



# the Silent Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

VOLUME 33

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MARCH 2009

## COLLEGE GREEN TEAM RECEIVES AUDUBON RECOGNITION

It all started with a single person. In 1998, Tom Dyer became FVCC's Director of Custodial Services, and took a hard look at the inventory of cleaning products that were being used on the campus. Well over 100 products sat on the shelves, many with labels listing toxic ingredients and warnings. Concerned for his workers, staff and students, and the environment in general, Tom set about weeding out those "skull and crossbones" labels, researching simpler products and tracking down green suppliers.



Also, since FVCC had moved to its new campus in the early 1990s, the maintenance workers had been collecting and recycling cardboard, paper, and aluminum. They were depositing the recycling money into a scholarship fund and were able to award a couple of small scholarships to needy students each year. Then one of the custodians, Glenn Ford, died, and his family contributed "seed money" to boost the scholarship fund, allowing larger awards to students. The fund became the Glenn Ford Memorial Scholarship Fund, and recycling took on a new meaning on campus. Seeing how much wasted paper his custodians were carrying out of classrooms in wastebaskets, Tom set up each room with a recycling bin, and the students started "pitching in." The scholarship fund began to grow and produce interest that could be

used for scholarships instead of the fund's capital.

In a leadership class that Tom Dyer attended, students were assigned to create a project that could continue after the class ended. With the change-over to using non-toxic products, and the recycling effort that was underway, Tom and his group developed a plan to expand campus-wide, to form "The Green Team," a group of advisors and organizers for the move to green, and to assemble an Earth Day program. Their proposal presented enough evidence for the FVCC Board of Trustees and administration to give the "green light."



As the Green Team formed, Laura Damon was hired into the new position of Instructional Safety and Chemical Hygiene Officer, overseeing disposal of wastes from the chemistry labs and monitoring of all purchase, use, and storage of chemicals and hazardous substances campus-wide. Coordinator of Service Learning Janaya Okerlund wrote a proposal for an Americorps Volunteer position and Roger Diller stepped into that assignment. Over the past 2 years, Roger has significantly expanded the recycling initiative. Roger has drawn lots of students into the recycling program and has begun a very active Renewable Resource Club. With his commitment and ready smile, Roger is both a popular and influential guy on campus.

*(Green Team Recognition, continued on page 6)*

### MARCH FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

**Monday, March 9, 2009: General Membership Meeting.** 7 PM, The Summit, Conference Room 3. Biologist Joyce Lapp presents a program on Local Native Plants. Details on page 3.

**Monday, March 2, 2009: Flathead Audubon Board of Directors Meeting.** 6 PM at 295 Third Ave. E.N. All are welcome.

**Saturday-Sunday, March 28-29, 2009: Freezout Lake Waterfowl Migration Field Trip.** Details, page 2.

# BIRD OF THE MONTH

By Gail Cleveland

## TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRES—SUGGESTION OF SPRING



Bruce Fannehill Photo

It is late February; the snow is still covering the backyard with deep, crusty snow. I am looking for a harbinger of spring. The mountain ash berries are nearly gone, eaten by the resident winter

flock of Pine grosbeaks and an occasional flock of waxwings. But there are still a few berries at the ends of the branches. When I look out the window, I see not one, but two heralds of Spring taking advantage of the last of the berries, one common, an American robin, and the other a rare treat at our house from February through April, a Townsend's solitaire.

In other parts of the valley, Townsend's solitaires spend the winter feeding on their main winter food source, juniper berries. As the juniper berries get scarce, I imagine that they go in search of other berries to feast on, and so luckily they come to our house.

The Townsend's solitaire is a member of a large family of birds called *Turdidae*, or the thrush family, which includes bluebirds, solitaires, robins and the spotted thrushes like the Varied, Hermit and Swainson's thrush. However, it is the only North American solitaire. There are four solitaires in the Hawaiian Islands and nine in Central and South America.

At first glance, the Townsend's solitaire looks to be a slender, drab, gray bird that is shaped like a robin. On closer observation, it has a white eye ring, white outer tail feathers that are obvious in flight, and a buffy wing patch that is spotted above and below.

