 3 Marsh Wrens (both the wren and the falcon were seen during our trial run in 1999). Three additional species never before seen on this count were reported during count week, but not on count day (Thayer's Gull, California Gull, and Fox Sparrow). Other notable species included Tundra Swan, White-throated Sparrow, Rusty Blackbird and Cooper's Hawk, each seen for just the second time. We had new high count totals for another 15 species (totals in bold on page 8). These included 7 Merlins, 191 Gray Partridges, and 186 Ring-necked Pheasants. Mourning Dove numbers (828) were just below last year's high, as were Blue Jays (34). We had our lowest totals to date for Mallards, Bald Eagles, and Wild Turkeys. (From Dan Casey)

Ninepipe (December 18, 2005): Twenty-three observers tallied 61 species. Extremely frigid conditions for the week prior to the count produced little open water throughout the count area and, as a result,

low numbers of waterfowl. Even though they are present in the area most winters, the 4 Snowy owls observed marked the first time we have tallied this beautiful species on the count. High counts were established for 10 species/races (totals in bold on page 8). Another delightful count highlight included all of the North American falcons: American Kestrel, Merlin, Prairie falcon, Peregrine falcon, and Gyrfalcon. (From Jim Rogers)

Eureka (December 17, 2005): Over the 13 years of our count we have ranged from 42 to 57 species, so this year's species count of 50 is about in the middle of our range. This year's total of 1487 individuals is the 4th lowest. The highlight of this year's count probably was the 4 new species on count day and 1 more during count week. They were common loon, Lewis's woodpecker, Wilson's snipe, and northern goshawk on count day and merlin during count week. We had 12 people count in the field and 20 feeder watchers. (From Lewis Young)

Swan Valley (December 18, 2005): Nine observers (a low for our count) braved temperatures ranging from -22F to +15F and slogged through snow 10 inches deep to search for birds in the Swan Valley. These brave souls tallied 28 species, which is a bit higher than our 12-year average. They found 337 individual birds, the lowest ever in our 12 year history. The surprise of the day was a Spotted Towhee. (From Rod Ash)

Glacier National Park (December 17, 2005): Fifteen observers recorded 592 birds of 37 species. The total of 37 species is above average and nearly matches the high count of 38 on the 2001 count. The 592 individual birds exceeded totals from the past 3 years, though was below the long-term average. The most abundant species on the count were Mallards and Common Goldeneyes (the most ever recorded). Among the most unusual species on count day were a Wilson's Snipe, a Killdeer, 2 Western Grebes, and 5 Trumpeter Swans. The American Goldfinch seen during count week but not on count day was a first. Despite below average temperatures prior to and during the day of the count, there was still plenty of open water, accounting for the higher than average waterfowl numbers. The 16 Bald Eagles were the most since the mid-1980's, when spawning kokanee salmon were still attracting large numbers of eagles to Lower McDonald Creek, and Ruffed Grouse numbers were much higher

CBC Results *continued on page 9.*

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS

B = Bigfork
K = Kalispell
N = Ninepipe

S = Swan Valley
E = Eureka
G = Glacier National Park

cw = seen during count week
sp = species
totals in bold are historically high tallies



SPECIES	B	K	N	S	E	G	SPECIES	B	K	N	S	E	G
Common Loon					2		Red-tailed Hawk	18	29	225		11	
Loon sp.						1	Harlan's Hawk	4	4	34			
Horned Grebe	3					4	Rough-legged Hawk	22	45	184		10	
Western Grebe					4	2	Buteo, sp.		3	25		1	
Double-crested Cormorant	1						Golden Eagle	cw		7	1	1	
Great Blue Heron	8	6	5		cw		American Kestrel	cw		19			
Tundra Swan	125	2					Merlin		7	4		cw	
Trumpeter Swan	1					5	Peregrine Falcon		1	1			
Canada Goose	1332	1597	420		1	51	Gyr Falcon	1		1			
Lesser Canada/Cackling Goose	35						Prairie Falcon			5			
Green-winged Teal	1						large falcon sp		1				
Mallard	523	1574	1087		140	98	Gray Partridge	23	191	228			
American Wigeon			3			3	Ring-necked Pheasant	251	186	463		cw	
Northern Pintail	12						Spruce Grouse	2					
Gadwall	cw						Ruffed Grouse	11	1		4	11	14
Redhead	2						Wild Turkey	218	46	50		131	
Ring-necked Duck	25						Virginia Rail			2			
Greater Scaup	25						American Coot	94					
Lesser Scaup	8						Killdeer		1			6	1
Common Goldeneye	336	39	4			98	Wilson's Snipe	cw	1	11		1	1
Barrow's Goldeneye	49	2				5	Ring-billed Gull	7	44				
goldeneye, sp.	4		3				California Gull	6	cw				
Bufflehead	80	34				30	Herring Gull	23	117				
Hooded Merganser	72						Thayer's Gull		cw				
Common Merganser	65	7	7	1	2	14	Glaucous Gull		1				
Red-breasted Merganser	1						gull, sp.	73	9				
duck, sp.		13				4	Rock Pigeon	195	702	186		102	
Bald Eagle	53	27	40	11	12	16	Mourning Dove	95	828	21		26	
Northern Harrier			7				Great Horned Owl	2	1	13	1	cw	
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2	3	2				Northern Pygmy-Owl	2				1	1
Cooper's Hawk		1					Northern Saw-whet Owl	1					
Northern Goshawk	1	1	3		1		Snowy Owl	5		4			
Accipiter, sp.		2					Belted Kingfisher	7	3	2	1	1	3

