



the Silent Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

VOLUME 31

NUMBER 8

APRIL 2007



"WASTE NOT PROJECT" EARNS FAS CONSERVATION AWARD

Did you know that:

- The energy saved from recycling one aluminum can will operate a computer for three hours?
- We can earn 38 cents a pound for recycling aluminum cans here in the Flathead?
- 30% of household waste is compostable?
- Currently, less than 1% of Montana's garbage is composted?
- Flathead County Landfill has a self-guided "composting garden"?
- Flathead County Landfill is the only one in the state that has a permanent facility for handling household hazardous wastes; homeowners can bring their hazardous wastes to the landfill every 3rd Saturday where they will be recycled or disposed of properly for no charge?
- Schools in the Flathead are currently able to apply (by October 2, 2007) for \$500 mini-grants to help implement waste reduction and recycling programs on their campuses?
- There are factories in Arizona and California where components in our old electronic machines are processed and recycled in an environmentally responsible manner?
- You can buy a very efficient bear-proof compost bin locally for \$35?



If you can answer yes to the majority of these questions, you undoubtedly have been keeping up with the amazing work of our local Waste Not Project. You can learn more about this project at the FAS May Potluck where we will be presenting our Spring Conservation Achievement Award to the creator and long-time director of this program, Mayre Flowers.

(WASTE NOT, continued on page 4...)



APRIL FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

Monday, April 9, 2007: Flathead Audubon General Meeting, 7 PM, The Summit.

Monday, April 2, 2007: Flathead Audubon Board of Directors Meeting. 6 PM at 295 Third Ave East North, Kalispell (Jane Lopp & Associates Building) All are welcome.

Wednesdays, April 11, 18, 25, and May 2, 2007: Beauty of Birds Classes, see page 9

Friday - Monday, June 1-4, 2007: Montana Audubon Bird Festival, Ennis, MT, see page 6

Friday - Sunday, June 22-24, 2007: Bitterroot Birding & Nature Festival, see page 6

APRIL AND MAY FIELD TRIPS, see pages 5 & 6

BIRD OF THE MONTH

By Linda DeKort

TIME TO WATCH FOR YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLERS

If you ask when Yellow-rumped Warblers will be returning to our valley, Bruce Tannehill, from Flathead Audubon, will tell you immediately, "between April 25th and May 1st". Bruce and his wife, Gail Cleveland, are avid birders who know their neighborhood birds intimately. Like the rest of us, they look forward to the return of this vivid warbler, the first to return every spring and last to leave in the fall.

The Yellow-rumped Warblers, also known by local birders as "butter-butts", are members of the family of wood warblers. All members of this group are small and active with short straight pointed bills; the bill of the Yellow-rumped is black. Until 1973, the Yellow-rumps were divided into two separate species: Audubon's in the west and Myrtle in the eastern U.S. These two forms were apparently separated during the last ice age and developed distinguishing characteristics. For example, the Myrtle, named for the wax myrtle berries it eats, has a white throat and Audubon's has a yellow throat. When it was shown, however, that these two forms were able to interbreed and produce viable young, the American Ornithological Union elected to merge them into one species. Many avid birders did not like this change; what before had been two entries on their life lists was now reduced to one!

During breeding season, the males of both varieties have slate blue backs streaked with black, white wing patches, streaked breasts and conspicuous yellow patches on their flanks, crowns and rumps. The females, fall males and young are streaked gray brown and are sometimes mistaken for Pine Siskins; like the Pine Siskin, these small warblers are about 5" long and have a wing span of about 9". But, unlike the Siskins, the "butter-butts" of all ages have yellow rumps.

Populations of this adaptable warbler are stable or even increasing in most areas. We have observed these conspicuous little birds in many locations this past year: in the Copper Canyon in November, in the Tennessee Valley in January and on the Queen Charlotte Islands in August. The population on the Queen Charlotte Islands stays there year round; in Montana, Yellow-rumps have shown up in small numbers on the Christmas Bird Counts.