John James Audubon named the species in 1839 for John K. Townsend, a young Philadelphia ornithologist who collected the first specimen along

the banks of the Columbia River near Astoria, Oregon. His name is also commemorated in the Townsend's warbler that frequents our area. When Townsend was 25 years old he accompanied Thomas Nuttall on a trip across the continent for 3 ½ years, collecting bird specimens, many of which were the basis for new species.

I think the solitaire's song is particularly wonderful. It is a glorious song of prolonged warbles that seems to have no pattern and varies from male to male. It is sweet, clear and loud, and has been compared to a purple finch song. They are unusual among thrushes in that they can be heard singing throughout the year. April through June, when they establish a breeding territory, is a peak time for singing. You won't see them in the valley during this time, as they breed in the mountains up to 12,000 feet. But hike in the mountains and you might be lucky enough to hear them singing from a high perch. They also sing September through November when they come down in elevation and establish wintering territories where juniper berries are plentiful.

Another unusual trait of this member of the thrush family is their nest. Unlike other thrushes that nest in trees, solitaires nest on the ground, often partly concealed at the base of a pine or fir tree or under an overhanging bank on a mountain trail.

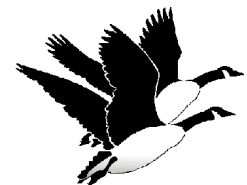
But finding a solitaire nest on a mountain trail is going to have to wait. Winter is still with us, but at least the robins and that rarer thrush, the Townsend's solitaire, is here; my indicators that spring will, indeed, eventually arrive.



## FREEZOUT 2009



Spring waterfowl migration at Freezout Lake WMA is an experience not to be missed. Snow Geese can be counted by the thousands and more than 40 bird species have been seen in past years. This year's trip will take place on Saturday and Sunday, 28-29 March. We will leave at 10:30 AM Saturday from the K Mart parking lot in Kalispell and be at Freezout WMA in time to watch the white geese arrive that evening. We'll stay overnight in Choteau. You should make your own arrangements at one of the Choteau motels: Bella Vista Motel (406-466-5711), the Stage Stop Inn (888-466-5900) or 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. Contact Bob Lee at 270-0371 or [RML3@centurytel.net](mailto:RML3@centurytel.net) to arrange carpooling and to sign up for the trip.





Windflower Native Plant Nursery

## March 2009 Program

## NATIVE PLANTS TAKE CENTER STAGE

Native plants, their values and uses, will be the topic of our program for Flathead Audubon's March 9 general membership meeting. Joyce Lapp, a Restoration Biologist with Glacier National Park, works to eradicate invasive species and restore native plants to the landscape of the Park.

Joyce's presentation will include identification of our local native plants, and will show us why they are better for the ecosystem than introduced species. Joyce will also discuss ways that the rebuild of Going to the Sun Highway will impact the surrounding ecosystem and native plants in particular. Come learn how you can start a native plant garden right in your own backyard. Get a jump start on Spring with this fascinating program!

Please join Flathead Audubon on March 9<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM at the Conference Room of The Summit. Also, at the meeting, the Green Team of Flathead Valley Community College will receive the FAS Conservation Achievement Recognition. Shade-grown, organic coffee and homemade goodies, too!



Red Paintbrush

## FAS SPRING RAFFLE

The winning ticket for Flathead Audubon's Spring Raffle will be drawn at the FAS March 9 meeting. The winner will take home this beautiful picture of a dancing Sandhill Crane. This 8"x12" color photograph is handsomely matted and framed, giving it an overall size of 15"x19". The piece was donated by local wildlife photographer Mike O'Dale, who captured this stunning image at Smith Lake last spring.



Raffle tickets will be sold at the March meeting before the drawing: **\$1 each**, or **six for \$5**. You may also purchase tickets by mail. Send your name, phone number, and payment for the tickets to Jill Fanning, 380 Tally Lake Road, Whitefish, MT, 59937.

