



the Pileated Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

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APRIL 2008

EARTH DAY 2008 - IT'S IN THE BAG!!



EARTH DAY EVENTS PROMOTE NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION

Although Earth Day is officially Tuesday, April 22, celebration activities begin the weekend before. Following the Second Annual Marty Cohen Bird-Day Stroll on Saturday, April 19, FAS also encourages—and thanks you—for participating in the following:

Two area organic/natural food groceries will generously donate a portion of their sales toward FAS conservation programs.

1. **THIRD STREET MARKET**, a complete shopping market specializing in Montana-grown organic produce at 244 Spokane Avenue in Whitefish will donate a portion of sales on Saturday, April 19, to FAS. We express our appreciation to owners Ric and Dawn Blair.

2. **MOUNTAIN VALLEY FOODS**, an organic grocery established in 1989 at 25 Commons Way in Kalispell will donate ten percent of sales on Earth Day, Tuesday, April 22 to FAS. Please convey our FAS "Thanks!" to Patricia and Lorien.

In our effort to reduce plastic bags in landfills, FAS is offering attractive, sturdy cotton canvas bags with our FAS logo, the Pileated Woodpecker. They will be available at our regular monthly meetings and at our Depot Park Booth on April 26 for \$10. Proceeds from the sale of the bags will benefit FAS's environmental programs. The canvas shopping bags will also be available for a limited time during April at **Camas Creek Crafts**, downtown Kalispell, **Third Street Market** in Whitefish and for two weeks, beginning April 14, at **Mountain Valley Foods** in Kalispell.

As you may know, plastic bags take 1,000 years to breakdown in a landfill. Many cities, states and even countries are trying to eliminate non-biodegradable...*(Earth Day, continued next page...)*

APRIL FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

Monday, April 12, 2008: Flathead Audubon General Meeting. 7 PM, The Summit, Conference Room 3. Bruce Tannehill presents "Bird Song: The Final Frontier." (see page 3)

Monday, April 7, 2008: Flathead Audubon Board of Directors Meeting. 6 PM at 295 3rd Ave EN, Kalispell (Jane Lopp & Associates Building) All are welcome.

Saturday, April 19, 2008: Project WET and WEBFOOT. Lone Pine State Park (see article, page 4)

Saturday, April 19, 2008: Second Marty Cohen Bird-Day Walk. (details on next page)

Saturday, April 19, 2008: Shop at Third Street Market! Help FAS and tell them thanks!

Tuesday, April 22, 2008: Shop at Mountain Valley Foods! Help FAS and tell them thanks!

Saturday, April 26, 2008: Earth Day Celebration at Depot Park

Friday - Sunday, June 6-8, 2008: Montana Audubon Bird Festival. Rocky Mountain College, Billings (see article, page 10)

All Flathead Audubon April - May Field Trips are listed on page 8!



Earth Day 2008



Come celebrate the Earth! Join us at Depot Park for a day of activities and fun. Valley Recycling is sponsoring the event with other partners, to be held in downtown Kalispell at Depot Park on April 26 from 10 AM to 1 PM. FAS will have an educational booth on bird conservation, including an activity for children. Please let Nancy Zapotocki know at naz@centurytel.net if you can volunteer to help at the FAS booth the day of the event. Other happenings for the event include: Kalispell Clean-up from 10 AM to 12 PM, contact Jennifer at Kalispell Parks and Rec #758-7717; Barbecue from 12 to 1 PM; Poster Contest – Theme: Flathead Valley Spring and Recycling, contact #257-2574; and other educational booths and activities, including an on-site recycling art project. Hope to see you there!



SATURDAY, APRIL 19
EARTH DAY AND THE SECOND ANNUAL
MARTY COHEN BIRD-DAY STROLL



Start out the Earth Day weekend with a stroll along the Whitefish River. Meet at the parking lot by the Whitefish City Ball Fields off Hwy. 40 at 8 AM on Saturday, April 19. We will stroll and ride (the whole path is accessible to wheelchairs and strollers) past ponds and along the river. We will look for reliable residents and early migrants. We will return to the parking lot by 10 AM. This is a good field trip for all ages, so bring your kids and grandparents and help celebrate the Second Annual Marty Cohen Bird-Day Stroll. For more information, call Linda de Kort at 755-3704.



(Paper, Plastic, or Canvas, continued...)

plastic bags from cityscapes, waterways and landfills. San Francisco banned them; Oakland is considering a ban. New York and New Jersey require retailers to recycle them. Let's do our part, too!

According to WORLDWATCH, Americans throw away about 100 billion plastic bags annually. So next time you walk into your local grocery store, and are asked, "Plastic or paper?" hand them your FAS cotton canvas bag, or maybe even two.