The apparent widespread success of Yel-

low-rumped warblers might be due to the fact that they do not require specific habitat nor diet. They prefer to build their nests on horizontal branches of coniferous trees, but will use deciduous trees as



Jan Wassink photo

well. (The nests are unique, being lined with feathers that are carefully woven and positioned to conceal the eggs; this little trick possibly fools the parasitizing Brown-headed cowbird into thinking no incubation is occurring in that nest.) During the breeding season, they reach highest densities in mature, unlogged

coniferous forest. But Bruce Tannehill confirms Yellow-rumps can breed successfully in selectively logged forests with some mature trees left standing. Steve Gniadek has noted that they are quite numerous in less severely burned areas of Glacier National Park. And though they are mostly insect eaters, their ability to digest the waxy coating of berries enables them to winter farther north and in more diverse habitats than most warblers.

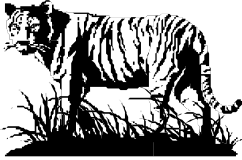
They winter in loose flocks from the southern US to Central America, the males wintering farther north than the females. Winter flocks of both genders are easy to spot as they are kept together by a constant emphatic "chek." In spring, their song is similar to the trill of a Junco, described as a flat, shivering tyew-tyew-tyew-tyew of 4 to 7 syllables.

Bruce Tannehill tells that a few years ago they heard a different Yellow-rumped Warbler song in their neighborhood; it had an extra "zip" on the end. They heard the song for about two weeks, until mid-May and then it disappeared; but the warblers themselves continued to raise young in their back lot. This pattern repeated itself for the



Jeannie Marcure photo

next four summers. Bruce recorded the unusual song and produced a sonogram. The resulting sonogram was truly different from the more commonly heard song of the Yellow-rumped warblers. During the fourth year, Bruce and Gail heard the same song with the unusual zip not only in May but also in the beginning of July. They watched, recorded carefully and found that the same male Yellow-rumped warbler was singing two different songs. Bruce hypothesized from these observations that the song with the zip is a truly "come hither" courtship song, while the more common song is a "keep off" territorial song. (Warblers, continued on page 4)



April 2007 Program

FROM PUMAS TO PENGUINS



Notes From A Montana Wildlife Manager in Patagonia, Argentina

In February of this year, Jim Williams, Regional Wildlife Program Manager for Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks in Kalispell, participated in a volunteer "Partners of the Americas" Culture and Education exchange in Patagonia, Argentina. This was a scientific exchange that took him from an Amazonian tropical habitat in Paraguay to Patagonia's Andean, steppe and Mediterranean habitats. He lived with local families during his travels. This enabled him to learn about the region's people and culture, as well as its unique mammal and bird resources. (And, speaking of the latter, did you know that the native Rhea is a major browser/grazer that behaves like an ungulate?)

Jim says he felt right at home in Patagonia. Jim has been involved with puma research, management and conflict for most of his professional career. The Patagonia landscape is similar to Montana and wildlife conflicts between landowners and wildlife are now a major issue. In addition to puma work, Jim also will be discussing and showing photos of Patagonia wildlife habitats, flora and fauna, and the incredible work that some dedicated Argentine biologists are undertaking at the other end of the world.

Please join us at The Summit on April 9 at 7 p.m. Through the eyes of an enthusiastic Montana program manager (who can't wait to go back), we will see why Patagonia is "just spectacular".

30 Years of Monthly Meeting Places

1977-1980	Bigfork Grade School	1994-2003	Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Kalispell
1981-1990	Flathead Bank of Bigfork	2003-2004	Calvary Lutheran Church, Kalispell
1990-1994	United Methodist Church, Bigfork	2004-present	The Summit, Kalispell

HELP WANTED - FROM YOU!

