



# the Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

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NOVEMBER 2009

## FAS & GLACIER HIGH STUDENTS CREATE BIRD HABITAT

The following article, written by students from Glacier High School, appeared in the latest issue of the student newspaper, "The Howl."

### Native Plant Bird Habitat

A year ago three dead trees, adorned with suet and sunflower seed feeders, were "planted" outside D & E science rooms in a feeble attempt to attract birds. Nancy Zapotocki of the Flathead Audubon Society was invited to assist in teaching a bird unit to the then Thunderbird team freshman students. She brought numerous bird trunks to Glacier High to illustrate characteristics and identification of birds. After viewing the dead trees with great amusement, Nancy had an idea. If a native garden could be designed outside the D & E science pods, maybe students could observe birds using the new habitat from the comfort of their science rooms.



Shortly after the presentation, Ms. Zapotocki suggested acquiring an Audubon grant to create bird habitat using native plants. The grant was awarded to Glacier High School and Mrs. Langhor approved construction of a native garden. Since its infancy, the native garden has continued to collect supporters. The core group of supporters has grown from the original Audubon Society to include Wind Flower Native Nursery and the Native Plant Society (Terry Divoky), Flathead National Forest (Teresa Wenum and Amy Ja-

cobs), Flathead Conservation District (Patti Mason), Flathead Wood Recycling (Travis Gray and Rachel Olsgaard) and Hoopers Nursery.

Freshmen science students from Pat Allick's, Bonnie Streeter's and Ben Young's classes helped create three "islands" in the lawn outside science pods D & E. Freshmen were assisted by Mrs. Allick's and Mrs. Streeter's Forensics classes and Mrs. Zimmerman's Biology class. Sod was removed and placed in areas close to the track, topsoil was hauled from the new parking area, rich soil was mixed-in with the top soil, edging was laid and staked, native plants were planted, mulch was added and boulders were put in place. Students pulled and collected cheat grass, kochia, and rush skeletonweed to prevent the annual weeds from making a stronghold within our graveled areas. Some native plants have already become dormant, in preparation for the coming winter, while some still display green leaves. Watch this winter to see birds enjoy their new habitat and next spring for colorful native flowers to attract birds and butterflies. Mrs. Patti Mason is working with Mrs. Streeter to secure a grant from DNRC to purchase the last necessary items, a feeding pole, bird feeders, bird bath, a plack, and bird seed; a stump will also soon be added. We are grateful to all the hard work and creativity students provided. Thank you for making Glacier High School the best in the state!

Shortly before press time, we received word that Ferne Cohen has passed away. Ferne was a driving force in Flathead Audubon for many years, a dear friend of many of the group's members, and an inspiration to all who knew her. We will miss her terribly. We extend our deepest sympathies to Marty, Ferne's husband, and to Richard and Jeffrey, their sons. A tribute to Ferne will be published in the December issue of the Post.

### NOVEMBER FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

**Monday, November 9, 2009: Flathead Audubon General Meeting.** 7 PM, The Summit, Conference Room 3. John Fraley presents "Wild River Pioneers." See page 3.

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

# BIRD OF THE MONTH

By Gail Cleveland

## Common Raven — Problem Solver of the Bird World

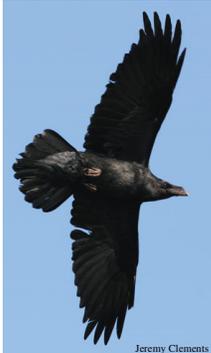
The acrobatic aerial display of two jet black birds soaring, wheeling and tumbling with wingtips touching --- inverted commas in the sky. This spring scene is the mating display of the Common Raven, the largest of the passerines (perching birds) that has "become the most widely naturally disturbed bird in the world, inhabiting the same continents as humans and at home in as many diverse habitats."

How does one distinguish the American Crow from the Common Raven?

In flight, the raven has a wedged-shaped tail, whereas the crow's tail is slightly rounded. Ravens are more slender with long, narrower wings and longer, thinner fingers at the wingtips. If perched, the larger, heavier beak and thick neck with shaggy, spiky throat feathers when they fluff them up are good raven indicators.

Common Ravens are not as social as crows; you tend to see them in pairs or alone except at food sources like landfills or road kills. They prefer to live in open and forest habitats across western and northern North America. Their nests are a mass of sticks and twigs that they will use for several years, built on cliff ledges and cavities or in trees. Ravens nest in single pairs, and evidence indicates that they will remain mated for life.