Paula Smith and Mary Nelesen



MORE SPRING FUN



Flathead Audubon's May meeting will be held at the **Bethlehem Lutheran Church** downstairs community room. Doors open at 5 PM, with silent auction items displayed for your bids, potluck dinner at 6 PM with an exciting program to follow. Watch for full details in your May *Pileated Post*!



EVERYTHING, INCLUDING THE KITCHEN SINK!

Start gathering items that you would like to donate to the FAS May Silent Auction. In past years, we have received flower arrangements, birdhouses, bedding plants, outdoor books, artwork, and more. Think outside the box! More details in next month's *Pileated Post*.



WARBLER WEEKEND IS THE FIRST WEEKEND IN JUNE!

Join FAS and Dan and Susannah Casey the weekend of June 6 - 8 at Tally Lake Campground for an extraordinary weekend of birding and relaxing. The group campsite has been reserved for the weekend. Throughout the weekend, we will be focusing on warbler identification, birding by ear and digi-scoping. This is an ideal time of the year to find all kinds of neotropical migrants, including all of the warbler species found in NW Montana. There are

plenty of other activities that can be enjoyed at Tally Lake; bring canoes and kayaks, and there is a volleyball court and one for horseshoes, plus numerous hiking trails close to the campground, that can be explored, as well. The cost is \$12.00 per camper per night. Please contact Dan and Susannah Casey at 857-3143 to sign up for the trip or for more information.





April 2008 Program

BIRD SONG – THE FINAL FRONTIER



Analysis of bird song is a very young science with many new discoveries yet to be made. Only a small fraction of the world's approximately 10,000 different species of birds have been studied. Part of the problem is that each species has calls, flight calls and as many as 3,000 different songs. Historically, the other part of the problem was that recording equipment was expensive. And, it took very costly computers to produce the sonograms to analyze the songs. Those days are over. Computers are everywhere and the software for analysis is free. Recording equipment is cheap. Bruce Tannehill uses this equipment to not only identify species, but to try to recognize the individuals. In other words, "Is this the same guy who nested in our yard last year?"

Bruce has been active in Flathead Audubon since his retirement from science teaching in 1995. He is Treasurer of Flathead Audubon and Office Manager Emeritus at North Country Builders. He and his wife Gail spend their time volunteering with Flathead Audubon and the O'Shaughnessy Center in Whitefish. They also travel at least once a year to experience the tropics with its colorful birds and their songs.

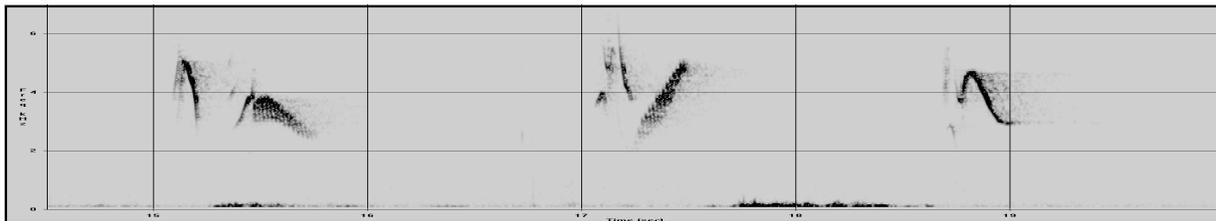
Please join us on at 7 PM on Monday, April 14 in the Community Room of The Summit, 205 Sunnyview Lane, Kalispell, when Bruce presents pictures, recordings at normal and reduced speeds and sonograms of bird song. Also at this meeting, Flathead Audubon will present the Conservation Achievement Recognition to Johnston and Siderius family representatives (see article, page 9).



WHY DO BIRDS SING?

The prevailing wisdom tells us that birds have two kinds of vocalizations. Birds use a song during breeding season to establish territory and attract a mate. They also have a call that is used to "communicate" with other birds. But communicate how or for what purpose?

Last summer I made a recording of a Cassin's Vireo near Happy Valley that illustrates how little we know about bird vocalizations. The Cassin's Vireo song is a series of up and down slurs. I used Cornell University's Raven software (free over the internet) to produce a sonogram that visually represents these slurs. The sonogram shows clearly that there are several kinds of up-slurs and down-slurs. Below is a 4.5 second portion of the sonogram.



Using standard procedure, I labeled each different syllable in the Vireo's song with a letter. The above portion of the sonogram has syllables C, D and E. The Vireo's song on that day went something like this: A B C D E B C D E A B C D C E A B C D. Obviously, this order is not random, so is this Vireo trying to say something more than just, "THIS IS MY TERRITORY"?

Bruce Tannehill



Singing the Praises for the New FAS Recycling Team



In a quiet coup, The Green Team from Flathead Valley Community College have taken over recycling collection at Flathead Audubon meetings this year. From 6:30-7 PM before every general meeting, leader Laura Damon and her crew have hustled our bags and boxes into their enclosed trailer with ease and efficiency. They report having a steady line of cars bearing recyclables every month. Our hats go off to them, for their reliability and friendliness to all.

