



the **Flatheaded Post**

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

VOLUME 31

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OCTOBER 2006



Prudential Volunteer Work Day At Owen Sowerwine Natural Area

The Stars have aligned, the Date is set, and Volunteers will be gathering 8:30 Saturday morning, October 7th, at the Montessori School on Willow Glen Drive, to clear the way for a new fence.

Who are the Stars? Well, we have Prudential's Jane Lopp & Associates; Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP); the Montana Conservation Corps; and Flathead Audubon's Volunteers. As many of you know, Flathead Audubon and Montana Audubon have been trying for several years to delineate the boundary of our Owen Sowerwine Natural Area (OSNA). A valuable land survey was completed last year by Smith Surveying which legally defines the property line. We are extremely grateful to Smith Surveying for donating their time and expertise to accomplish this important task. Fencing was to follow, but the logistics of removing the shrub layer (jungle!) along the planned fence line became a problem.

Then it happened! WOW!! The Parks Division of MFWP and the Montana Conservation Corps have teamed up to help us out on National Public Lands Day (Sept 30th). These two hard working groups have volunteered to clear brush from over a half mile of dense riparian vegetation to make it possible to get some fencing established.



One week after this brush clearing will be OUR Prudential Volunteer Work Day (October 7th)! Flathead Audubon volunteers will be taking the brush that the September 30th crew cut from the fence line and scattering it in the interior of the Natural Area. No burning will be needed. Furthermore, IF Audubon gets 20 people to work for 2 hours (9-11AM) on these OSNA projects, Prudential's Jane Lopp & Associates will MATCH our labor with a much needed Grant of \$1000! This money will be used to buy needed materials for the fence and other OSNA projects.

Can YOU help on October 7th for about two hours? If so, please meet us October 7 at the Montessori School, 349 Willow Glen Drive, Kalispell, 8:30AM.

What will you need to bring? #1) Yourself and your smile!; #2) Gloves; #3) Glasses/safety glasses/or safety goggles; #4) Long pants, long sleeve shirt, sturdy footwear and/or rubber boots for the wet areas; #5) Your usual Flathead "Can Do" attitude; #6) Rain Gear...just in case; AND #7) Loppers, pruners, or a bow saw, if you have them.

This project will help us manage the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area more efficiently and protect it so everyone can enjoy it. Please come to help out!

From Brent Mitchell, Co-chair, OSNA Committee

**FAS MEMBERSHIPS EXPIRE
THIS MONTH**

See page 5 for renewal information.

OCTOBER

FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

Monday, October 9: Flathead Audubon General Meeting begins at 7PM at The Summit, conference room #3. More details on page 3.

Monday, October 2: Flathead Audubon Board of Directors meeting, 6PM at 295 Third Avenue East North, Kalispell (Jane Lopp & Associates Building).

Saturday, October 7: Volunteer Work Day at Owen Sowerwine Natural Area, begins at 8:30AM. More details on this page.

Sunday, October 15: Field Trip at Smith Lake, meet at 9AM. More details on page 3.

Saturday, October 21: Sunflower Seed Pick-up Day. Further information on page 7.

BIRD OF THE MONTH

OUR SMALLEST FALCON

Although my years of bird watching have familiarized me with many of the beautiful birds in our area, I have to confess that when it comes to raptors I'm still often frustrated by my inability to make positive identifications.

Most people tend to think of all the day-flying birds of prey with hooked beaks and claws as one group while actually they fall into two quite separate families. The hawk group is comprised of kites, eagles, buteos, accipiters and harriers, while the falcon group is comprised of falcons and caracaras.

