



the Silent Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

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CARLSONS HONORED FOR CONSERVATION ACHIEVEMENT



Milt and B.J. Carlson will be recognized for their support of conservation and proper land use planning by Flathead Audubon at its March meeting. They will be presented with the first Conservation Achievement Recognition of 2010.

As members of Flathead Land Trust, Flathead Lakers, Citizens For A Better Flathead, Flathead Tomorrow and The Glacier Institute, the Carlsons have worked to insure the Flathead area remains an attractive place in which to live. They have been generous with both their time and their donations.

Milt is a stalwart member of the Flathead Land Trust. He was either a board member or treasurer for 10 years. The Carlsons set an example for others by donating several easements on 26 acres of land along the Stillwater River, a short distance downstream from Flathead Valley Community College. These easements protect important wetlands and bench lands bordering the Stillwater.

Both B.J. and Milt have worked hard to promote proper land use planning in the Flathead. They are founding members of Citizens For A Better Flathead. B.J. was a staff volunteer and served as co-chair. Milt served on the City-County Planning Board. As a member of North 93 Neighbors, B.J. helped initi-

ate a lawsuit against the Flathead County Commissioners challenging the legality of a growth policy amendment and related zoning changes to accommodate a proposed mall by Bucky Wolford. Partly as a result of this lawsuit, the mall design was renegotiated to make it more acceptable. More importantly for future planning issues, the lawsuit resulted in a 2006 Montana Supreme Court decision that established the important legal ruling that county officials must give full consideration to public comment when deciding planning issues.

The Carlsons' advocacy of conservation issues has sometimes resulted in hateful criticism from opponents. Despite these personal attacks, Milt and B.J. have always responded to criticism with civility and worked to persuade people to express their views without personal rancor.

Audubon's award is for conservation achievement but it should be noted that B.J. and Milt have supported a vast array of civic causes and organizations. They are premier examples of good citizens. Flathead Audubon is proud to recognize their contributions to the betterment of life in the Flathead Valley.

By Richard Kuhl

FAS Conservation Education will have a box at the March 8 FAS General Meeting to collect food for the Kalispell Food Bank. We're doing this in partnership with the Northwest MT Educational Co-op. Please bring a canned or boxed food item to contribute. We educate and work with so many children and families in the Flathead; we want to help those who may be in need at this time of year.

MARCH FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR



Monday, March 8, 2010: Flathead Audubon General Meeting. 7 PM, The Summit, Conference Room 3. Steve Kohler presents a program on Montana butterflies and their food. See page 3.

Monday, March 1, 2010: Flathead Audubon Board of Directors Meeting. 6 PM at 295 Third Ave. E.N. All are welcome.

Saturday-Sunday, March 27-28, 2010: Field Trip to Freezout Lake. Full details on page 6.

Wednesdays, April 7, 14, 21 & 28, 2010: Beauty of Birds Classes. See page 3 for details!

BIRD OF THE MONTH

By Gail Cleveland

GET A BUZZ FROM THE TOWNSEND'S WARBLER

High up near the tip top of a fir tree in Glacier Park, I can hear the distinctive song of one of my favorite Northwest Montana warblers. If I am lucky, he may come out and sing from the top of the tree, but I am not getting my hopes up. I also didn't bring my neck brace, which would definitely be handy when looking for these tree top singers. When he does come into view, this medium-sized wood-warbler is strikingly arrayed with an olive green back, a black throat, a large yellow eye patch with a black stripe, a yellow breast with white underbelly and two white wing bars, making this Townsend's Warbler arguably among the most beautiful birds of western North America.



The Townsend's is one of five North American black-throated warblers. The Black-throated Green is primarily an eastern bird, which also nests north of us in Alberta and Saskatchewan. The Hermit is primarily a west coast bird, along with the Black-throated Gray which is also a western interior bird. The rarest of these black-throats is the Golden-cheeked, which can be found only in a small part of central Texas.

The Townsend's breeding range is west of the Rocky Mountains and includes parts of Alaska south through much of British Columbia to the Olympic Peninsula in Washington and to the mountains of western Montana, the Idaho panhandle and northeast Oregon. The habitats of the Hermit and Townsend's Warbler overlap. Researchers believe that Townsend's are displacing Hermit Warblers in these zones because they are more aggressive at attracting females and have larger clutches of eggs. There have been examples of hybridization of the two species as well.