Behind the scenes, after collecting from Audubon on Monday nights, the G.T. has expanded the recycling drive to include all staff, students, and departments of FVCC on the following day. They then haul their entire collection to the recycling centers. Recycling doesn't pay much, but the meager proceeds from their efforts go to green scholarships for students and helping keep their (unfunded) department operating.



Ansley Ford Receives Educator of the Year Award from Montana Environmental Education Association (MEEA)

Flathead Audubon nominated Ansley Ford, Board Member, Education Committee Co-chair and 3rd grade teacher at Lakeside Elementary School for the MEEA Educator of the Year Award. The award is presented to a professional educator who has demonstrated service and leadership in the field of environmental education. It was awarded at the MEEA Conference in Helena on Friday, March 14th by unanimous decision. Included with the nomination were Letters of Recognition for Ansley's work from Glacier National Park, Flathead National Forest, Lone Pine State Park, Northwest Montana Educational Cooperative, Flathead Community of Resource Educators and a fellow Lakeside Elementary School teacher.



Ansley Ford with husband Rob (in bird suit).
Photo by Nancy Zapotocki

The nomination was based on Ansley's work as third grade teacher at Lakeside Elementary, as well as being a community educator through her involvement with Flathead Audubon and Flathead Community of Resource Educators (CORE). Ansley actively facilitates creative environmental education, in her classroom and with the community, to connect students to the natural world. She has her students involved with Citizen Science programs such as Project Feeder Watch and the Great Backyard Bird Count. She even makes bird feeders with her class and hangs them on the school grounds! She brings Flathead Audubon Education Trunks and other trunks from around the state into the school and shares them with her students and other teachers. She also developed a schoolyard vegetable and

flower garden that 3rd grade students manage with the help of all the grade levels. She has been instrumental in developing a positive relationship between Northwest Montana Educational Cooperative and Flathead Audubon. Ansley graciously volunteers her time for community education with Flathead Community of Resource Educators (CORE), as well as with Flathead Audubon as a Board Member and Education Committee Chair for many years. Her insights as an elementary classroom teacher have been highly beneficial. One of the highlights of Ansley's work has been the Beauty of Birds class that Flathead Audubon puts on in the spring. Ansley has been the lead person to not only line up speakers and design the class, but also to facilitate the class each week. The class has received rave reviews and continues to entice birders of all skill levels to come and learn more. Ansley also has been very willing to help lead family fieldtrips for Audubon.

Ansley is a very creative, active and enthusiastic educator, both in the classroom and in the community, and it is wonderful to see that she was awarded the MEEA's Educator of the Year Award. She willingly finds the time and energy to give fully to her class and to the community. We are so lucky to have her working and volunteering in the Flathead valley and a part of Flathead Audubon. She is influential as an educator of the natural world and making a difference in the Flathead Valley!

Congratulations Ansley!!



REMINDER TO EDUCATORS

WET & WEBFOOT workshop Saturday, April 19, 2008, 9 AM-4 PM at Lone Pine State Park. For further information, contact Nancy Zapotocki, FAS Education Coordinator at naz@centurytel.net.

The new **Winter Birds in Your Backyard Family Program** was a success, with lots of fun learning about our common bird "neighbors" - who they are, what they look, act, and sound like, and how to feed them from birdfeeders in the winter. We reached 110 children and 81 adults. Requests have come in for similar family programs. We are now planning to offer a different one each season! *Our thanks also to Karen Nichols at the Daily Inter Lake and Chris Peterson at the Hungry Horse News for coming out and taking photos for the newspapers.*
Nancy Zapotocki, FAS Education Consultant



Beauty of Birds



*Are you interested in birds?
Do you want to learn more?*

*Then sign up for **Beauty of Birds!**
Classes include guest speakers, activities,
slides of local birds,*

and a trip into the field to practice our skills.

**Classes will be held April 2nd, 9th, 16th, and 23rd,
6-8 p.m., at Flathead High School.**

For more information call 857-6788.

To sign up call Flathead High School at 751-3500.

*Come join Flathead Audubon Society
in this annual celebration of the*

Beauty of Birds!



Flathead Audubon Society Members Recognized by Professional Society

At the Annual meeting of the Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society, held in late February, in Missoula, FAS members **Pat & Riley McClelland** were honored with the prestigious **Distinguished Service Award** for a lifetime of service in promoting, researching, working, writing and teaching others about the conservation and ecology of our wildlife resources. Riley & Pat live in West Glacier, and are closely associated with Glacier National Park, where they retired from long careers with the NPS. The Wildlife Society is a professional organization of Wildlife Biologists; the Society was established in 1937. Several of Flathead Audubon's members are members of TWS. Congratulations to the McClellands!