Sibley describes falcons as compact, fast flying raptors with long pointed wings, long tails and notched beaks. Although members of this family vary greatly in size, all are well adapted to swift level flights, twisting flight maneuvers and high speed dives while in pursuit of prey. Because of their proficiency in flight, they can be hard to spot and to identify. The good news is that the smallest member of this family, the American Kestrel, is very common in the Flat-head Valley and can often be seen on fence posts and utility wires throughout the area. At about the same size as an American Robin, the Kestrel weighs approximately 4 ounces--the weight of a stick of butter. Despite its small size the Kestrel can fly at 40 miles per hour and can hover over potential prey like a small helicopter. In fact it is the only small hovering hawk found in North America. The Kestrel is also the only small raptor that has a bright rust-colored back and tail. It also has white cheeks, a gray crown and two black mustache marks on its face and is easily differentiated from Sharp-shinned Hawk which is of a similar size but much less colorful and lacks the mustache markings. The other similar species, the Merlin, is much darker and has only a single mustache mark.

As is the case with many of the raptors, the American Kestrel females are larger than the males with females measuring 9 to 11 inches in length and weighing an average of 4.2 ounces, while the males measure 8 to 10 inches and weigh an average of 3.9 ounces. Experts speculate that this reverse sexual dimorphism occurs because raptors eggs are quite large in relation to the size of their bodies and the female's larger size gives her an advantage in both the egg laying and in the brooding.

According to Wikipedia, Kestrels form strong pair bonds and courtship begins shortly after the male establishes a territory. In our area most Kestrels are migratory but our annual Christmas Bird Count data shows that some usually over winter. In the 32 years of the Bigfork count, Kestrels have been present in 12 of those years with the highest occurrence being 7, while in the 7 years of the Kalispell count, Kestrels have been reported in 6 of the 7 years and the numbers have ranged from 1 to 4.

Kestrels are secondary cavity nesters preferring to use old woodpecker holes or natural cavities in trees or in rocks. They will also use nest boxes constructed to the proper size. I found great directions for building nest boxes for Kestrels (and many other species) at <http://www.epa.gov/glnpo/greenacres/wildones/handbk/wo26bird.html>. Returning migrants commonly re-establish their territories from the previous year and in early courtship the male may make "dive displays", a series of climbs and dives of 33 to 66 feet with 3 to 5 "klee" notes given at the peak of each ascent. He may also present the female with food during a ritual courtship feeding and try to entice her to the nest by calling and "flutter-gliding" toward her while carrying food. In response she may beg for food while doing a similar "flutter-glide". No nest is built in the cavity but if you're providing a nest box you could add some sawdust or wood shavings for the eggs to rest on.

Once the nest is established and the 3 to 7 eggs are laid, both sexes take turns incubating the eggs, a very rare occurrence among birds of prey since the female usually incubates exclusively. Both the male and female Kestrel develop bare oval patches on the sides of their breasts where the bare skin can warm the eggs. Eggs typically hatch after about 30 days and the young grow quickly becoming noisy between day 11 and 14 and reaching adult weight in about 2.5 weeks. First flights are taken between days 26 and 31. Cornell Lab reports that Kestrels take care of the house keeping tasks in their nest by backing up to the wall and squirting their feces onto the walls. The feces then dry and stay off the eggs and later the baby birds. You can imagine what a smelly place that nest must be by the time the nestlings fledged!

In the summer, Kestrels feed primarily on insects such as grasshoppers, dragonflies, and crickets, and

(BIRD OF THE MONTH, continued on page 3)



By Jeannie Marcure



By Isidor Jeklin

October 2006 Program

REFLECTIONS ON WHITEFISH LAKE



Mike Koopal, Executive Director and founder of the Whitefish Lake Institute, will reflect on the history of Whitefish Lake, scientific research being undertaken to understand complex lake systems, and stewardship of lake resources at our October meeting.

Until 125 years ago, Whitefish Lake quietly existed as a glacial relic of the Pleistocene Epoch. Upon the advent of European settlement to its shores, the lake has transitioned chemically, biologically and physically. Cultural eutrophication, or the accelerated rate of aging in Whitefish Lake, is now readily apparent.