The Family Forestry Expo is quickly approaching on Saturday and Sunday, May 12 and 13. Each year, Flathead Audubon hosts an exhibit that introduces the general public to the wonder of birds and birding. This will be just before our annual potluck and is a great time to invite folks to join us in enjoying our feathered friends. As such, we invite all the Flathead Audubon members to help out. It would require just a couple of hours of your time on either day but especially on Saturday, then you could enjoy the rest of the Expo. If you would like to volunteer to help out, please contact Ansley Ford at 857-6788. Audubon and the birds thank you in advance.

*In this special season, we are reminded that
we are caretakers of the Earth and all that it
holds.*



Teacher Workshop in April

"For the Birds", a teacher workshop, is scheduled for **Saturday, April 14 & Sunday, April 15** at Lone Pine State Park, from **9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.**

Co-sponsored by Flathead Audubon and Lone Pine State Park, "For the Birds" is open to all area educators working with grades 4 through 10. It will highlight a wide range of activities and ideas centered on birds, bird conservation and related habitat issues, which educators can use in their classrooms and surrounding landscape. Participants will learn birding basics, study common birds of the Flathead, and explore "Flying Wild," a curriculum guidebook, tied to National Science Standards, on birds and bird conservation.

The workshop is limited to a minimum of 8 participants, a maximum of 20. All participants will receive a free Flying Wild curriculum guidebook and earn 12 OPI credits. Registration is via the PIRnet at www.kalnet.io-solutions.com/pir. The last day to register is April 6, 2007.

TEACHERS – this is a great opportunity to get information and materials to help you introduce a unit on birds into your classroom or to polish up a unit you already have in place.

PARENTS – please pass this information on to your favorite teacher.

For more information, contact Melissa Sladek at 270-5919, or the Northwest Montana Educational Cooperative at 752-3302.



WASTE NOT PROJECT, *continued...*

The Waste Not Project is a consumer education program that seeks to heighten awareness about solid waste issues, while promoting ways to reduce the volume and toxicity of our county waste stream. A collaborative project established in 1995, it includes Flathead Valley Community College's Service Learning Program, the Flathead County Solid Waste District, and Citizens For A Better Flathead.

The Project coordinates service learning volunteers from FVCC and area high schools to provide waste education programs and research to further efforts to reduce the volume of waste entering our county landfill. Its educational programs include a tour of the landfill, lessons on composting, Master Recycler Program, a skit about waste management, "Use Less Stuff Day" celebrations, and hand sorting a day's worth of garbage by students resulting in a waste audit report. A part time assistant hired every spring helps coordinate volunteers and visits classrooms. Last spring their programs reached over 1000 students (K-6, public, private, home schools and scouts). Waste Not also works with the Solid Waste Management program to reduce volume, increase recycling and control toxic wastes.

This wide reaching program was the brain child of Mayre Flowers and K.C. Zwisler. K.C. started the Service Learning program at the Community College and Mayre had been working with the Waste Watchers Program. The purpose of the latter pioneer group was to heighten awareness of recycling. Our own Ferne Cohen was instrumental in obtaining a mini-grant from National Audubon for Waste Watchers. Ferne drew Mayre into this initial

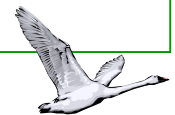
effort by asking "how do we get kids involved?" Mayre chuckles when she recalls her innocent response. "I tried to answer that question and here I am!" Here she is indeed, 13 years later, managing a program that is well established and has been very effective in both furthering awareness of waste reduction strategies in our community and actually making them happen.

Mayre Flowers is not only an optimistic idealist, she is a persistent realist. Unlike many, Mayre gets it started and sticks with it. Waste Not is now a self-sustaining program with its own web site and part-time employee.

When asked her hopes, dreams and challenges, Mayre replies, "Keeping a sense of hopefulness is one of the biggest challenges we have right now. We do make a difference. But they are little changes that have ripple effects and we can't always see them. Without the consistent effort by many citizens, Flathead Valley would be a very different place than what it is now." Her dream is to reach the point of zero waste. We have made a lot of progress. Large appliances used to be thrown into the landfill; now valuable metals that are in them are recycled and the toxic Freon is disposed of in a responsible manner. We need to take the same progressive steps with electronics such as TVs and computers. She also hopes someday we will be able to capture methane gas from the landfill to generate electricity and to purchase a glass pulverizer for the landfill.