THIS BEARS REPEATING



After a Long Winter's Nap, our bears, black and grizzly, are waking up and are out and about looking for a hearty breakfast. Make sure that their feast isn't at your bird feeder, dog food bin, or garbage can! It's time to clean and store your bird feeders until next fall and secure all other food inside.



Flathead Audubon Needs Volunteer Monitors for Owen Sowerwine CAN YOU HELP?

Linda Winnie, Co-Chair of the FAS Owen Sowerwine Committee



We are still looking for volunteers to help Flathead Audubon keep track of activities and maintenance needs at the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area.

You can help by signing up for our Volunteer Monitoring Program. Or get together with a friend, and sign up as a monitoring team.

What does a Volunteer Monitor do? As a volunteer monitor, your job will be to make at least one monitoring visit to Owen Sowerwine sometime during the monitoring segment you select. It is best if you can make your visit on a weekend, since that is a busier time at Owen Sowerwine, but this is not required. And you can make more than one visit during the monitoring segment if you wish. Each monitoring segment is about 2 weeks long. A monitoring visit usually takes from 1½ hours to 2 hours, but you can spend longer if you wish.

Monitors are provided with a Monitoring Checklist indicating what should be covered on a monitoring visit and a map showing the areas and trails referenced on the Checklist. They are encouraged to take a camera along. At the end of the monitoring segment, a completed Checklist for each visit, along with any documenting pictures, are sent to Brent Mitchell, Co-Chair of the Owen Sowerwine Committee, by either email or US mail.

Volunteer monitors are encouraged to talk with visitors at Owen Sowerwine to find out how the Natural Area is being used, and provide feedback on the concerns, comments and suggestions of Owen Sowerwine's visitors and neighbors. These findings can be reported in the "Comments" section of the Monitoring Checklist.

You can get a look at the Monitoring Checklist by visiting the Flathead Audubon website; go to the Conservation Section, then to the section on

Owen Sowerwine. Or contact me and I will send you a copy.

There are still some monitoring segments available for this summer. Right now, volunteers have signed up for all the monitoring periods from March 1 through the first half of June. But we still need people to help cover the rest of the summer. The monitoring periods still open are June 16-30; July 1-15; July 16-31; August 1-15; August 16-31.

To volunteer, or to get more information, please contact me at lindawin@centurytel.net or 755-1406, or see me at the next Flathead Audubon meeting.

You can also help by sending us feedback whenever you visit Owen Sowerwine.

Whenever you go to Owen Sowerwine – whether for just a short time to walk on the trails, or for a few hours of birding, please take a Monitoring Checklist with you. Use the Checklist to indicate what parts of Owen Sowerwine you visited, and what you saw there, and then mail it off to Brent.

You can get a copy of the Checklist from the Flathead Audubon website, or contact me and I will send you one. Copies are also available at Flathead Audubon meetings.

And **please be sure to let us know about the birds you see** on your visit. You can use the Monitoring Checklist to report your sightings. If you find a species as yet unreported for Owen Sowerwine, and tell us about it, we'll make sure that it gets added to the Owen Sowerwine Bird List.

We encourage all Flathead Audubon members to become the Chapter's eyes and ears at Owen Sowerwine. Even if you forget to take a Checklist along on your visit to Owen Sowerwine, if you see something of note, please let Brent know.

BIRD OF THE MONTH

By Ben Long

Big and Glamorous Great Blue Heron

The Great Blue Heron is one of those big, glamorous birds that delight both the novice and the expert birder alike. Not everyone appreciates the different phases of the dark-eyed junco, or can distinguish the calls of treetop warblers, but everyone can appreciate the Great Blue Heron.

First off, they are *big*. The largest of herons, they are nearly four feet long and have a wingspan of seven feet, which makes them hard to miss. Even at that size, Great Blue Herons weigh only about five pounds, built light for flight. Males are somewhat larger than females, but look similar. (At least to those of us who are not Great Blue Herons.)

Great Blue Herons are foragers, patiently stalking swamps, stream banks and lakeshores, wading on long, sticklike legs. You often see them standing stone-still in quiet waters. They snap their long, snakelike neck to grab frogs, fish, crawfish, mice and other morsels. The bill

looks like a dagger but pinches the birds' prey, never stabbing it. (They have died from choking themselves by trying to swallow fish that are too big.)

Mature Great Blue Herons are slate-grey overall, with a blue wash over the body and wings. Those sweeping wings are tipped in dark primary feathers. Adults have a plume off the back of the head. A fringe of feathers where the neck joins the body adds to its showy airs.

In flight, herons are distinctive by slow, steady wing-beats. Legs trail straight behind them; their neck is crooked in an "S." In flight at a distance, they can be mistaken for Bald Eagles and Sandhill Cranes, all of which may be expected in similar habitats. But look closer. The eagle, of course, lacks those long, trailing legs. The crane points its neck out straight, not crooked in an "S."