Following high school in Iowa, Mike spent a month in the Great Bear Wilderness on a project with the Student Conservation Association. The experience instilled two things in him: The desire to work for the environment and an aspiration to live in Montana. After graduating from Luther College with a degree in biology, Montana became Mike's home. His work has allowed him to chase trout and salmon in Montana, Idaho, Nevada and Alaska while addressing watershed scale issues. In 2005 Mike founded the Whitefish Lake Institute with hopes of tackling the tough issues of an urban interface lake. The Whitefish Lake Institute is dedicated to linking science with community awareness to protect the lake.

Please join us at The Summit on Monday, October 9, at 7 p.m. to learn more about the Whitefish area lakes and the Whitefish Lake Institute.



This month's big event ...

FAS Annual Sunflower Seed Sale

This is Flathead Audubon's primary fund raising project. The seed is very clean, Montana grown, black sunflower seed, much loved by many many birds. Here is your opportunity to support Flathead Audubon and obtain high-quality food to offer your back-yard birds. Proceeds of this sale support local conservation and educational programs such as:

- ◆ Scholarships for environmental education
- ◆ Research grants for field studies of birds and bird habitat
- ◆ Employment of an Education Coordinator
- ◆ Educational materials for lectures by Audubon members to local classes and civic groups
- ◆ Support to local elementary schools through Project Feeder Watch
- ◆ Lease, care and upkeep of the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area

Orders must be placed before October 14. Pick-up day will be October 21. See page 7 for an order form and for locations and times of seed pick-up.

From Mike Fanning, Chair of Birdseed Sales



Fall Field Trip

Join Leslie Kehoe on
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 15,
for a morning of

BIRDING AROUND SMITH LAKE.

This expedition to the Smith Lake Waterfowl Production Area should field put trip participants up close and personal to a wide variety of waterfowl, including an assortment of grebes and lots of ducks. The group should also find a bluebird or two still in the area and possibly meadowlarks. Bald Eagles and Marsh Harriers, and possibly an Osprey, will be seen soaring in the sky or perched on prominent trees by Smith Lake.

Meet at the Fish, Wildlife and Parks building in Kalispell (490 North Meridian) at 9:00AM. For more information contact Leslie Kehoe at 837-4467 or kehoes11@centurytel.net.



BIRD OF THE MONTH, continued from page 1.

on small mammals such as mice, and voles. In the winter, however, the absence of an insect supply in our area forces Kestrels to feed primarily on small mammals and birds, or to migrate far enough south to obtain an adequate food supply. Interestingly, the Mission Valley, reputed for its large population of voles most winters, usually records a much higher number of Kestrels on its Christmas Bird Count.

Kestrels are plentiful in our area and seem to be adapting well to the changing landscape of our valley so take time this month to get out and enjoy our beautiful valley. When you do, remember to watch the roadsides for a small, rust colored bird and maybe you'll be lucky enough to observe one of my favorite birding sights-- a Kestrel perched on a fence post or a utility wire, proudly holding a mouse in its foot! Don't forget to take your camera, that will be a scene you'll want to record!

By Jeannie Marcure for Flathead Audubon

The following article from National Audubon is so important and timely that I would like to offer it here, for all FAS members to read, in place of my usual President's message.

Bob Lopp, FAS President

FALL MIGRATION TIME!

Audubon Urges People to Help Birds Make it Safely to Their Wintering Grounds

Each year from August to November, 5 billion birds in North America - including songbirds, hummingbirds, raptors and others - make their way from their summer breeding grounds in northern areas to their winter homes in the south. Their migration is wrought with perils, such as storms, limited food supplies, and exhaustion. Compounding these natural threats are the ones created by humans, including the bright lights and tall structures of cities, prowling domestic pets and toxic lawns.