Proceeds from the Raffle help fund local Flat-

head Audubon projects such as the FAS Bird Education Program, Audubon projects such as the FAS Bird Education Program, which includes such activities as providing bird education

(complete with bird costume), birding field trips for school classes, workshops on birds and bird habitat for local educators, and presentations for youngsters and their parents at local libraries on birds of the Flathead Valley.

Flathead Audubon wishes to thank Mike O'Dale for his generous donation. Thanks, also, everyone who purchases raffle tickets. It is only with your support that Flathead Audubon can continue its local projects.

2,000 mockingbirds = two kilomockingbirds



## DELL DOES IT RIGHT!

Following a successful pilot campaign, Dell this week also launched Dell Exchange, a free online trade-in system allowing customers to trade in unwanted computer equipment and exchange them for Dell gift cards.

The program, run in partnership with trade-in service provider, Dealtree, accepts many kinds of consumer electronics equipment, including desktop and laptop computers, digital cameras and video game consoles. More information and a full list of covered materials is available at <http://dell.eztradein.com/dell/>



## 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 1st, 15th, 22nd, and 29th, 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!**



## HELP WATCHABLE WILDLIFE SURVIVE!



Your Montana income tax form gives you a special opportunity to help all of the birds and other critters that we love but who don't receive any other funding for their habitat needs and protections from being "over-loved." Just check the box on the last page of your tax return, and ask that a few of your refund dollars be sent to this important program. You will feel more cheerful about paying taxes!



## Grant Awarded for Ecosystem Education Book Club Project

Nancy Zapotocki, Conservation Educator



Flathead Audubon, in partnership with the Northwest Montana Educational Cooperative and Flathead National Forest, was awarded an Ecosystem Education Mini-grant through the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem Education Consortium (COCEEC). We will be developing an Indian Education for All (IEFA) Young Adult Book Club Education Trunk to correlate the *Crown of the Continent Profile of a Treasured Landscape* with an Indian Education book for upper elementary to middle school. At the 2008 Flathead CORE Trunk Workshop for Educators, it was noted that a class set of books in an education trunk, would be beneficial. This project creates an opportunity for individual schools to use a set of books for a class study group on the local Crown of the Continent

ecosystem. The goal of the Education Trunk is to aid teachers in implementing IEFA and assist teachers and their students in learning about the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem. The Education Trunk will include 1) twenty copies of the Indian Education young adult books, 2) an update of the relevant portions of the Profile correlating to the Indian Education Youth adult book, and 3) alignment of the Education Trunk materials with Montana Content Standards. This project could later be built on by other COCEEC participants completing additional chapters, until there is a complete upper elementary to middle school version of the *Crown of the Continent Profile of a Treasured Landscape*. The Education Trunk and contents is planned for completion by Fall 2009.



## Montessori Counts MANY birds!

Nancy Zapotocki, Conservation Educator



Flathead Audubon "adopted" Kalispell Montessori School for the day for the Great Background Bird Count (GBBC) on February 13<sup>th</sup>. Nancy Zapotocki, Conservation Educator, with the assistance of Education Committee volunteer, Aurialle Cohen had a fun-filled morning birding with a total of 71 first through sixth graders, 20 at a time.

Spending about ½ hour to 40 minutes with each class, we began inside with: basic bird ID, how to use binoculars and a review of common birds we might see (those past year calendars with bird photos once again came in handy!). Aurialle's pet dove, Mel, graciously modeled for bird ID, along with "Woody" the pileated puppet. We then went outside to listen to, look for and record sightings of birds. It was exciting or, as one student said, "This is Awesome!!" The data will be entered and shared in the national database. Species sighted: Rock Pigeon, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Black-Billed Magpie, American Crow, Common Raven, Black-capped Chickadee, American Robin, Bohemian Waxwing and Pine Grosbeak. Great views of the Grosbeaks!