The heron is more closely related to storks,

ibises and flamingos. Other members of the heron family are bitterns and egrets. There is an all-white "morph" of the Great Blue Heron common in the Florida Keys but which has never been recorded anywhere near Montana.

Hérons are vocal. In flight, they have a deep, hoarse "fraaaahnk" or "braaak," which also helps distinguish them from airborne eagles and cranes.



Photo by Karen Nichols from her backyard!

Great Blue Herons are widespread in North America, south of the Arctic in both fresh and salt-water environments. They are mostly solitary but do join together to nest in rookeries to provide better protection for vulnerable young. These rookeries can number in the hundreds and in the Flathead there are rookeries of dozens of pairs. Nests are massive platforms of sticks 4 feet or more across. In the Flathead, the birds seem fond of nesting in streamside galleries of black cottonwood trees. They tend to lay 3-7 eggs at

a time, incubating them for 28 days sometime between March and May.

Young herons are the picture of awkward adolescence, with loud voices, ungainly necks and limbs and unruly plumage. Yet they generally fly within two months of hatching and abandon the nest around three months.

Some Great Blue Herons linger around the Flathead Valley all winter, where there is open water and enough food to support them. Most follow their instincts and open water when fall weather freezes their favorite haunts.

Before long, the birds will be flying around North America on seasonal migrations, topping speeds of 30 miles per hour. With luck, each will live ten years or so, or perhaps even break the record age of 21 years, delighting people all the way.

Question: How fast and high do birds fly?

Answer: Most birds fly between 20 and 30 mph. However, all birds can fly much faster when necessary. Ducks being pursued can reach speeds in excess of 60 mph. Peregrine falcons can supposedly stoop at speeds of 200 mph. Speed isn't related to bird size; hummingbirds and geese can fly at about the same maximum speeds. Most birds fly below 500 feet except during migration. Many long distance migrants start out at about 5,000 feet and progressively climb to around 20,000 feet. A flock of whooper swans (European relatives of our trumpeter) was observed at an altitude of 29,000 feet.



Prof. Jim Story, UM & Bitterroot Audubon

BOARD BRAINS
AT WORK



MARCY MAHR
FAS Board Member

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM
INDIVIDUAL BOARD MEMBERS
AND OFFICERS

Great Blue Herons, We're Planning for Your Return

Kila is well known to Flathead Audubon members who regularly visit Smith Lake Waterfowl Production Area. But did you know Kila also has Flathead County's first designated park for Great Blue Herons? As of spring 2007, two acres were set aside as a 'Heronry Park' in the new subdivision of Cottage Lane Estates. This conservation area will allow Great Blue Herons to continue breeding and nesting in a patch of forest of mature ponderosa pine trees on Cottage Lane, located behind the Kila Country Church.

Since the mid-1960s, Kila residents and families have enjoyed watching these enormous birds flying in and out from the Smith Lake Waterfowl Production Area to this forest of big nest trees. It's a rare phenomenon to have Great Blue Herons breeding and nesting in an upland, conifer rookery. According to MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks, this is the only known Great Blue Heron breeding colony in the Flathead Valley not located on a major river or on a river island.

Last spring developer Tungsten Holdings, Inc., proposed a five-lot subdivision on 10.8 acres that included a portion of this rookery. Several Kila residents attended the County's Planning Board subdivision review hearing and informed the Board about this unique rookery. Biologists with MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks also were concerned about the effects new homes could have on this colony. They told the County they would be willing to work with the developer to try and mitigate the possible negative effects of the subdivision on the rookery.

The County Planning Board's decision on the preliminary plat addressed the sensitivity of the rookery by requiring the developer to work with MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks on a protection plan. This cooperation resulted in field studies, marked nesting trees, and proposed mitigation for the heron rookery on the property. The developers then modified their proposed subdivision based on the new information. For example, the number of housing lots was reduced from five to four, with approximately 2 acres dedicated to conserving the existing nest trees. The developers modified their lot lines to further reduce development near the existing nest trees, and identified an additional 75-foot buffer of natural habitat within lots nearest the nest trees. Additionally, the developers agreed upon a set of construction windows to avoid the heron's nesting and breeding season (March – July), and limits on other human activities within the Heronry Park and buffer area.

This process was a good example of how community input could be addressed by the Planning Board during preliminary plat approval; and of cooperation between local residents, agency staff and developers to devise a solution that is reflected in a final plat that receives Commissioner approval. Everyone hopes these protective measures will enhance the likelihood that this nesting colony will remain using this site; yet everyone agrees this will be an experiment.