There are many new ideas on the horizon. We are grateful that our local Waste Not Project, under Mayre's steady leadership, will be here to keep us informed and inspired.

By Linda DeKort



TRUMPETER SWANS - Current population status

In the early 1950s, a previously unknown population of Trumpeter Swans was discovered in Alaska. Today, estimates show nearly 16,000 Trumpeters Swans reside in North America. For management purposes, Trumpeters are divided into populations based on their range.

Rocky Mountain Population—depending upon the source approximately 2,000 or as many as 4,700 Trumpeters occur in western Canada and nearly 500 in the tri-state area of Montana (including the Red Rock Lakes refuge flock), Idaho, and Wyoming.

Pacific Coast Population—12,000-13,000 in Alaska combined with western Canadian flocks which winter on the Pacific Coast.

Interior Population—approximately 500 birds in flocks east of the Rocky Mountains and in the Midwest.

Yellow-rumped Warblers, continued ...

Since these warblers have two broods in a good season, the male they heard that July was probably trying to coax a female in one breath, while protecting his territory and nest in the other. This anecdote illustrates how much remains to be learned and confirmed about these seemingly common birds. If you would like to hear more stories about local birds (including how to make sonograms from Bruce Tannehill) sign up for the Beauty of Birds class offered this April through District 5 Adult Education. Call Ansley Ford at 857-6788 for more information. To register, call Flathead High School at 751-3500.

Keep an eye out and an ear open for Yellow-rumped Warblers; they will be arriving any day now!



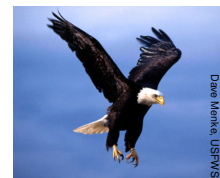
2007 APRIL AND MAY FIELD TRIPS



SATURDAY & SUNDAY, MARCH 31 & APRIL 1: FREEZOUT LAKE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA FIELDTRIP. Spring waterfowl migration at Freezout Lake WMA is an experience not to be missed. Snow Geese are can be counted by the thousands and more than 40 bird species have been seen in past years. Please call Dan to arrange carpool. The trip leaves at 10:30 AM Saturday from the Tidyman's parking lot in Kalispell, getting us to the WMA just in time to watch the white geese arrive at Freezout Lake that evening. Stay overnight at the Bella Vista Motel (406-466-5711) in Choteau. Other motels in Choteau include The Stage Stop Inn (888-466-5900) and the Gunther Motel (877-491-5444). After watching the geese leave the lake Sunday morning, we will head for home in time to arrive in Kalispell by 5 PM. You may contact the field trip leader, Dan Casey, at 857-3143 or dcasey@abcbirds.org

SATURDAY, APRIL 7: LOWER VALLEY WATERFOWL TOUR, PART TWO.

Please join FAS for a 3-4 hour guided tour of the wetland areas in the Somers area and the north shore of Flathead Lake. We will search for resident and migrating waterfowl and should also see a wide variety of raptors and early songbirds. Bone up on your ducks and get into the spirit of spring! Join us for a morning of early spring bird watching. We will meet at the Park n' Ride at the intersection of Hwy 93 and Hwy 82 at 9 AM. For more information please contact Leslie Kehoe, 837-4467.



SATURDAY, APRIL 21: THE FIRST ANNUAL MARTY COHEN BIRD-DAY

STROLL and **EARTH DAY:** Start out the Earth Day weekend with a stroll along the Whitefish River. We will meet at the parking lot by the Whitefish City Ball Fields off Hwy. 40 at 8 AM on Saturday, April 21. We will stroll and ride (the whole path is accessible to wheel chairs and strollers) past ponds and along the river, looking for reliable residents and early migrants. We will return by 10 AM. This is a good field trip for all ages; please bring your kids and grandparents and help celebrate the First Annual Marty Cohen Bird-day Stroll! For more information call Bruce Tannehill at 862-4548 or Linda deKort at 755-3704.