The winter range for our Townsend's Warbler extends from southeast Arizona and southwestern Texas to extensive regions of Mexico all the way to Costa Rica. The West Coast Townsend's actually winters on the Pacific coast from British Columbia to southern California.

The black-throated warblers have songs that are distinctive from other warblers and similar to each other. I call them the "zoo zee" warblers. For me, they are the easiest warblers to identify. Whether I have been in Glacier Park or on the West Coast, in a Utah desert or lucky enough to hear a Golden-Cheeked in Central Texas, their wheezy, buzzy notes make me stop in my tracks and say "a black-throated warbler." My general moniker for these lovelies is "zee zee zoo zee." Although each has a different song, this general pattern will identify a black-throated warbler.

I have never seen a Townsend's nest, as it is typically high up in the canopy and well concealed by foliage. It is a bulky cap of grass, moss, bark strips, and twigs, lined with hair, feathers and moss. The female, a duller version of the male without a black throat but still with the distinctive yellow eye patch, incubates 3 to 5 eggs for 11 to 14 days. Both male and female feed the young, which leave the nest about 10 days after hatching.

They feed primarily on insects on their breeding grounds, although berries and some nectar round out their winter diet in warm climates.

Our Townsend's arrive here in mid-May and often stopover in the valley if the high country is still wintry. They can sometimes be seen feeding in lower branches of the valley conifers before they ascend to their breeding grounds. In June and early July when they are still singing, two good spots to hear and/or see them are on the Big Mountain or in Glacier National Park.

If you are interested in hearing and seeing this beautiful black-throated warbler, familiarize yourself with its song by visiting <http://www.flatheadaudubon.org/content/birds/songs/index.htm> and clicking on Townsend's Warbler, or purchase a Flathead Audubon Society Local Bird Songs CD at the monthly meeting.



A Huge Thank You to All FAS Members

As all of you know, FAS has a large budget hole to fill each year in order to get the \$10,000 we need to match The Sustainability Fund's donation of \$10,000 to our education program. This year we raised our dues and asked for additional donations. The membership responded very generously. Dues were up to \$5100 from \$3100 last year. Donations were \$3300, not counting two special \$2000 donations. This was truly amazing membership support, especially given the current state of the economy. The Board of Directors is very grateful and will assure that the money is well spent. The education program has been a great success and, with this kind of support, will continue to be.

Mike Fanning, Finance Committee Chair





March 2010 Program BUTTERFLIES OF MONTANA--LARVAL FOOD PLANT STUDIES



At our March meeting, Steve Kohler will present a fascinating talk about his work on the food plants of butterfly larvae. Even with all the studies that have been done with butterflies over the years, there are still a number of species about which little is known of the life cycle or biology, including their larval food plants. This is especially true for Montana, a very large state where few people have been actively and seriously studying butterflies. Steve will also give an update on the Montana Butterfly Project, including new discoveries, distribution information and work on the Montana butterfly book. And Steve will show and discuss photos of many of Montana's diverse habitats and the butterflies that inhabit them.

Steve received a BS degree in Entomology and MS degree in Wildlife Biology from Utah State University. He worked for the Nebraska and Utah Fish and Wildlife Departments before moving to Missoula in 1970. Insects, especially butterflies, have been a lifelong interest of Steve's. After a career of 33 years as a forest entomologist with the Montana Department of Natural Resources, he retired in 2004 to devote more time to studying butterflies. He has a large research collection of butterflies from all over the world, including Montana. Steve has published several papers on butterfly taxonomy and continues to work on his Montana butterfly book.

Be sure to join us at the FAS general membership meeting, March 8 at 7:00 PM in the Community Room of The Summit, 205 Sunnyview Lane in Kalispell. Also at the meeting, Milt and B.J. Carlson will be presented with Flathead Audubon's Conservation Achievement Recognition (see page 1).

Ed. Note: Last month, our results of the 2009 Christmas Bird Counts inadvertently left out our Eureka CBC report. With apologies to Eureka members, here are your tallies!

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2009 EUREKA AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Lewis Young, Compiler

The 17th annual Eureka Christmas Bird Count was conducted on December 19, 2009. Twenty-one field observers and 18 feeder watchers counted 51 species of birds and 1364 individual birds. Although it rained most of the morning, overall it was generally a fair to good day for birding. Over the 17 years of the Eureka Christmas Count, the number of species sighted in any one year has ranged from a low of 42 in 1993 to a high of 66 in 2006. Altogether, a total of 107 species have been sighted over the 17 years.