This year, FAS also coordinated the counts of Kalispell Montessori and five other schools: West Glacier Elementary, East Glacier Park, Babb, Canyon Elementary and Somers Middle School. This allows students and teachers to share more detailed data locally and see similarities and differences in counts from different habitats. Glacier National Park assisted with the count at West Glacier, East Glacier Park and Babb, and Flathead National Forest assisted with the count at Canyon. Thanks to all the children and teachers at these schools for helping scientists collect information on bird populations in your local corner of the U.S.!

{Reminder: Pick up a new "Birding Hotspots of the Flathead" brochure at the March FAS meeting!}



## T-I-M-B-E-R ... and birds!

The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary Family Forestry Expo is coming soon to the Stoltze Trumbull Creek Experimental Forest. This free annual event is sponsored by many local forest industry and recreation groups and has exhibits on forest management, wildlife and fisheries and an assortment of recreational interests from around the Flathead Valley.



About 1200 local 5<sup>th</sup> graders will tour the field exhibits and nearby lumber mills through the week of May 4 – 8. The general public may attend on May 9 from 9 AM - 4 PM, and May 10 from 11 AM - 3 PM. The weekend highlight is the logger sports and equipment demonstrations; there are other great exhibits, including one from Flathead Audubon. Many people visit our station to learn more about birds of the Flathead and share stories of their own birding adventures. This is a wonderful opportunity for Audubon members to share their knowledge and love of birds with others. We would love for you to help, so please contact Nancy Zapotocki at [naz@centurytel.net](mailto:naz@centurytel.net) to get on board.





# BOARD MEMBER MUSINGS

From

**Melissa Sladek, FAS Board Member**



Most of us wander through our day-to-day tasks with little thought. We know the groceries need to be bought, the project at work must get finished, and the dog is waiting for his walk. And as we plod through life and become engrossed in the mundane and unimportant, it's easy to forget the wonder of life in all its complexity.

Once in awhile, I am startled out of my daily routine. I am forced to formulate thoughts and concepts from the depths of my neuro tissue that make my brain ache and my body heavy. I am forced to reevaluate my goals, my priorities...my understanding of who I am and why I'm here.

In short, I start to think. I mean *really* think. In fact just the other day, as I headed east on Highway 2 through the snow-filled canyon and on my way to work, I had one of these "neuro surges." As I looked around at the luminous snow-covered mountains of rocks and trees rising up in front of me, I thought "How on earth did I get here?" Not literally, to be clear, but in the sense of how did a kid raised in a nice suburb of Minneapolis end up in northwest Montana? How did the child of mostly city-dwelling parents end up in the wilds of the West, engaged to a woodsman more interested in fishing and hunting than breathing?

Yes, I know how I *got* here...the steps I took

throughout my life that led me here...but, what was the impetus that guided me to where I am today? In some moods this self-directed question may have been easily brushed aside, but at the instant the thought zapped throughout my shaken brain cells, I noticed sunlight reflect off the coal-black feathers of a raven flying high above. It was then that I knew the answer.

I have many great memories of my childhood, my adolescence, and my early adult years but the memories that seem so vivid and awing are the interactions that I've had with wildlife...the first time I saw 30 bald eagles sitting in the cottonwood trees waiting for spawning kokanee; the day I saw the beauty and power of dancing orcas in the Pacific Ocean; the mind-altering instant I stared at my first grizzly bear just 100 yards away from my small and unprotected self. These and countless other magical wildlife moments are the reasons I am here. They are the experiences that have guided me to live in one of the richest natural areas in the lower 48.

And, these are the reasons I am a part of a truly amazing organization whose goal is to conserve habitat and promote an appreciation of the natural world. I am honored to be a board member of Flathead Audubon, just as I am honored to live in this treasured valley we call home.

## SNEAK PEEK!

### APRIL FIELD TRIP A REAL HOOT!

**Saturday, April 11, 2009: Unique Field Trip to Listen For and Call Barred Owls.** Put on your night vision goggles and join Keith Smith for this fascinating prowl through the woods to find a barred owl, cousin of the spotted owl. Meet at 7:00 P.M. at the Silver Bullet Bar parking lot, located between Columbia Heights and Woody's on MT Highway 206. More details in next month's *Pileated Post!*



## FLATHEAD AUDUBON MISSION STATEMENT

THE FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY IS A LOCAL CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY.