SATURDAY, APRIL 28: BIRDING AROUND SMITH LAKE. A morning of bird watching at the Smith Lake Waterfowl Production Area should get us up close and personal with a wide variety of waterfowl. We will look for Sandhill Cranes, an assortment of grebes and lots of ducks. Around the margins of the lake we might spot a bluebird or two and meadowlarks. Bald Eagles, Osprey and Marsh Harriers can be seen soaring in the sky or perched on prominent trees by Smith Lake, as well. Please join Bob Lee and FAS for a pleasant morning of birding. We will meet at the Fish, Wildlife & Parks building on Meridian at 8 AM. You may contact Bob at 257-0363 for more information and to sign up for the trip.



SATURDAY, MAY 12: INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY AT THE NATIONAL BISON RANGE.

The National Bison Range near Moiese celebrates this day in a big way, with the Red Sleep Mountain drive opening for the summer. This splendid drive through the range travels through a variety of habitats and is a wonderful place to see a broad spectrum of birds from Yellow-headed Blackbirds to Mountain Bluebirds, from Western Meadowlarks to Bald Eagles. Contact Pat Jamieson at the Bison Range for more information at 644-2211, Ext. 207.



SATURDAY, MAY 12: SPRING LOON CENSUS DAY. The Montana Loon Society and the Montana Common Loon Working Group need volunteers to look for and count loons on lakes of northwest Montana on this day. Please contact Gael Bissell at 752-3874 if you would like to volunteer.





2007 APRIL AND MAY FIELD TRIPS

SATURDAY, MAY 19: SPRING LOON IN GLACIER NATIONAL PARK. Still wanting to count some more loons? Here is another chance to volunteer in one of the most beautiful places in Montana. Volunteers with some birding experience or previous training are needed, to look for and count the loons of Glacier National Park. Please call Jami Belt at 888-7986 to sign up for a great day in the field with the loons.

SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, MAY 19 & 20: THE GLACIER INSTITUTE VOLUNTEER WORK WEEKEND. Come help the Glacier Institute get ready for its 22nd year of educational activities. Volunteers are needed for a variety of tasks including cleaning, painting, light carpentry, and outdoor work such as tree cutting and planting. Work will be done at both the Field Camp in the Park and at the Big Creek Outdoor Education Center. Interested volunteers may call The Glacier Institute at 755-1211 or register@glacierinstitute.org.



SUNDAY, MAY 27: A WANDER THROUGH THE LOST TRAIL NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE. Lost Trail is located in beautiful Pleasant Valley and is a great place to see grassland and riparian birds closely. The road through the Refuge wanders through wet meadows where Wilson's Snipe, Brewer's Blackbirds and Vesper Sparrows sit on fence posts next to the road. The enticing songs of warblers and flycatchers come from thickets beside the road. Dahl Lake, a large shallow lake on the Refuge, has breeding populations of Black Terns, Ruddy Ducks, Red-necked, Pied-billed, Horned and Eared Grebes and Sandhill Cranes. We may see Golden and Bald Eagles, as both species breed here. Meet at Fish, Wildlife and Parks in Kalispell at 6 AM. Please contact Leslie Kehoe for more information or to sign up for the trip at 837-4467.



Looking for birds in the Flathead, but can't go on the field trips? The "Birding Hotspots Brochure" is available on our website, www.flatheadaudubon.org. Check out some of the area's best bird watching sites!



Montana Audubon Bird Festival



Montana Audubon, in conjunction with Sacajawea and Pintler Audubon Societies, is holding it's annual bird festival in Ennis this year June 1-3. Field Trips to surrounding areas include: Harrison Lake, Ennis Lake, the Madison River and Channels, the Sun Ranch, Pony Area, Lewis & Clark Caverns area, A Historic Tour of Virginia City, Ruby River, Varney Bridge, and a Beginning Birding trip; children are also welcome and encouraged to participate (binoculars and guide books provided).