Ravens do well around people, especially in rural environments but also in some towns and cities. For centuries, they accompanied people on the move, following their wagons, sleds, sleighs and hunting parties in hopes of a quick meal. What do they eat? Anything that is edible and many things that aren't. They take advantage of any available food source. My mother lived several blocks from two fast food restaurants. Daily, she had to clean her bird bath, as a raven was in the habit of washing his French fries and taco bits there before consumption. Or perhaps



Jeremy Clements

he was caching them for a late night snack.

Ravens are carrion eaters. Another useful behavioral clue to identification is that ravens cruise roads looking for road kill; crows normally don't do this. Like the other members of the *Corvid* family (jays, magpies and crows), they store extra food, mostly burying it in the ground or hiding it in trees.

Native American mythology often includes the raven. He is a cultural hero, a trickster or the principal creator figure in many cultures, from the Tlingit of southern to Inuit of northern Alaska. The prominence of the raven in these mythologies may correlate with its purported intelligence.

Recent experiments conducted by Bernd Heinrich and Thomas Bugnyar show that these birds use logic to solve problems and that some of their abilities approach or even surpass those of the great apes. One of the experiments showed true insight when solving problems. Ravens faced with a novel task, such as getting food that is dangling on the end of a string, were able to assess the problem and then use their feet to hold the string and pull the food up. Grownup birds would examine the situation for minutes on end and then perform a multistep procedure on their first try in as little as 30 seconds. Year-old birds required at least six minutes to solve the puzzle, during which they overtly tested possibilities. Young birds (a month or two past fledging) were unable to perform this behavior, so apparently their problem solving abilities increase with age; mature ravens have the ability to test actions



in their minds and project the outcomes of those actions. Wow!

If you are interested in other experiments testing the intelligence of the Common Raven, see the April 2007 Scientific American.



## TIME TO FEED OUR FEATHERED FRIENDS!

FAS is again partnering with WBC (Western Building Centers), a locally owned and operated business for purchase of sunflower seeds. The Sunflower Seed Sale runs through December 31. A portion of the profit from each bag sold will be donated to FAS. Purchase your sunflower seeds in 20-lb or 40-lb bags from WBC's four locations in Flathead Valley: Evergreen, Columbia Falls, Whitefish and south Kalispell.

This Seed Sale is one of Flathead Audubon's major fundraising events of the year and your support is needed to ensure our ongoing commitment to environmental and educational programs in the Flathead Valley. Be sure to thank these fine folks for their ongoing support of Flathead Audubon!

Mary Nelesen, Seed Sale Chairperson





November 2009 Program  
**WILD RIVER PIONEERS**



Montana's wildest river, the Middle Fork of the Flathead River, will be the subject of John Fraley's audio-visual presentation at our November general membership meeting. Fraley's recently-published book **WILD RIVER PIONEERS** is a series of true adventure stories that brings alive the exciting pioneer history of the Middle Fork drainage within Glacier National Park and the Great Bear Wilderness.

Fraley will talk about the natural history of the Middle Fork and present the story of a grizzly bear mauling and rescue high in the mountains in the Middle Fork drainage near Nyack. More than a century ago, prominent Philadelphia surgeon and Boone and Crockett Club member C.B. Penrose shot a white grizzly in a high, untracked backcountry basin below the mountain that now bears his name. This adventurer's gunshot set in motion a chain of fate, bad luck and violence that came together in the naming of several Middle Fork mountains and streams and, by extension, the Great Bear Wilderness.

**WILD RIVER PIONEERS** grew from Fraley's research and travels over the past three decades in the Great Bear Wilderness and Glacier National Park in the Middle Fork drainage. In his research, Fraley used over 200 sources in historical archives, old newspapers and family documents, and interviewed dozens of old-timers over a 20-year period. Coupled with site visits, this allowed the author to accurately reconstruct the events covered in the book. **WILD RIVER PIONEERS** was recently selected as a 2009 Leadership in History Award of Merit Winner by the American Association for State and Local History. John will bring copies of his books to sell and to have autographed.

John Fraley received wildlife degrees from both Montana universities. He has worked for Montana, Fish, Wildlife and Parks for 30 years, mostly in the upper Flathead drainage. His first book, **A WOMAN'S WAY WEST**, was published in 1998 and tells the story of Glacier National Park pioneers Doris and Dan Huffine.

Please join us on Monday, November 9 at 7:00 PM in the Community Room of The Summit at 205 Sunnyview Lane in Kalispell. Everyone is welcome.