People can provide a safer journey for migrating birds, especially when the birds stop in their yards and communities for rest and food. The Audubon At Home program urges people to take the following steps to help ensure a successful fall migration for our feathered friends:

- ◆ **Turn off lights at night:** Birds become disoriented by artificial light, which often results in fatal collisions with buildings, homes, and other structures. To prevent this, turn off exterior and interior lights during the peak migration hours of midnight to dawn. Outfit exterior lights with top and side shields to direct the light downward, where it is needed. If you work in a multi-floor building, advocate for "lights out" during migration season.
- ◆ **Prevent window collisions:** Many birds strike windows after being startled off a feeder, seeing escape routes mirrored in reflective glass. To avoid this, reduce reflectivity with light-colored shades, blinds, or drapes; place netting or a screen in front of the window; or stick decals closely spaced to the outside of windows. Place bird feeders either within 3 feet or more than 30 feet of windows - at 3 feet birds do not have an adequate distance to reach a high speed and are less likely to get injured. At more than 30 feet birds are more likely to recognize the window.
- ◆ **Keep cats indoors:** Cats - domestic, stray, or feral - kill an estimated hundreds of millions of birds each year. Ground feeding birds, such as cardinals and quail, as well as young, immature birds, are the most vulnerable. Keeping cats indoors helps keep the birds outdoors safe, and it also reduces risks to cats, especially from injuries and disease.
- ◆ **Eliminate pesticides:** U.S. households use 102 million pounds of pesticides in their homes and gardens annually, which kill several million birds each year when the birds ingest tainted insects, seeds and other food sources. Use the least toxic alternatives for combating pests.
- ◆ **Keep feeders stocked and clean:** Birds will need places to rest and refuel, so make sure that your yard includes native plants and your bird-feeders are well-stocked. Along with feeders and native plants, provide a source of fresh water for the thirsty travelers. Reduce the risk of spreading disease at feeders by regularly cleaning them with a nine-to-one water-bleach solution, or a dilute vinegar solution (three-to-one) or non-fragranced biodegradable soap.



For more information on how to keep birds safe, visit the Audubon At Home website at www.audubonathome.org (go to the "Keeping Wildlife Safe" link on the left-hand side of the page).

Looking for some great entertainment on a rainy autumn afternoon?

Just set your computer on the Flathead Audubon website - www.flatheadaudubon.org - and

-  enjoy photographs of your favorite birds
-  renew your Flathead Audubon membership for the year
-  read about the next meeting's program
-  listen to the calls and songs of backyard birds
-  check out the most up-to-date field trip info
-  discover what our Education Committee is doing for Flathead Valley kids and teachers
-  peruse the Pileated Post monthly newsletter.

By dinnertime, you'll have a smile on your face and a (bird) song in your heart!

... And don't forget to check the FAS website for newly scheduled fieldtrips too!!



JOIN OUR LOCAL CHAPTER!!

Three years ago we announced a new category of membership—Local Chapter Membership in the Flathead Audubon Society. Now, three years later, 188 families are currently members of FAS.

Historically, to join Audubon, you would simply join the National organization. You would then automatically become a Flathead Audubon Society member, and receive the Flathead Audubon newsletter as well as the National organization's Audubon magazine. National Audubon supported our chapter by sharing the membership dues with us.

This is no longer the case. National Audubon has been gradually reducing its financial support to the local chapters and is encouraging them to become self-supporting. We currently receive from National Audubon less than \$4 from the membership dues of each member, and this will soon drop to 0. \$4 is less than half the cost of printing and postage for the newsletter for each member. So we (along with many other chapters nation-wide) have instituted a new Chapter Membership.

For \$15 you can join Flathead Audubon, receive the newsletter, be part of the action here, and support all of our local programs: monthly meetings, field trips, management of Owen Sowerwine Natural Area, school and adult education programs.

You can still join National Audubon, of course. Your membership fee will support National's many excellent nation-wide education and conservation programs **but you will not be supporting the local chapter.** With a National membership you re-

ceive both the Audubon magazine and the Flathead Audubon monthly newsletter. The National Audubon fee is \$20 for first-time members (\$15 for Seniors and Students), and then \$35 to renew your membership each year after that.

We strongly suggest that you join Flathead Audubon and then choose either to join National Audubon or not. Without local members the chapter will have to reduce its programs in the future.

Over the years, Flathead Audubon has been well supported by valley residents through donations and activities such as our annual seed sale. We hope this support will continue in the future and be supplemented by a large group of local chapter members.

Go to www.flatheadaudubon.org or send in the form on the back of this newsletter to join now!