A few months ago, National Audubon Society determined that Great Blue Herons have declined in Montana 81% in since 1967—around the time the Kila heron rookery established. Many thanks to all of the Flathead Audubon members who worked on this protection plan! It's a small step, yet a good precedent set.

The Glacier Institute Bird Courses for 2008

Owls of the Mission Valley: Hoots and Haunts
Glacier's Harlequins
Birding by Ear
Glacier's Birds of Prey
The "Uncommon" Loon

Denver Holt, B.A.
John Ashley, B.A.
Denny Olson, M.S.
Dave Shea, M.S.
Denny Olson, M.S.

April 5-6
May 3
June 13-15
June 14-15
June 21-22



Alan Nelson

Interested? For detailed course descriptions and more information please visit our website www.glacierinstitute.org or call 406-755-1211.



2008 APRIL AND MAY FIELD TRIPS



SUNDAY, APRIL 6: LOWER VALLEY WATERFOWL TOUR, PART TWO. Join FAS for a 3-4 hour guided tour of wetlands in the Somers area and north shore of Flathead Lake. We will search for resident and migrating waterfowl, but we should also see a wide variety of raptors and early songbirds. This is a great time to bone up on your ducks and get into the spirit of spring. Meet at Park n' Ride at the intersection of Hwys 93 and 82 at 8:30 AM. For more information contact Leslie Kehoe, evenings, at 837-4467.

SATURDAY, APRIL 19: EARTH DAY AND SECOND ANNUAL MARTY COHEN BIRD-DAY STROLL. Start out Earth Day weekend with a stroll along the Whitefish River. Meet at the parking lot by the Whitefish City Ball Fields off Hwy. 40 at 8 AM Saturday, April 19. We will stroll and ride (the whole path is accessible to wheelchairs 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; bring kids and grandparents to help celebrate the Second Annual Marty Cohen Bird-Day Stroll. For information, call Linda de Kort at 755-3704.

SUNDAY, APRIL 27: 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. We might spot a bluebird or meadow-lark. Bald Eagles, Osprey and Marsh Harriers may be seen soaring in the sky or perched on prominent trees by Smith Lake. Join Bob Lee and FAS for a pleasant morning of birding. Meet at Fish, Wildlife & Parks building on Meridian Road at 8:00 AM. Contact Bob at 270-0371 to sign up for the trip.

TUESDAYS IN MAY AND JUNE (May 6-13-20-27, June 3-10-17-24): WILD MILE NATURE WALKS. Join Neal Brown of Flathead Audubon and Anne Morley of Montana Native Plant Society, for a morning of bird and wildflower identification along Bigfork's Wild Mile of the Swan River. An easy amble on the Swan River Nature Trail. Meet in front of the Bigfork Playhouse at 10 AM. Bring water, binoculars, hand lens and field guides. Return by noon.

SATURDAY MAY 10: INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY AT THE NATIONAL BISON RANGE. Center Bird walks, wildlife photography walks, book signings, bird talks, trivia contests, free posters. Kate Davis of Raptors of the Rockies with live birds. The splendid Red Sleep Mountain Drive will open for the summer season, weather and road conditions permitting. All events start at Bison Range Visitor Center. For more information, call Pat Jamieson at the National Bison Range at 406-644-2211, Ext. 207.

SATURDAY, MAY 10: SPRING LOON CENSUS DAY. The Montana Loon Society and the Montana Common Loon Working Group need volunteers to help look for and count loons on the lakes throughout north-west Montana on this day. Please contact Gael Bissell at 751-4580 if you would like to volunteer.

MID-MAY: SPRING LOONS IN GLACIER NATIONAL PARK. Still wanting to count some more loons? Here is a chance to volunteer in one of Montana's most beautiful places. Volunteers with some birding experience or previous training are needed to look for and count the loons of Glacier National Park. Call 888-7986 to sign up. Exact date is still to be determined, depending on the spring and conditions.

SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, MAY 19 & 20: THE GLACIER INSTITUTE VOLUNTEER WORK WEEK-END. Help Glacier Institute get ready for its 25th year of educational activities. Volunteers are needed for cleaning, painting, light carpentry, and outdoor work at both the Field Camp in the Park and Big Creek Outdoor Education Center. Call Glacier Institute at 755-1211 or register@glacierinstitute.org.

FRIDAY, MAY 23: NATIONAL BISON RANGE 100th BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION! The Big Birthday Bash – speakers and special guests, recognition ceremony for Student Art Contest, US Postage Stamp cancellations, visit by Honker the Blue Goose mascot, trivia contests, free posters, book signings. Free entry to all scenic drives. And, of course, birthday cake! For more information, call Pat Jamieson at the National Bison Range at 406-644-2211, Ext. 207.