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



**SPECIAL GIFTS**

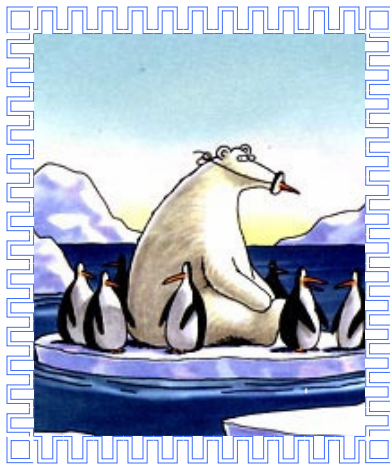
We want to recognize those members who have made special donations to FAS. We will do this in *The Pileated Post* each month. This list includes all "name your bird" special gifts received through February 18.

**Donations made  
January 18—February 18, 2009**



**OSPREY**  
Soroptomist Club of Whitefish

**MY OWN VISION**  
Charles Sutfin



*"And now Edgar's gone ...  
Something's going on around here."*

**SPECIAL GIFTS**

I wish to help make Flathead Audubon's vision a reality. Here is my contribution to the continued success of our chapter.



Dave Manike, USFWS

- Eagle Donation, \$1000
- Osprey Donation, \$500
- Snowy Owl Donation, \$250
- Merlin Donation, \$100
- Kestrel Donation, \$50
- My Own Vision, amount of my choice

\*\*\*\*

*The FAS activity which most interests me is:*

- Education Programs
- Owen Sowerwine Natural Area
- Scholarships and Grants
- Field Trips and Outdoor Events

\*\*\*\*

*I want my gift to recognize another:*

In memory of \_\_\_\_\_  
In honor of \_\_\_\_\_

Please send notification of this gift to:

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_  
State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Please do not acknowledge my gift in the Pileated Post

\*\*\*\*

*Please make checks payable to:*

Flathead Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 9173  
Kalispell, MT 59904

**Your gift is tax deductible.**

*(Conservation Achievement Recognition, continued ...)*

One of the Green Team's main goals has been to bring the community into their activities. Earth Day and the Green Symposium draw interested residents from all over the Flathead Valley, to learn tricks and tips, and to absorb the enthusiasm and "can-do" spirit of these young people. Today, the FVCC buildings are cleaned and maintained using more than 90% certified green, non-aerosol products. The Glenn Ford Memorial Scholarships are up to \$1,000. Tom Dyer is switching over his cleaning equipment to pieces that use less power, less cleaning solution, and less water. The newer campus buildings have motion sensor light switches that turn off when the room is empty. This year's Earth Day celebration will be highlighted by the public showing of the recently released documentary film, "Fuel." The Green Team is working to get lights in the older buildings retrofitted with motion sensors, as well as to adjust staff habits to using email rather than putting paper communications in mailboxes.



And here's the real Green Surprise: Absolutely NONE of these many achievements and activities has received a dollar of funding from the college. Not one of these people has received a dime for fitting this extra work into their already-full positions. Even the Earth Day productions have been put together with volunteer staff and students and recycled materials. The Green Team has no budget; they receive no special privileges. Any income goes to the scholarship fund. When asked why they have continued to work so hard with no personal reward, Tom Dyer says quietly with a smile, "Because it's the right thing to do."

Flathead Audubon is very pleased to recognize the FVCC Green Team and their responsible environmental activities with the Conservation Achievement Recognition.  
By Kay Mitchell

## Birds and Climate Change: On the Move



A report released in February by National Audubon says nearly 60% of the 305 species found in North America in winter are on the move, shifting their ranges northward by an average of 35 miles.

Audubon scientists analyzed 40 years of citizen-science Christmas Bird Count data. Their findings provide new and powerful evidence that global warming is having a serious impact on natural systems. Northward movement was detected among species of every type, including more than 70% of highly adaptable forest and feeder birds. More than 60 bird species moved in excess of 100 miles north. Analysis found the trends among nearly every type of species; the sheer numbers and variety point to a powerful common force contributing to the movements.