Saturday afternoon Presentations and Workshop topics include: Sage Grouse, Peregrine Falcons, Energy development, Birding for beginners, Shorebird identification, Red Rock Lakes NWR, Family bird projects and arts & crafts, Songbird banding project, and more.

The First Madison Valley Bank hosts our Friday night social at their new bank located in downtown Ennis, generously providing entertainment and light fare. Join the festivities, visit with friends, pick up your registration packet and buy raffle tickets. Be sure to bring items to donate to the silent auction.

The Saturday evening banquet catered by "The Reel Decoy" will be held at the Ennis High School.



Bitterroot Birding & Nature Festival

June 22-24, 2007 at the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge.



In addition to providing opportunities to bird in Lewis & Clark Country, the Festival will include juried art show, BioThon, family activities, golf tournament, live raptors and snakes, activities featuring western culture, and the Montana Junior Duck Stamp Award Ceremony. Proceeds from the Festival assist Friends of the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge in supporting the Lee Metcalf Refuge and its mission of wildlife and habitat conservation. To register, call 406-777-5552 or go to www.bitterrootbirdfestival.com.

Because of the intense discussion around the issue of global warming, I want to share with all of you this message from John Flicker, President of the National Audubon Society. BOB

Unleashing the Power of Audubon to Combat Global Warming

Dear Colleagues:

I am writing to seek your feedback and ultimately your full engagement in Audubon's plans to enhance our ongoing organizational response to the growing threat of global warming to birds and other wildlife, habitat, and humanity.

As you probably know, the world's top scientists recently produced the report of the United Nations International Panel on Climate Change that all but eliminated any remaining doubt that dramatic alteration of global climate is underway, that it is caused by human use of fossil fuels, and that it has crisis implications. Serious effects are already being seen world-wide, with long-term impacts on birds, wildlife, habitat, and humankind that threaten to undermine all that Audubon has struggled for more than a century to accomplish.

Numerous Audubon chapters, state offices and national programs have been responding to this unprecedented challenge for some time: Ongoing conservation efforts address both causes and likely outcomes; national, state and local level policy work tackles a wide range of energy-related issues; and *Audubon* magazine has long chronicled the warming issue and its potential solutions. Yet the ever-worsening crisis demands that we ramp up our response as never before. And we can accomplish far more by working together.

Building on the Global Warming and Energy framework adopted by the National Audubon Society Board last year and on the efforts of network partners nationwide, staff are now proposing plans for a coordinated Audubon response that can add value to the great work already being done at the chapter and state level. Together, we can work to achieve overarching greenhouse gas reduction goals defined by science and adopted by the entire conservation community, while continuing our vital work for birds and habitat. Working at every level, the Audubon network can:

- ! Help pass federal legislation to reduce CO₂ emissions by 60-80% by 2050.
- ! Encourage federal and state adoption or enhancement of a suite of renewable energy measures, including Renewable Portfolio Standards
- ! Inspire Voluntary Actions to reduce the carbon footprint of individuals and communities
- ! Promote responsible energy development and conservation strategies consistent with protection of birds and habitat.

Many groups are crafting the specific policy and technical solutions for controlling greenhouse gas emissions. However, Audubon can collectively make a vital contribution by using our nationwide expertise in science, education, and policy to inform and mobilize our unique shared constituency of advocates, educators, scientists, and bird and nature lovers to take both personal and political action.



The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy. Martin Luther King

TAXING ISSUES



As you are filling out your tax returns this season, remember to check the Non-game Wildlife Contribution box on your Montana form and give a little extra if you can. That check box is there to enable bird watchers and others to do our part to support care for Montana's wildlife species that are not funded by hunting and fishing license money.