SUNDAY, MAY 31: A TOUR OF THE MISSION VALLEY. Come with FAS to the Mission Valley for some exceptional spring bird watching. We will visit the National Bison Range, driving up and over the Red Sleep Mountain Drive to look for warblers, vireos and sparrows. We may find Rock Wrens, Short-eared Owls or a swift Prairie Falcon. We will spend some time at Ninepipe National Wildlife Refuge, scanning the reservoir for waterfowl of all kinds and other denizens of the marshes. Meet at Park n' Ride at the intersection of Hwys 93 and 82 near Somers at 6 AM. For more information on this all-day trip, call Leslie Kehoe, evenings at 837-4467. Please note: entrance fee to the National Bison Range is \$4 per vehicle.



TIMBER!

The 2008 Family Forestry Expo is coming to Stoltze Lumber Company's Trumbull Creek Experimental Forest. This annual event is sponsored by many local forest industry and recreation groups and has exhibits on forest management, wildlife and fisheries, and various recreational pursuits from around the Flathead Valley.

About 1200 local 5th graders will tour the field exhibits and nearby lumber mills over the week of May 5 – 9. The general public is invited to attend on the weekend of May 10 and 11. Hours are from 9 AM through 4 PM on Saturday and 11 AM through 3 PM on Sunday. The weekend highlight is the logger sports and equipment demonstrations; however, there are other great exhibits, including one from Flathead Audubon. Many people will visit this station to learn more about the birds of the Flathead and share stories of their own birding adventures. This is a wonderful opportunity for any Audubon member to share their knowledge and love of birds with others in the Valley as well as learning about other opportunities in the neighborhood. If you would like to help, please contact Sonja Hartmann at prather@digisys.net or 387-4150.



FLYCATCHER IDENTIFICATION CHART

From Nancy McMahon, Prescott (AZ) Audubon



	WILLOW	HAMMOND'S	DUSKY	GRAY	CORDILLERAN
HEAD:	round; peak on rear crown	big	small	small rounded	big peaked
EYE RING:	not apparent	bright, round usually with teardrop at rear	round but not bright	round <u>inconspicuous</u>	teardrop shaped; broad & pale; broken above
BILL:	large long wide	short thin	long medium	long narrow	long fairly large
LOWER MANDIBLE:	yellow	usually black	orange at base blending into dark tip	pinkish-orange base & dark tip	orange
THROAT:	whitish	grayish	grayish	light gray	<u>yellow</u>
TAIL:	long flicks up	short flicks up	long flicks up	long flicks <u>down</u>	short flicks up, often with wings
COLOR ABOVE:	brownish	grayish-olive	grayish-olive	grayish	brownish-olive
COLOR BELOW:		gray or olive wash on breast & sides; belly tinged with pale yellow	pale olive wash on upper breast; yellowish below	whitish below, belly washed pale yellow by late fall	yellowish below with brownish tinge on breast
PRIMARY PROJECTION:	short	long	short	short	short



MONTANA BIRD FESTIVAL

Montana Audubon and the Yellowstone Valley Audubon Chapter are hosting the 2008 Montana Bird Festival at Rocky Mountain College in Billings, June 6-8. The festival will celebrate the tremendous variety of birds found in the area's stream and river bottoms, mountain forests, prairies, and wetlands. Field trips include visits to the Pryor

Mountains, Pompey's Pillar, Yellowstone River, Audubon's Conservation Education Center, and more. Workshops, such as Beginning Birding, will also be offered. Check Montana Audubon's website for updates on speakers and trips. A festival brochure with all the details will be sent to all Audubon members in Montana in early April.



ARTISTS' CALL

In conjunction with the Montana Bird Festival, the Billings Arts Association, Montana Audubon and Rocky Mountain College are sponsoring a Juried Art Show and Sale, with cash prizes ranging from \$100-500. Deadline for submittal of art work and photography is May 1, 2008. Rules, entry forms, schedule, and other details may be obtained from William Crain at 697-9156 or Kayhan Ostorvor at 256-7481 or through Montana Audubon at www.mtaudubon.org.



Notice: Montana Audubon recently mailed out the Winter 2008 issue of their newsletter, the Magpie Muse. If you did not receive a copy, you can view this issue on the Montana Audubon website, www.mtaudubon.org, or anyone who would like to have a paper copy of the Montana Audubon newsletter may contact the Montana Audubon office. They will be glad to mail one out.



Montana Audubon's Veracruz, Mexico Tour September 29 - October 10, 2008



Join Montana Audubon board member, professor Jack Kirkley, on this 12-day adventure exploring and birding the varied ecological habitats in the Veracruz region of eastern Mexico. Our tour is specially scheduled to coincide with the peak of raptor migration season, when the stunning "River of Raptors" (several million birds strong) streams across the Veracruz area, providing one of the most awesome wildlife spectacles on earth. Our birding tour will also include early morning and afternoon visits to coastal lagoons, wetlands, lowland forests and savannas, as well as high mountain pine-oak forests and cloud forests, enabling us to see a great variety of birds. 540 species are listed for central Veracruz!