Grassland species were an exception, with only 38% mirroring the northward trend. But far from being good news for species like Eastern Meadowlark and Henslow's Sparrow, this reflects the grim reality of severely-depleted grassland habitat and suggests that these species now face a double threat from the combined stresses of habitat loss and climate adaptation.

It is the complete picture of widespread movement and the failure of some species to move at all that illustrate the impacts of climate change on birds. For more information and a map showing where a number of these species have traveled from their original grounds, check out <http://audubon.org/bird/bacc/index.html>

Montana species for which this study has documented northward movement include: American Crow, American Goldfinch, American Robin, Brewer's Blackbird, Cedar Waxwing, Dark-eyed Junco, Mourning Dove, Northern Flicker, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, Pine Grosbeak, Redhead, Red-tailed Hawk, Ring-necked Duck, Rough-legged Hawk, Ruddy Duck, Spruce Grouse, Townsend's Solitaire, Wood Duck.

Five of these species are relatively common

(in the right habitats) during our annual Christmas Bird Count. Here is a summary of what the study found for these birds:

**SPRUCE GROUSE**, a forest bird, has moved about 316 miles north. Based on Christmas Bird Count surveys, its population in Montana has decreased about 90% in 40 years, though it has not declined precipitously across the continent. Forest birds show the most northward movement, and forest birds have been able to winter farther north with the warmer winters. However, as these birds move north, they may be at increased risk from unusually cold winters or harsh storms.

**NORTHERN PINTAIL** has shifted about 90 miles north in the last four decades. Although it is now more commonly found during Montana's winter, its population overall has significantly decreased. Climate change brings warmer summers, drying our crucial potholes and wetlands for breeding waterfowl.

**CEDAR WAXWING**, both a forest and feeder bird, has moved almost 190 miles north, and appears to be increasing both in Montana and across the continental US over the last 40 years. Flocks of waxwings are commonly found across Montana, feeding on mountain ash berries or crab apple fruits.

**RED-TAILED HAWK** has shifted its center of abundance about 82 miles to the north, increasing in the winter both in Montana and nationally. Again, sudden harsh winter spells could make winter feeding and survival challenging. Will this raptor out-compete other raptors, resulting in their decline?

**NORTHERN FLICKER**, a forest woodpecker but often seen around towns, has shifted about 192 miles north. Although apparently increasing in Montana, populations appear to be either stable or slightly decreasing nationally. Efforts to preserve nesting snags for these and other woodpeckers are helpful.



**SCIENCE**

### KEEP THE LITTLE FISH AND THROW THE BIG ONES BACK

From *Scientific American*, February 2009, pages 76 – 78

#### Chaos and the Catch of the Day

by Paul Raeburn

When you consider that 29% of the currently fished species have catches that have dropped to 10% of historic maximums, a trend that would lead to the collapse of all ocean fisheries by 2048, we know something has to change. A mathematical model by George Sugihara of Scripps Institution of Oceanography sounds hopeful. The data for this model comes from 50 years of sardine population research.

In the 1930's, California fisherman were catching more than 500,000 tons of sardines annually. When the catch dropped by 99% by the 1950's, it seemed reasonable that the cause was over fishing or that some environment factor had changed. George Sugihara's model concludes that we are not taking too many sardines but we are taking the big ones and leaving behind a juvenile population. Sugihara showed that mathematically such juvenile populations are unstable (something that any high school teacher could have told him). The big sardines are large because they have been successful in finding food and surviving environmental changes. Taking the big ones leaves behind a population without the smarts or fat reserves to survive changes. So we need to learn to **THROW THE BIG ONES BACK**.

Submitted by Bruce Tannehill

**TIDBIT**



## Volunteers Needed to Help Monitor Owen Sowerwine

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



*We are looking for volunteers to help monitor the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area.*

All you need to do is tromp around Owen Sowerwine and tell us what you see!