Not sure how to come up with dollars to contribute to the Non-game Wildlife check-off? Remember that \$9 of every bag of sunflower seeds that you bought from Flathead Audubon this year can be deducted as a charitable contribution. If you take the deduction and put the taxes you save into the Non-game Wildlife box, your dollars do double duty!



BOARD MEMBER VIEW: LINDA WINNIE

FAS BOARD MEMBER

Unusual Beachcomber



Morning, in a small cove along the northern British Columbia coast, drifting in the shallow water in my kayak just off a small pocket beach (a wedge of sand between boulders and cliffs, that uncovers only at low tide), I notice a motion partway up the beach – a bird moving among the stones and bits of sea weed, poking its bill frequently into the sand. A shorebird, looking for breakfast? With binoculars I get a closer look -- orange “eyebrow,” orange throat and belly separated by dark band across breast, dark gray back and top of head, complicated pattern of gray and orange on wings.

This is no shorebird! It is a male Varied Thrush.

Varied Thrushes at sea level are not unusual along this coast. The shores of the northwest Pacific coast are thick with the tangle of the western hemlock-Sitka spruce-red cedar temperate rainforest that characterizes this area. And in almost every cove we anchor, we hear the long, buzzy, minor-key whistles of the forest’s resident Varied Thrushes as daylight fades, and then again in the morning, as the sun begins peeking into the cove.

But I’ve never before seen a Varied Thrush beachcombing. This fellow seems to be finding plenty to eat as he hops and pokes his way toward one side of the beach. Presumably he is gleaning the insects and other arthropods, and possibly small crustaceans, that are being uncovered by the falling tide – sort of like the Varied Thrushes that poke around for insects in my yard in Montana in the spring. When he reaches the part where the sand runs out and the boulders begin, he flies to the top of a particularly large boulder, then heads into the nearby bushes.

I wait a bit for the bird to return, then put my binoculars back into my lap and prepare to paddle away.

Suddenly a flutter of gray and orange reappears out of the bushes, with a large, bright red salmonberry in its beak. The bird flies straight to the other side of the little beach, where now I catch sight of another Varied Thrush, a paler version of the one I have been watching – a female. Quickly the male hands the salmonberry off to the female, and immediately she flies back into the brush on her side of the beach.

Wow! First Varied Thrush as beachcomber, now Varied Thrush as berry gifter. What next?

The male flies back to the center of the beach, but now closer to the water, where he begins poking his beak into a small puddle. Poke – poke – several times, and then up comes his beak with something small in it, long and thin, shiny gray. It wriggles as the bird shakes his head back and forth. A small fish!

Several times the bird drops the fish on the sand, pecks at it while it flops about, then picks it up again and shakes it. Finally the fish stops moving, and the Varied Thrush quickly swallows it – head first, tail last. The bird looks about quickly, then flies into the forest at the back of the beach.

Varied Thrush as fisherman!

I’ve looked in all the books I can find, and cannot find any mention of Varied Thrushes catching and eating fish. But a wriggling little fish is not too unlike a wriggling worm. So perhaps it is not so surprising that a Varied Thrush living by the sea turns out to be handy at catching and downing little fish.

Explaining is one thing, of course. Being there is another. Watching that sea-side Varied Thrush from my kayak that morning is one of those special birding experiences we each get to have once in a while. I will never look at Varied Thrushes in the same way again.



Varied Thrush by Larry McQueen

DID YOU KNOW?

- The smallest hummingbird, the 2.25 inch Cuban Bee, weighs only two grams.
- The largest hummingbird, the 8.5 inch long Patagonia, weighs less than an ounce.
- Hummingbirds can hover as well as fly sideways, backwards and even upside down.
- A hummingbird’s egg is only about the size of a jellybean, yet in proportion to body weight, hummingbirds’ eggs are the largest of any kind.



TODAY – YESTERDAY – TOMORROW



Come One, Come All!