We will be led by the skillful, local birding guides of Pronatura-Veracruz, the nonprofit conservation organization hosting our group. We will stay at comfortable hotels in the towns of Cardel and Xalapa, as well as in the Catemaco Lake region.

The all-inclusive cost for the tour is \$2925 (double occupancy) from Veracruz airport, which includes a \$900 tax-deductible contribution to Montana Audubon, half of which will be shared with Pronatura-Veracruz. For a detailed itinerary or other information contact Dr. Jack Kirkley at j_kirkley@umwestern.edu or (406) 683-7321, or the Montana Audubon office at mtaudubon@mtaudubon.org or (406) 443-3949.



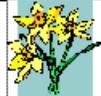
REMINDER! When you fill out your Montana tax forms this year, be sure to check the "NonGame Wildlife" box and support birds and other species whose programs are not funded by hunting and fishing license fees. Our feathered friends thank you!

SERIOUS BIRDERS, TAKE NOTE!

If you are interested in browsing through more than a century of ornithological journals, check out the Searchable Ornithological Research Archive (SORA). It gives you free access to seven journals' archived articles, including the Auk, Condor, Wilson Bulletin, Journal of Field Ornithology, North American Bird Bander, Pacific Coast Avifauna, and Studies in Avian Biology. For example, you can read the 1943 article by Harlow Mills documenting the first starling nesting in Montana. SORA dates from 1884 to present. Access SORA at <http://elibrary.unm.edu/sora/>.



"What sunshine is to flowers, smiles are to humanity." – Joseph Addison



TWO MONTANA BIRDS ON THE 2007 WATCHLIST

WatchList 2007, the newest and most scientifically sound list of America's birds at greatest risk, was released in November 2007 by National Audubon and the American Bird Conservancy. The bird species on this list are often rare and limited in range; consequently, they face a more imminent threat of extinction. Forty of these imperiled species spend at least part of the year in Montana. Two of those birds are profiled here (photos by John Carlson):



Baird's Sparrow. As one of the myriad of grassland bird species that have shown significant long-term declines, the Baird's Sparrow depends on large blocks of lightly-grazed native bunchgrass prairie for nesting. Northeastern Montana is within the core of the species range. Protection of Baird's Sparrow habitat in Montana will help meet the needs of two other WatchList species, the **Sprague's Pipit** and **Chestnut-collared Longspur**.

Piping Plover. The Piping Plover has suffered population and habitat losses throughout its range, primarily due to disturbance and development of its preferred beach nesting habitat. It is listed as a Threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. The species' preferred nesting habitat in Montana includes gravel bars along the lower reaches of the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers, and large alkali prairie wetlands in northeastern Montana.



For the complete WatchList and details on how to help, visit www.audubon.org. To learn more about Montana Audubon's work protecting these and other species, visit www.mtaudubon.org.



BALD EAGLE NUMBERS GROW

The number of bald eagles in Montana continues to grow. The 2007 numbers are still being compiled but in 2006, 426 territories were documented, up from the 396 reported in 2005. An increase has been documented every year since monitoring began in 1980 when 31 territories were reported. Numerous cooperators survey most of the known territories every year to determine how many are active and how successful they are, then the results are tabulated by Kristi DuBois, the Native Species Coordinator for Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks. The table below shows the numbers for 2006.

Territories	Checked	Active	Successful	Young	Nest Success	Average Brood Size
426	411	361	279	514	77%	1.84

Bald eagles were removed from the Federal Endangered and Threatened Species list in 2007, due to their recovery across the lower 48 states. Now that they are "delisted," the intensive, annual surveys probably aren't warranted. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is currently developing a monitoring plan for bald eagles that would maintain the complete list of territories, then sample a portion of them each year for occupancy and production.

Although the bald eagle has been "delisted," it continues to be protected under 2 federal laws and Montana state law. The federal laws are the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Act. In Montana, bald eagles are classified and protected as a migratory bird species. In general, these laws prohibit killing, injuring, or substantially interfering with breeding and feeding activities.

The recovery of the bald eagle in the lower 48 states, including Montana, has been a tremendous conservation success story and now we can enjoy watching these wonderful birds along our rivers and lakes almost anywhere we go in Montana.

From Lewis Young, Conservation Chair

A female Bar-tailed Godwit fitted with a GPS unit made a record 7,145 mile flight from Alaska to New Zealand without stopping for food or water. According to the US Geological Survey Alaska Science Center, this was the longest nonstop flight ever recorded for a land bird. The godwit left Alaska on August 29, 2007, flew past Hawaii and Fiji and arrived in New Zealand on September 7, 2007. During those 9 days of flight, the bird "slept" by shutting down one side of her brain at a time.



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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

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