**IF YOU HAVEN'T RECEIVED THIS NEWSLETTER,  
 THAT MEANS YOU HAVEN'T RENEWED YOUR  
 FLATHEAD AUDUBON DUES!**



### FAS FIELD TRIPS

Each year, Flathead Audubon offers many field trips. Our field trips range from the National Bison Range, along the shores of Flathead Lake, and all the way to Glacier National Park. Many of our excursions are so popular that we offer them every year. As field trip chairman, it has been my pleasure to call folks who have volunteered their time in the past to lead trips. Their enthusiasm to lead again makes my job much easier. To all of you, a big **THANK YOU!!**

We are always looking for new volunteers who may have a favorite birding spot they are willing to share. This past April, Pete Smith provided our birders with an opportunity to hear and observe Barred Owls on the eastside of the valley. This was a new field trip and a big thanks to you, Pete, for making this new one possible.

If any of you know of a birding spot or are willing to lead a trip, please call me at 250-5205 or 257-2359. I look forward to hearing from you.

Bill Schustrom, Field Trip Chairman

### MONTANA AUDUBON MEMBERS HEAD FOR D.C.



I will be attending a Global Warming & Advocacy Training Workshop sponsored by National Audubon in Washington, DC, October 18-21, 2009. Out of 17 participants, 3 were selected from Montana, so we must have some clout!

The two day workshop will focus on grassroots, media, and lobby training that will equip us with the skills needed to be more effective advocates for solutions to global warming. On the third day of the training we will meet with our Representative and Senators on Capitol Hill. I will report back next month.

Linda de Kort



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*Most of us go to our grave with our music still inside of us.*

### Thanks!

...to all those below who have made special donations to Flathead Audubon since September, 2009.

- |                           |        |                      |
|---------------------------|--------|----------------------|
| Snowy Owl                 | \$250+ | Anonymous            |
| Merlin                    | \$100+ | Bob Lee              |
|                           |        | Jim Dimond           |
|                           |        | Mike & Jill Fanning  |
|                           |        | Bob & Jane Lopp      |
| Kestrel                   | \$50+  | Doris Causey         |
| My Own Vision             | \$25+  | Anonymous            |
| Supporting Member + extra |        | Albert Dufresne      |
|                           |        | Kristin Bruninga     |
|                           |        | Bob Lopp             |
|                           |        | Barbara Boorman      |
|                           |        | Rod McIver           |
|                           |        | Richard Kuhl         |
|                           |        | Robert & Inez Love   |
|                           |        | Linda & Frank Dekort |



Jeannie Marcure



### RECYCLING NEWS

For our new (or returning but newly interested) members, here's the skinny on Flathead Audubon's recycling process. In an effort to save trees, space in the county landfill, time and gasoline for individual trips to the recycling center, we partner with the Green Team and Recycling Club of Flathead Valley Community College. An Americorps volunteer assigned to the college and members of the Recycling Club bring a truck and/or trailer to the north parking lot of The Summit on the evenings of our general meetings. They usually arrive at about 6:30 PM and park at the west end of the lot. From 6:30 to 7:00 PM, members are encouraged to drive past the trailer and drop off recyclables. Our entire load gets hauled to the recycling center for us and any proceeds go to a special fund that awards scholarships to local FVCC students. In next month's Pileated Post, we will provide an updated list of recyclables that are accepted. So if you haven't recycled with Audubon before this, now is a great time to try it out. Save up a few milk bottles or newspapers and do a little "drive-by recycling!"

#### Funds Available for Wildlife Projects

Montana Audubon will offer grant money totaling more than \$1,400 to fund projects that benefit wildlife. Preference will be given to research and/or education projects that focus on nongame wildlife and their habitats. The funds may be used for mileage, supplies, equipment, printing, and communications.

Last year we funded Flammulated Owl research in western Montana, resurveying of historic pika locations in Southwestern Montana to determine population persistence in the face of climate change, a native habitat for field studies at Glacier High School in Kalispell, and development of a nature trail along the Milk River in Malta.

Applications must be postmarked on or before December 15, 2009. Grant winners will be notified by February 1, 2010. Audubon Wildlife Fund guidelines can be requested by mail (Montana Audubon, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624), phone (406-443-3949), or downloaded from our website [www.mtaudubon.org](http://www.mtaudubon.org).

### SPECIAL GIFTS

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

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



Dave Menke, USFWS

\*\*\*\*

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:

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Please make checks payable to:

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Kalispell, MT 59904

Your gift is tax deductible.



## “Just Another day at the Office”

By Board Member, Ansley Ford

Picture this: SEVENTY excited sixth graders. Shouting. Running. In the woods. Is this a place you want to be? This is something I love.

Here's why I love my job. On a clear, crisp October morning, instead of going to an office and sitting behind a desk, I get to go to the woods. I get to share my excitement about nature with the best possible audience -- sixth graders! They are enthusiastic about EVERYTHING... (“Mrs. Ford! Look at this huge leaf!” “Mrs. Ford! I found a raccoon track!” “Look Mrs. Ford, I brought a thermos of hot chocolate!”)