Some of the most numerous birds sighted were wild turkey, common raven, Bohemian waxwing, mallard and American goldfinch. By contrast, only 1-5 individuals were sighted for 19 species with a few examples being, lesser scaup, golden eagle, hooded merganser, and pine grosbeak.

One species new to the Eureka count was sighted on count day this year—Eurasian collared-dove. The first recorded sighting in the Eureka area was in the spring of 2007 and this year the Eurasian collared-doves outnumbered mourning doves! Another new species, spotted towhee, was seen during count week but not on count day.

Record high counts were made for Western grebes, wild turkey, northern flicker, northern goshawk, horned grebe, rough-legged hawk, black-billed magpie, American goldfinch, and bald eagle. Absent for the second year in a row was the Canada goose.





BEAUTY OF BIRDS



Spring is just around the corner ...

Can you believe it? Early signs of spring have already begun. Great Horned Owls are hooting at night, black-capped Chickadees are singing their spring tunes, and it won't be long until our early migratory birds show up. It can be a little tricky to remember who's who and what's what after a long, quiet winter. Many of us could use a refresher course each spring as we welcome back our old friends. Beauty of Birds, Flathead Audubon's spring birding course, may be just what you're looking for. Whether you're a seasoned birder looking for a review, or someone brand new to birding, this course is for you! During four evening sessions, we cover interesting topics like common birds, field marks, songs and calls, field guides and binoculars, and we even take a field trip to Smith Lake a local birding hotspot!

The series is offered for \$10, and classes are held Wednesday evenings in April from 6-8:00 PM at Flathead High School. For more information and to register, please call FHS at 751-3500.




HELP FLATHEAD AUDUBON'S TREASURY NO \$\$\$ REQUIRED!

When you switch from hard copy to e-delivery of your *PILEATED POST*, you save FAS about \$20 a year. Not much, you say? Well, \$20 will buy a bluebird house, a pair of binoculars for a kid, or pay for more than half of one of our great monthly programs. Email indawin@centurytel.net to get 'er done!



BOARD MEMBER VIEWPOINT

From Ben Young



"What is that?" my nephew whispered with excitement. The monotonous hoots of a Northern Saw-whet Owl from within the riparian willows were quick to greet us, as I led my brother and his boys on an owl trip in SE Idaho this past Presidents' Day weekend. "What is it?"

That's the kind of question that makes me giddy. As a science teacher, it's the question that I long to hear my students ask, knowing that such an expression of curiosity has the potential to take them down an adventurous road of exploration and problem-solving. It's the kind of question that drives a kid to chase every chirp and peep in his backyard forest until he knows each one's origin; to awake at 1:00 AM just to fix one's gaze upon a full September moon through a spotting scope and pick out the silhouettes of migrating Swainson's thrushes; to slog through thigh-deep mud and endure a thousand mosquito bites en route to seeing their first ruff; or, as was the case on this night, to take a night hike in Idaho's Snake River canyon in hopes of finding owls.

Unfortunately, it seems as though few individuals, especially today's youth, have an awareness of what lies beyond their cell phone, television, or computer screen. "I never knew there were so many birds here," is a comment I hear often from my students. How can one interact positively with his or her environment without awareness of what's in it? How can youth understand how their actions impact their environment if they don't know what surrounds them?

It was a memorable night for my nephews. By night's end we had encountered four owl species, been startled by three porcupines, and flushed a flock of white-crowned sparrows and quail that had settled in the riparian thicket. I hope to continue what my mentors Scott Smithson and Don Powers did for me: take a friend out birding and let the birds speak for themselves. I would encourage you to share your hobby and passion for birds with someone else on your next birding excursion, as it may open up an entirely new world to them.



Shuffle Board—A Report from President Bob Lee



The FAS Board may seem to be a rather mysterious entity, but really it's not. This group of about 20 gets together on the first Monday of the month. Each Board meeting involves lively discussion on topics affecting Audubon. A major topic each month is, of course, our budget. Bruce Tannehill, Treasurer, does a great job of keeping on top of the cache. Other matters include Education, a very active committee overseeing the Education Coordinator and planning Beauty of Birds, Rod Ash Raptor Days, Family Forestry Expo and others. The Owen Sowerwine and Conservation committees have plenty to do, too. In addition to renegotiating a lease with DNRC, Linda and Brent have been investigating riprap projects that may affect OSNA. Lewis and Steve stay on top of conservation issues and have written several comment letters, including those concerning Haskill Mountain and fishing regulations in the Park. As a Board, we are drafting a letter to Senator Tester, generally supporting his Jobs and Recreation bill. Of course, programs are a vital issue and ideas for speakers are bounced around, as are hospitality and sales issues.