Flathead Audubon is now in its 13th year of managing Owen Sowerwine. An important part of this task is to keep track of what is happening there – things such as what birds and wildlife and vegetation are present, how many people are visiting, which walkways or fences need fixing, whether any Natural Area rules are being violated, whether there are parking problems or trail blockages.

There are two ways you can help. Whichever way you choose, you will be making an important contribution to the FAS management of Owen Sowerwine. Your help is essential and greatly appreciated.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **(1) Sign up for the Volunteer Monitoring Program.**

The Volunteer Monitoring Program sets up a schedule of visits by Volunteer Monitors which ensures that Owen Sowerwine is monitored at least twice a month, March through November.

This Program is now two years old, and we've found that it works! Volunteer Monitors have provided the regular feedback we need in order to keep up on maintenance chores, identify problems, get an idea of visitor numbers and visitor activities, and develop a complete list of the birds and wildlife that use the Area.

So once again this year, we are asking for volunteers from the Flathead Audubon membership to help out with this program. The Program works like this:

The Monitoring Program runs for nine months, March through November. In each month there are two monitoring periods – the first half of the month, and the second half, making a total of 18 periods. We need a volunteer for each of these monitoring periods.

You can choose your month, and choose whether you want to cover the first half or the second half of that month. Several people can get together to volunteer for one monitoring period. You can all go down to Owen Sowerwine together, or make separate monitoring visits throughout your chosen period – it's up to you. You or your group can sign up for more than one monitoring period, if you wish.

Your job is to make at least one monitoring visit during your chosen period. If possible, make your visit on a weekend – when there tend to be more people present.

You will be provided with a Monitoring Checklist, which indicates what to look for and where to go, as well as a map showing the areas and trails referenced on the Checklist. Monitors are encouraged to use a camera to document their observations. At the end of the monitoring period, send a completed Checklist for each visit, along with any documenting pictures, to Brent Mitchell, Owen Sowerwine Committee Co-Chair.

Volunteer Monitors are also encouraged to talk to people they encounter 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. There is room on the Monitoring Checklist to report these findings.

You can get a look at the Monitoring Checklist by visiting the Flathead Audubon website, [flatheadaudubon.org](http://flatheadaudubon.org). Go to the Conservation Section, then to the section on Owen Sowerwine.

We have found that a full monitoring visit usually takes from 1½ to 2 hours. Some people take longer. Some have had to cut their visits short because of weather or mosquitoes, or because paths are covered by snow or high water. These short visits are also valuable, since they help us learn more about what conditions are present there at various times of the year.

To volunteer, or to get more information, please contact me at [lindawin@centurytel.net](mailto:lindawin@centurytel.net) or 755-1406. Or see me at the Flathead Audubon meeting; I'll have the Volunteer Monitoring sign-up sheet there.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **(2) Give 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 send it to Brent. You can get a copy of the Checklist and the accompanying map from the Flathead Audubon website, or contact me and I will send them to you. Copies of the Checklist and the map will also be available at the Flathead Audubon meetings.

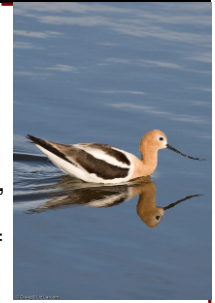
We encourage all Flathead Audubon members to become eyes and ears for the Chapter when they visit Owen Sowerwine. Note that you can also use the Checklist to report the birds you see. If you find a species as yet unreported for Owen Sowerwine, and tell us about it on your Checklist, we'll see that it gets added to the Owen Sowerwine Bird List.





## **Wings Across The Big Sky** **2009 Montana Audubon Bird Festival**

Montana Audubon, in conjunction with the Upper Missouri Breaks Audubon Society, will hold our annual Bird Festival in Great Falls, MT, June 5-7, 2009, at the Holiday Inn, Great Falls, MT. For information and to register, visit [www.mtaudubon.org/birdwatching/festival](http://www.mtaudubon.org/birdwatching/festival) or call Montana Audubon at 406-443-3949. Register by April 15 and have a chance to win two nights of lodging at the Holiday Inn during the festival!