We are spending the day at Owen Sowerwine Natural Area. As a culmination to our ecology unit in science class, we are here to explore a Riparian area, an ecosystem rich with life. We are here to learn while we explore and play along the river. Between games of “Eagle Eye” and observation relay races, students learn about the diverse species that inhabit this gem of a habitat.

Students walk in pairs along the banks of the Stillwater River. Binoculars hang from their necks, and eyes are peeled for birdlife. The students are great observers, and notice signs of birds nesting in the banks of the river. They learn that the smaller holes are from the Swallows, who have headed south by now, ready to winter in warmer climes. The larger holes may have been made by Kingfishers. Lucky students may hear the chatter of one above the sound of their own chatter. The morning is icy cold; the water birds are slow to wake up today.

Meanwhile, forest birds are everywhere. Flickers are calling loud and clear, Bohemian waxwings are flying in small flocks from berry bush to berry bush, and friendly Black-capped Chickadees approach groups of children that whistle at them.

By the ponds, students complete an ecological survey, locating as many species as they can in a given section of land and water. Snails are abundant, and quite exciting to find. Students squeal with delight over gigantic ant hills; hundreds of red ants are teeming in and around the mounds. Students stand in amazement over the series of large holes they find above the ponds. They hypothesize in groups... “I think they're fox dens.” “I think they're muskrat holes, with tunnels leading to the ponds.” Other students predict that gophers, badgers, or even bears dug the holes. We have fun comparing guesses. That's what science is all about - *wondering* about the amazing things that surround us in this world, *delighting* in the simple things, like the warm glow of golden leaves on the Cottonwood trees, the mysterious tracks in the mud, or the shining red berries on a bush.

Children are full of wonder, full of vigor and excitement for life and learning. They love to be outside, love to explore and discover. They *need* this connection to nature. We all do. So spend some time outside this fall. Try seeing things again as a child would, and wonder at the beauty that surrounds us all here in the Flat-head Valley.



## OWEN SOWERWINE WORK/FUN DAY A GREAT SUCCESS



To the 37 people who pulled together, made trails more passable, put in two bridges and finished a beautiful and professionally appointed kiosk – give yourselves a well-deserved pat on the back! You did wonders!

And thanks to our home-base personnel (Lois and Barb), we were all accounted for and well-supplied with nice treats. Our crew members came from the local neighborhood, as well as from the greater Kalispell area, Whitefish, Bigfork, Columbia Falls, West Glacier, Rogers Lake, and Eureka. Amazingly, 37 people totaled 111 hours of volunteer public service in just one short Saturday morning!

This year, we tackled the Big Island and its weeds. Terry and Kay were the canoe guides for the Weed Team, who pulled and cut 24-30 big

bags of weeds. The Kiosk Krew headed by Ben made and installed the logo for OSNA, the maps, and visitor information. They added Plexiglas to protect the materials from the weather.

The kiosk is now (finally!) up to date, as well as being a real masterpiece. “The trails were cleaned and mowed in record time,” reported Bob Lee, President of FAS. Mowing was done by Bob Smith, chief billy goat herder. The bridges were assembled, leveled at the ends, and “almost” completely planked with treated decking. The Bridge Crew also built a new trail section to access the major portion of the Greenridge Trail. Bridge Crew members went into overtime to finish the two bridges, but before they ran out of energy, ....

(OSNA Work/Fun Day, continued on next page...)