Conservation Recognition Awards are discussed and a member agrees to research the candidate. Recently Steve has been looking into how we might better interact with the community through potential links with the Visitors Bureau and the Conservation Roundtable. Melissa updates us on the website, and potential fund-raising projects are kicked around. We just gave a small grant to Linda Roberts, a teacher at Eureka Elementary, for binoculars to support her bird program. And we wind up with an overview of the upcoming Pileated Post articles. Quite a bit is accomplished in a fairly short time. Board meetings are held at Jane Lopp and Associates' office. We start at 5:30 with a potluck and get to business around 6:00. Everyone is invited to attend ... this is where the business really takes place.



Montana Audubon's Annual Bird Festival



Montana Audubon, Five Valleys and Bitterroot Audubon Chapters are hosting a fantastic festival June 4 - 6. Fifteen field trips on Saturday range from the local Clark Fork River Grass Valley Important Bird Area to a 750-acre working cattle ranch west of Frenchtown. Saturday's lunch speaker is Kate Stone. Saturday evening features a social hour, banquet, silent auction, and fabulous raffle items, as well as the dessert auction. Sunday has 15 exciting field trips, ranging from a beautiful drive to Up-sata Lake to a 6-mile hike through Douglas Fir and Ponderosa Pine forests. Information about conservation, habitat, and research projects will be shared. There will be something to meet everyone's fitness level and birding interest. More detailed information will be posted in early March at <http://mtaudubon.org>. Until then, **save the date** and plan to be in Missoula in early June! *Group sizes will be limited so register early!*

FEATHERS, FLOCKS & FUN!

Young Knowledgeable Many Lakes Birder Adds To The GBBC

Many of you know the enthusiastic youthful birder, Travis Harlen, as he and his parents, Sonjia and Kirk have participated in past Christmas counts and the GBBC. This year they participated in the GBBC once again from the Many Lakes area and have shared some of their numbers. Travis is counting every day and so far on Friday and Saturday had seen 6 Blue Jays, 5 Chestnut-backed, 5 Black-capped, and 4 Mountain Chickadees, 1 Brown Creeper, 5 Pine Siskins, 1 Downy Woodpecker, White-breasted and Red-breasted Nuthatches, 2 Flickers, and 1 Raven.

I had the pleasure of taking Travis, Sonjia and Kirk on a skiing field trip to the Swan Wildlife Refuge earlier this month. Travis shared some of his delightful citizen scientist projects with me, as well as many observations he has made monitoring his feeders. We will all look forward to hearing more from him in the future. He is a keen and knowledgeable observer of the natural world, as well as a very creative designer of bird feeders. More on that in the future.

At the refuge, Travis pointed out the numerous Goldeneyes, the Chickadee that greeted us as we entered the refuge and with his "eagle eyes" (speaking of eagles, he had identified 3 Balds on the way to the refuge) spotted a wonderful nest camouflaged in the cattails. We believe it was built by a Marsh Wren. We were able to identify the tracks of Blue Heron, Coyote, Otter and maybe even the delicate prints of a Bobcat. It was a great pleasure to share information and experiences with Travis and his folks.

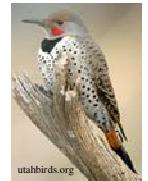


By Kathy Ross

Whitefish Wonders at the Winter Birds!

Flathead Audubon "adopted" Whitefish Middle School for the Great Background Bird Count (GBBC) on February 15. Education Committee volunteer Aurialle Cohen and I had a fun morning observing and counting birds with 55 seventh grade students in Mrs. Parr's Science classes. Kerrie Byrne, who taught 5th grade for District 44 for many years graciously allowed us look for birds at the feeders and habitat in her backyard.