The Festival's featured speaker is **David Allen Sibley**, the author and illustrator of the comprehensive *Sibley Guide to Birds* and other books such as *Sibley's Birding Basics*. **Vince Yannone**, retired MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks biologist and educator, who has appeared on Discovery Channel and Animal Planet, opens the festival Friday evening with live birds.

Choose from 28 different field trips to wildlife refuges and birding hotspots from the Rocky Mountain Front to the prairie marshes and the storied Missouri River, rich in birds, other wildlife and history. Birds of interest include: McCown's & Chestnut-collared Longspurs, Sprague's Pipit, Burrowing Owl, Calliope Hummingbird, Baird's Sparrow, American Avocet and Ferruginous Hawk.

Attend birdwatchers' and bird conservation presentations/workshops. Bring the whole family and enjoy a morning of games, a bird banding demo, guided hikes and activities involving birds and birding. This festival will bring you and your family up close and personal with the birds of Montana and their magnificent habitat!

Add to your festival experience by participating in the pre-festival canoe trip through the White Cliffs of the Missouri in the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument, or one of the two post-festival field trips to Glacier National Park and Square Butte Natural Area. Audubon members will receive an illustrated brochure after April 1. We look forward to seeing you!



## **MT Audubon Legislative Update**



The 2009 Montana Legislature in Helena is nearing its midway point. With Montana's legislature meeting for only 90 days every other year, each day brings a new challenge to aid in support of progressive environmental policy protection legislation and to stop bills aimed at rolling back previous environmental policies. Nearly 1200 bills have been introduced so far, and of those, MT Audubon is watching about 280 bills.

Janet Ellis and her legislative assistant, Casey Perkins, have testified in support of 20 bills ranging from creating a weatherization account for low income households (which will help combat global warming) to the regulation of aquatic species. We have also testified in opposition to 17 bills that aim to undermine public input, hamper state agencies in the fulfillment of

their duties to protect wildlife and the environment, or otherwise repeal sound environmental protections.

We are excited to announce that one of our priority bills, the Big Sky Rivers Act (HB 455) has a hearing on Thursday, February 19. MT Audubon is also leading efforts on HB 443, which will allow Fish, Wildlife and Parks to manage certain nongame species, including prairie dogs, and HB 584, a bill to consider wildlife friendly siting guidelines for wind farms.

To find out the latest on these bills and our other priorities this session, or to sign up to receive legislative alerts, please visit our website at [www.mtaudubon.org](http://www.mtaudubon.org) or feel free to contact Janet or Casey at [mtmagpie@mtaudubon.org](mailto:mtmagpie@mtaudubon.org) or (406) 443-3949.

## **Colonial Waterbird Inventory: A Citizen Science Opportunity**

The Montana Bird Conservation Partnership is planning a colonial nesting waterbird inventory in 2009 and 2010. This statewide program will provide important information to scientists and managers on waterbirds in Montana and will be used to inform monitoring, research, and habitat projects. The Partnership is seeking volunteers to count nests on one visit at colonies throughout Montana during the month of June. Priority species include: American White Pelican, Clark's Grebe, Forster's Tern, Franklin's Gull, White-faced Ibis, Black-crowned Night-heron, Black Tern, Caspian Tern, and Common Tern. Species of secondary priority include: California Gull, Double-crested Cormorant, Ring-billed Gull, Western Grebe, Eared Grebe, Horned Grebe, Red-necked grebe, and Great-blue Heron. Funds from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks will cover mileage and a small per diem for volunteers. A list of survey areas and protocols will be provided to your Chapter in the near future. This is a great opportunity to get involved in a statewide bird conservation program. To volunteer, contact Catherine Wightman, Bird Conservation Coordinator with Fish, Wildlife and Parks at [cwightman@mt.gov](mailto:cwightman@mt.gov) or 406-490-2329.





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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. Meetings start at 7:00PM and include 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](mailto: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](mailto:pileatedpost@flatheadaudubon.org)**

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