# RAPTORS GALORE!



## Jewel Basin Hawk Watch

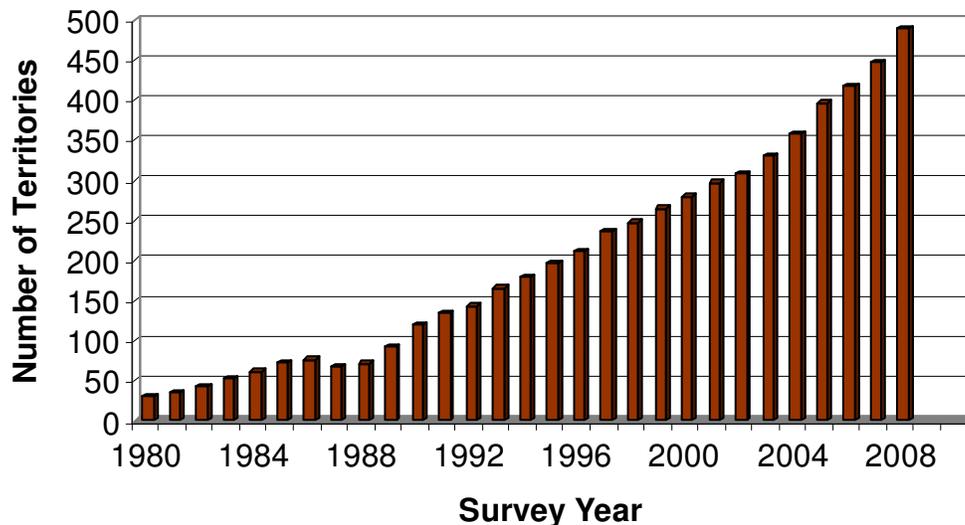
This fall, FAS contributed \$1500 to The American Bird Conservancy to help pay for the Hawk Watch on Mount Aeneas in Jewel Basin. The site was discovered by Dan Casey, the person responsible for the watch this year and last. The money insured that the migrating raptors were counted every day by qualified people. Dan selected the site because it appeared to have a very large number of migrating accipiters flying past. It turns out the site probably has the highest number of migrating accipiters of any known place in the state. The counts will help in understanding both the numbers and the migrating patterns of accipiters. From August 30 through October 17, 1286 accipiters were counted together with 200 golden eagles and a total of 1942 raptors. The numbers are consistent with last year's counts. From Mike Fanning

## BALD EAGLE SUCCESS STORY CONTINUES

Results are in from the 2008 nesting season for bald eagles and it's good news! Kristi DuBois, non-game wildlife biologist for MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks reports that 490 territories are now known in Montana, an increase of 57 over the previous year. Monitoring at varying intensities occurred on 411 territories and showed that 344 were active and 292 were monitored sufficiently to know the fate of the nesting attempt. The 247 known to be successful produced 428 young. The success rate of known-fate nests was 85% and the average brood size was 1.73 fledged per successful nest. These production numbers are comparable to previous years and indicate that Montana's bald eagle population continues to do well and increase.

Montana's bald eagle population has shown a steady increase since 1980, due to a concerted effort by many agencies and organizations, and the increase has continued since bald eagles were removed from the Endangered Species List in 2007. From Lewis Young, Conservation Chair

**Montana Bald Eagle Nesting Population, 1980-2008**



OSNA Work/Fun Day, continued... their battery powered drills did! So a small amount of work remains, to take the bridges from "almost" to "finished." Richard Kuhl did lots of prep work prior to the Work Day, to make things flow smoothly. About 75% of our bridge materials were donated by Western Building Centers – thanks, WBC!

Now for the dessert: We have been sponsored by Prudential's Jane Lopp & Associates for a Global Volunteer Day challenge grant. Jane Lopp and her husband Bob are active members of our Audubon

chapter. Jane is our transportation expert on the OSNA Volunteer Work Day. Jane Lopp & Associates have sponsored us since 2002 – that's 8 years! If our challenge grant application is accepted, our chapter has a chance to be awarded \$1000. We sincerely appreciate the support we have received from this local business. Thanks, Jane Lopp & Associates!

Let's look forward to next year's Volunteer Day. In the meantime, visit OSNA. It's a real wild gem. Brent Mitchell, OSNA Co-Chair





NOVEMBER 2009



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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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**COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

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| Christmas Bird Count | Dan Casey      | 857-3143 |
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| Education            | Ansley Ford    | 857-6788 |
| Field Trips          | Bill Schustrom | 257-2359 |
| Finance              | Mike Fanning   | 862-8070 |
| Hospitality          | Lois Drobish   | 756-7405 |
| Membership           | Mike Fanning   | 862-8070 |
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| Natural Area         | Linda Winnie   | 755-1406 |
| Newsletter           | Linda Winnie   | 755-1406 |
|                      | Kay Mitchell   | 756-8130 |
| Nominations          | Linda deKort   | 755-3704 |
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| Publicity            | Paula Smith    | 837-0181 |
| Sales                | Jill Fanning   | 862-8070 |

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| Refuge Projects | Kathy Ross     | ( <a href="mailto:mtkat@montanaport.net">mtkat@montanaport.net</a> )           |
| Website         | Melissa Sladek | ( <a href="mailto:mssladek72@gmail.com">mssladek72@gmail.com</a> )             |
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Board President: Larry McEvoy  
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**FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY**



**Membership**  
Individual or Family

- Basic Membership ..... \$20  
(Pays for newsletter and operating costs)
- Supporting Membership ..... \$35  
(Extra \$15 funds local projects such as grants, scholarships, meetings, and Christmas Bird Count )
- Additional Donation of ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
to Education Fund
- Owen Sowerwine Fund
- Wherever needed

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