Tallies continued on page 9.

CBC Results *continued from page 7.*

than usual. The total of 8 Three-toed Woodpeckers was a high for the species, reflecting post-fire habitat from the 2003 fires. Many of the 23 unidentified woodpeckers were probably Three-toeds, heard drilling in dead trees in the burned areas. Pine Siskins, Common Redpolls and Evening Grosbeaks have often dominated count totals of the past, but sightings have been much reduced in recent years. (From Susan Sindt)

Tallies *continued from page 8*

SPECIES	B	K	N	S	E	G
Belted Kingfisher	7	3	2	1	1	3
Lewis's Woodpecker					1	
Downy Woodpecker	24	39	7	6	20	6
Hairy Woodpecker	20	9	7	5	20	8
Three-toed Woodpecker						8
Black-backed Woodpecker					2	
Northern Flicker	67	203	27	5	39	1
Pileated Woodpecker	6	5	2	3	4	3
woodpecker, sp.		2				23
Horned Lark	39	cw				
Gray Jay	3	2			14	1
Steller's Jay	18	2	8	15	13	5
Blue Jay	3	34			3	
Clark's Nutcracker	12			2	5	
Black-billed Magpie	124	427	749	2	16	
American Crow	50	172	5		19	
Common Raven	215	305	100	55	236	17
Black-capped Chickadee	507	499	249	72	159	28
Mountain Chickadee	125	122	4	52	86	5
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	72	2		8	6	5
Black-cap x Mtn Chickadee		1				
chickadee, sp.		72				16
Red-breasted Nuthatch	79	47	4	33	55	4
White-breasted Nuthatch	2	6		1	4	
Pygmy Nuthatch	56	112	11		cw	
Brown Creeper	6	5	2	1	7	3
Winter Wren	1					
Marsh Wren		3	1			
American Dipper	6	2		1	4	6
Golden-crowned Kinglet	41	13	39	4		12
Townsend's Solitaire	6	2	52	1	cw	

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SPECIES	B	K	N	S	E	G
American Robin	14	51	51		1	
Bohemian Waxwing	1492	1640	379	7	69	6
Cedar Waxwing	95	104	140			
waxwing, sp.		75				
Northern Shrike	2	7	4		4	
European Starling	31	718	1234		45	
Spotted Towhee				1		
American Tree Sparrow		123	26		10	
Song Sparrow	34	34	39		6	
Fox Sparrow		cw				
White-throated Sparrow	2	1				
White-crowned Sparrow	cw			3		
Dark-eyed Junco	54	41	13		8	6
Snow Bunting	4	126				
Red-winged Blackbird	398	14	51			
Brewer's Blackbird	cw	38	290		22	
Rusty Blackbird		1				
Pine Grosbeak	3		3		17	
Cassin's Finch			1			
House Finch	317	1236	385		105	
Carpodacus sp					2	
Red Crossbill	10	32				55
Common Redpoll	10		1			20
Pine Siskin	cw	10			9	
American Goldfinch	24	121	35		4	cw
finch, sp.		20				
Evening Grosbeak	117			20		3
House Sparrow	438	1047	2213			



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. The meeting starts at 7:00PM and includes a featured guest who presents a conservation or nature program. The Board of Directors meet the Monday preceding the general meeting, at 6PM at 295 3rd Ave. EN, in Kalispell. 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 18th of each month. Contact newsletter editor at 755-1406; email submissions to pileatedpost@hotmail.com

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