From Mike Fanning, Membership Chair

Do you receive The Pileated Post electronically, rather than by "snail mail?"

If so PLEASE let us know right away when you have a change of email address. We don't want you to miss a single issue!

We also have run into a couple of email-boxes that were full and couldn't accept the Post. We know that email can be overwhelming at times, but please clean out a little space for your favorite newsletter!

Thanks!

If you are already FAS member, don't forget ... it is

TIME TO RENEW YOUR FAS MEMBERSHIP!!

Our memberships now all renew in October rather than on the month the membership started.

All memberships except those made after April 2006 must be renewed now.

Without renewal, this will be the last month you receive The Pileated Post.

To renew your membership and ensure you will continue to receive the Post uninterrupted, renew now at www.flatheadaudubon.org or send in the form on the back of this newsletter.

American Bird Conservancy Offers Bird Conservation Postage Stamps



American Bird Conservancy (ABC) has announced the launch of the first U.S. charity postage stamps to support wildlife conservation. The new stamps feature illustrations of the Cerulean Warbler - a declining songbird - and the recently-rediscovered Ivory-billed Woodpecker. They are 2.5" x 1.5" at actual size. Each carries a face value of 39 cents, and can be used for regular U.S. postage.

The stamps are available through the ABC web site at www.abcbirds.org, and are being distributed by Zazzle.com.

"The concept of individualized postage stamps is a new one, and ABC is delighted to partner with Zazzle in issuing the first charity postage stamps to support wildlife conservation" said George Fenwick, ABC's President. "Not only will these stamps contribute much-needed funds to priority bird conservation projects, they will also

help raise awareness of the need to conserve America's birds" he added.

The stamps are themed to reflect two important bird conservation goals: to halt species extinctions, and to restore American songbird populations. Twenty-seven percent of the net proceeds from all stamp sales ordered through ABC's web site will contribute directly to bird and habitat conservation programs. ABC is a 501 (c) (3) not-for-profit organization whose mission is to conserve wild birds and their habitats throughout the Americas. It is recognized as a top-rated charity by the independent group Charity Navigator.

The Ivory-billed Woodpecker stamp illustration was painted by Washington-based artist Todd Telander www.toddtelander.com. The Cerulean Warbler image was adapted by ABC graphic designer Gemma Radko from a photograph by bird bander Robert Mulvihill. The original photograph was taken at Powdermill Nature Reserve in Pennsylvania www.powdermill.org, where researchers have been banding migratory birds to track their movements since 1961.



Birding Opportunities Near and Far...

November 7-12, 2006

Wings Over Water Wildlife Festival

Now in its tenth year, the Wings Over Water Wildlife Festival has become the premier birding and nature festival of the Outer Banks of North Carolina. This event offers birding, paddling, and natural history trips throughout eastern North Carolina.

Registration materials and information about the 2006 festival are available at www.wingsoverwater.org or you can call 252-441-8144 to have these materials mailed to you.

Sponsors of this event include Carolina Bird Club, Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society National Park Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Outer Banks Sentinel.

October 13-15, 2006 (Friday evening-Sunday)

Golden Eagle Migration: Trapping, Banding and Observing

Every October near Rogers Pass, it is migration season for one of the world's largest concentrations of soaring, migrating golden eagles. As many as 150 golden eagles may be observed in a single day along with 14 other species of migrating raptors.

The Glacier Institute is offering a class in which participants will work side-by-side with experienced raptor biologists to spot and capture golden eagles. When birds are captured, participants will help with the scientific process of examining and banding birds. Participants will also learn about migratory ecology, physical adaptations, and identification in flight.

Ages 12 and up are welcome. The course fee of \$355 includes meals and lodging at a nearby guest ranch.

For more information and to register contact the Glacier Institute at 755-1211 or go to www.glacierinstitute.org.

FLATHEAD AUDUBON'S ANNUAL SUNFLOWER SEED SALE



Feed your feathered friends and
support local Audubon projects!