Put Flathead Audubon's May General Meeting on your calendar for May 14, and circle it in red! To finish out our Audubon year, we will gather at the New Covenant Church community room, 436 Birch Grove Road. Bring your own tableware and a potluck dish to share. We will have a Silent Auction, discuss important chapter business, enjoy a great program, and witness the Annual Migration of the Duct Tape Duck to its next lucky caretaker. In preparation for all of this fun, please search your closets, bookshelves, and garages for items to include in the Silent Auction. Likely candidates might be bird books, artwork, usable binoculars or spotting scopes, bird houses and feeders, bedding plants, or other natural resource-related goodies. Watch for further details in your May Pileated Post!



Chuckles

-- Ratio of an igloo's circumference to its diameter =
Eskimo Pi

- 2,000 pounds of Chinese soup = Won ton
- 1 millionth of a mouthwash = 1 microscope
- 16.5 feet in the Twilight Zone = 1 Rod Sterling
- Basic unit of laryngitis = 1 hoarsepower
- 2,000 mockingbirds = two kilomockingbirds
- 10 cards = 1 decacards
- 1,000 grams of wet socks = 1 literhosen



Looking Back on the FAS May Potluck

Though Flathead Audubon was founded 30 years ago, the tradition of combining the May meeting with a potluck dinner is only 21 years old. The announcement of the first May potluck appeared in the May 1986 Pileated Post:

"REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING, Lone-pine Visitor Center, 6:30 PM. Spring and Last Meeting of the Season Potluck Dinner. If your last name begins with A-Z bring something good to eat and enjoy an evening of Audubon fellowship. Mike Fairchild of the Wolf Recovery Team will present a fascinating account of the Magic Pack, a band of Northern Gray Wolves which are moving back into the wildlands of Glacier Park and the upper Flathead River. Do come!"



Lone Pine continued to be the site of the May Potluck through 2002. By that time, the size of the potluck attendance had outgrown the space available at Lone Pine – people were starting to have to sit in each others laps! Since then, the search has been on for a good place with enough room for our still growing potluck attendance. The event was held in the West Valley School gym for three years (2003-2005), then last year in the Country Kitchen at the Flathead Valley Fairground. If we like the new 2007 location, we may just settle there for a while.

From Linda Winnie

WHAT ARE YOU DOING THIS EARTH DAY?

Suggestions for ways to celebrate:



- Walk or ride your bike instead of driving
- Take a reusable cloth bag to the grocery store
- Pick up litter along 1 mile of roadway
- Change all of your light bulbs to compact fluorescents
- Dig and plant a big garden
- Commit to a chemical-free lawn this summer
- Plant a tree or bush
- Turn down your heat thermostat
- Turn up your air conditioner thermostat



JOB OPPORTUNITIES - Get Paid to Bird!

High Quality Birder (Idaho): May through August, possibly longer. \$2450/month. Details - contact Norm Merz, Fish and Wildlife Department, P.O. Box 1269, Bonners Ferry, ID 83805. Cell: (208) 610-9294, Office: (208) 267-3620, ext. 555, or email: merz@kootenai.org



Wildlife Technicians - Avian Point Count and Banding positions (Utah): \$10.11-\$16.02/hr DOE. Vehicle and grocery allowance also provided. Details - contact Jim Parrish, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, Avian Program Coordinator, 1594 W. North Temple, Salt Lake City, UT 84114-6301. (801) 538-4788 or (801) 209-2013 or email hillarywhite@utah.gov.



the Pileated Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

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Kalispell, MT 59904-9173

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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: pileatedpost@flatheadaudubon.org

FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY DIRECTORY

Website: www.flatheadaudubon.org

John Kyle: Flockmaster@flatheadaudubon.org

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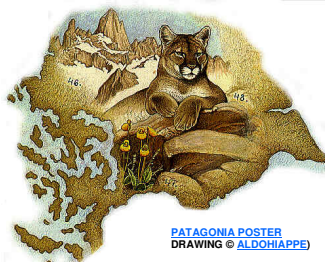
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P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624
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www.mtaudubon.org

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