Spending about 45 minutes with each class, we began inside with basic bird ID, how to use binoculars and a review of the common birds in the area. Aurialle's pet dove, Mel, modeled again for bird ID, while this time flying around the room so much he finally had to be put in his cage! He sure demonstrated wings and tail feathers in flight very well! Students were laughing and observing, as colors of out-stretched wings and tail were identified and called out. We then went outside to listen to, look for and record sightings of birds for the GBBC. The data will be entered and shared in the national database. *Species that students observed: Mallard, Rock Pigeon, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, American Crow, Blue Jay, Black-billed Magpie, Black-capped and Mountain Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, American Robin, European Starling, House Sparrow, and House Finch.*



This year, FAS coordinated counts between Whitefish Middle School, West Glacier Elementary, Kalispell Middle School, Somers Middle School and a Brownie Troop. This allowed students and teachers to share more detailed data locally and see similarities and differences in counts from different habitats. Laura Law with Glacier National Park lead the count at West Glacier School, Linda DeKort with the local Brownie Troop in West Valley, Gina Garlie at Kalispell Middle School and Ansley Ford at Somers Middle School. "We did have fun! I think we'll try to do one every week. Some of the students are really getting the bug to go birding which is very fun," from Gina Garlie, Science Teacher, Kalispell Middle School. 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.!

By Nancy Zapotocki, FAS Conservation Educator



Somers Students Commune With Nature

Getting out of class to take a walk in the woods is *always* fun for kids, especially when you're 12 years old, it's the Friday before Valentine's Day, and all that your teacher has been talking about for the last five weeks is this week's chemistry test and the upcoming sixth grade science fair! Sometimes kids just need a *break*, a chance to get outside, get some exercise, and visit with friends. Little did they know we were *observing, hypothesizing, and collecting data* as we enjoyed the fresh air and balmy weather on Friday. Teachers are good at making learning fun, and the GBBC (Great Backyard Bird Count) is a perfect way to do just that! Here we were, doing important biological data collection, and every student was *engaged, smiling, and having fun*. It didn't matter how many birds we found, we were just happy to be outside, learning in disguise. Oh, and by the way, we saw over 60 birds of 13 species, the highlight being a bald eagle that stayed perched on a nearby snag long enough for all the kids to see him up close through the binoculars!

(Species recorded: house finch, flicker, starling, bald eagle, Canada goose, magpie, pheasant, gull spp., mallard, black-capped chickadee, song sparrow, hairy woodpecker, raven.)

By Ansley Ford, Education Chair

Freezout Lake Snow Goose Migration: A Rite of Spring



The annual Flathead Audubon trip to witness the extraordinary concentration of Snow Geese at the Freezout Lake Wildlife Management Area south of Choteau is once again scheduled for the last weekend in March. Every year, the majority of the Pacific Flyway population of Snow Geese stops at this wonderful wetland complex and the surrounding barley fields, to rest and refuel on their trip from their central California wintering grounds to arctic nesting areas (some as far away as Russia). Their daily comings and goings against the backdrop of the Rocky Mountain Front make for an incredible spectacle. In past years we have seen as many as 400,000 or more geese, and most years we see well over 100,000. Thousands of Tundra Swans, tens of thousands of Northern Pintails, American Wigeons, and a wide variety of other waterfowl add to the excitement, and often the first White Pelicans, shorebirds and Franklin's Gulls of the spring are also seen.



This year's trip is scheduled for Saturday and Sunday, March 27 - 28 and will be led by Dan Casey. We will

meet at the west end of the Super 1 parking lot on First Avenue East in downtown Kalispell Saturday morning at 10:00, and will caravan/carpool to Choteau, planning on being at Freezout in time for the afternoon "fly-out" of the geese. After dinner and a night in Choteau, we will head back out before daybreak to again watch the geese leave the lake, leaving to head home sometime shortly after noon, once the geese have flown back in from the fields. We should arrive back in Kalispell by 5:00 PM Sunday. Dan will provide a suggested schedule and route, and will lead the group, but attendees can choose to follow the geese as much or as little as the weather (cold and windy) and the birds allow.

You will need to make your own arrangements for lodging. The options include the Bella Vista (466-5711), the Big Sky (466-5318), the Gunther (466-5444), or the Stage Stop (888-466-5900). Contact Dan if you have questions about the trip, at 857-3143 or daniel-casey55@gmail.com.



Have You Seen the Clark's Nutcracker?

By Monika Maier



Imagine you are hiking in Glacier Park. It's a clear summer day, and you can feel the warm sun on the back of your neck. You breathe in the fresh air and admire the wildflowers lining the trail. As you pass a weathered-looking pine tree, you hear a loud "kraaa-kraaa!" along with the whistling wing beats of a bird that flies over your head to land in the tree. You look up and see a gray bird, bigger than a robin but smaller than a crow. For a second you think, *Gray Jay?*, but then you notice the long bill, the black and white patterned wings and tail feathers. It's a Clark's Nutcracker!