Black Oil Sunflower Seeds 50 lb. Sack - \$19

Highest Quality--Grown in Montana

This sale is Flathead Audubon's primary fund-raising
project and your purchase will help fund local
conservation and educational programs.

DELIVERY--OCTOBER 21

Bigfork (837-1456)-----IGA Parking Lot-----9:00-11:00AM
Columbia Falls (387-4150)-Glacier Bank-----10:00-12:00AM
Whitefish (862-8070)----Train Depot-----11:00-1:00PM
Kalispell (755-1406)-----Fairgrounds North End-12:00-2:00 PM
Swan Valley (754-2289) Call June Ash for pickup information
Eureka (889-3492)---Call Lewis Young for pickup information

Clip and Send the Order form below to:
Mike Fanning, 380 Tally Lake Rd., Whitefish, MT 59937
Phone: 862-8070

----- CLIP HERE -----

SALE CLOSES OCTOBER 14--ORDER NOW!

ORDER FORM - SUBMIT BY OCTOBER 14

Number of Sacks: _____ @ \$19 = Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

I will pick up my order Saturday, October 21 at (check one)

Bigfork____ Columbia Falls____ Condon____ Kalispell____ Whitefish____ Eureka____

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Are you a member of Flathead Audubon? Yes _____ No _____

If you are not a member, you can join for only \$15. Use the form on back of the newsletter.



OCTOBER, 2006



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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 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: piledatedpost@flatheadaudubon.org**

FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY DIRECTORY

Website: www.flatheadaudubon.org

John Kyle: Flockmaster@flatheadaudubon.org

OFFICERS

President	Bob Lopp	52 West View Drive, Kalispell 59901	257-6886
Vice-President	Mike Fanning	(shrldu@centurytel.net)	862-8070
Secretary	Gail Sullivan	932 Columbia Ave., Whitefish 59937	862-5775
Treasurer	Bruce Tannehill	239 Deer Trail, Whitefish 59937	862-4548
Past-President	Linda deKort	(dekort@montanasky.com)	755-3704

DIRECTORS

2004-2007	Dan Casey	(dcasey@abcbirds.org)	857-3143
2004-2007	Bob Lee	(rml3@centurytel.net)	257-0363
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2006-2007	Marcy Mahr	(marcymah@centurytel.net)	752-6837
2005-2008	Paula Smith	(paulabobsmith@centurytel.net)	837-0181
2005-2008	Shirley Harrison	(shirley107@centurytel.net)	844-2291
2006-2009	Lewis Young	50 Garrison Dr., Eureka 59917	889-3492
2006-2009	Barbara Grove	(grove10@centurytel.net)	862-6086
2006-2007	Leo Keane	XX Pine Place, Whitefish 59937	862-5807
2006-2007	Linda Winnie	(lindawin@centurytel.net)	755-1406
2006-2007	Brent Mitchell	(bkmitch@centurytel.net)	756-8130

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Birdseed Sales	Mike Fanning	862-8070
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Education	Ansley Ford	857-6788
Education	Lisa Discoe	837-1456
Coordinators	Sonja Hartmann	387-4150
Field Trips	Leslie Kehoe	837-4467
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Natural Area	Linda Winnie	755-1406
Newsletter	Linda Winnie	755-1406
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Nominations	Linda deKort	755-3704
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Publicity	Paula Smith	837-0181
Refuge Projects	Leslie Kehoe	837-4467
Sales	Jill Fanning	862-8070
Website	Gail Sullivan	862-5775
Wetlands/Waterfowl	Neal Brown	837-5018

MONTANA AUDUBON

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Board President: Betsy Griffing
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Photo by Dave Menke, USFWS

FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY

Support local programs
and receive the Pileated Post.

Flathead Audubon Membership . . . \$15
(Individual or Family)

Name _____

Address _____

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State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____ - _____

Email _____

How do you wish to receive the Pileated Post?
Paper copy/U.S. mail Electronic copy/email

Mail this form with your check to:
Flathead Audubon Society Membership
380 Tally Lake Road
Whitefish, MT 59937