The Montana Field Guide lists the Clark's Nutcracker as a species of concern. Indeed, you have to search far and wide to see one of these beautiful birds in northwest Montana. They are truly fascinating creatures: during the summer they collect thousands of pine seeds and cache them in the ground and in trees. They have a remarkable memory, and in the winter and spring, when food is scarce, they return to their caches and retrieve the seeds.

Unfortunately, one of the nutcrackers' major food source—whitebark pine—is in decline. A fungal pathogen, white pine blister rust, has infected and killed most of the region's whitebark pine trees. Whitebark pine is a keystone species that supports many of Montana's subalpine ecosystems. If whitebark pine is going to survive, Clark's Nutcracker needs to stick around. These two species have a very interesting relationship: nutcrackers rely on whitebark pine for food, and whitebark pine relies on nutcrackers for seed dispersal. When nutcrackers store their seeds, they usually end up caching more than they need to survive. Those seeds that are left in the ground are allowed to germinate and grow. This is how whitebark pine seeds are sown.

I am studying Clark's Nutcracker in and around Glacier National Park. Through my research, I hope to be able to discover ways to ensure that Clark's Nutcracker will not become extinct in northwest Montana. I need your help! This spring and summer I'll be in the Glacier area, mist-netting nutcrackers and observing their behavior. Nutcrackers are difficult to find, and I won't be able to collect enough data if I spend most of my time looking for those stealthy birds. Could you let me know if you see any Clark's Nutcracker in or around Glacier Park? Thanks for helping me as I work to save northwest Montana's Clark's Nutcracker and whitebark pine!

Monika Maier is a Master's student in the biology program at Utah State University. She is returning to Montana this spring for her second field season studying Clark's Nutcrackers in Glacier National Park. If you would like to report a nutcracker sighting, or if you have questions about her project, you can reach her at monika.e.maier@gmail.com. Happy birding!

Thanks!

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

Kestrel Sandy and Dana Yudovin
In Memory of Ferne Cohen



My Own Vision Edward and Margaret Gray
In Memory of Ferne Cohen



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

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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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Kalispell, MT 59904

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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!



SCIENCE TIDBIT



PLUME TRADE

The Birder's Handbook, pages 37-39

Paul R. Ehrlich, David S. Dobkin, and Darryl Wheye

Many people do not know that there is a Federal law against collecting dead birds, their feathers, eggs or nests. From our position at the beginning of the 21st century, it seems ridiculous. One of the many fine articles on bird biology in The Birder's Handbook explains the necessity for this law.

In 1886 ornithologist Frank Chapman, taking two walks on the streets of Manhattan, saw 700 women wearing hats, three quarters of which had bird feathers in them. He was able to count 40 species of wild birds including Northern Saw-Whet Owl, Red-headed Woodpecker, Eastern Bluebird and Wilson's warbler. The commercial value of bird feathers was to rise to 2 – 5 times the price per ounce of gold! A number of species (especially the herons) were at risk of being hunted to extinction. No law protected the birds until The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, so it is unclear whether it was the Act, changing fashion, or WWI that saved so many species. What is clear is that there is reason to fear the extinction of birds when they become valuable after they have been killed.

From Bruce Tannehill

Remember to sign up for Voices for the North Fork Campaign! Last week's announcement from British Columbia was cause for celebration, but there is still work to be done! Send requests to info@headwatersmontana.org. Ask to receive an update on the North Fork.

From Dave Hadden

Audubon's licensed products team has just launched *The Audubon Color Collection* featuring Olympic Paint palettes inspired by nature. Available in a Zero VOC, low odor formula (interior only), *The Audubon Color Collection* is available exclusively at Lowe's.

Third Season of OSNA VOLUNTEER MONITORING PROGRAM Begins CAN YOU HELP?

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



Flathead Audubon is now in its 14th year of managing the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area.

Our VOLUNTEER MONITORING PROGRAM, now two years old, has come to play a crucial role in our management efforts. Monitoring visits made by participants in the Program allow us keep track of what is happening at Owen Sowerwine – what birds, 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, how visitors are using the Area, and much more.

The third season of this highly successful Program is now beginning. So once again this year, ...

WE ARE ASKING 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! It is easy and fun! And it is a chance to learn more about Owen Sowerwine and what is there. Monitors use the Owen Sowerwine Monitoring Checklist to send us information on what they see. The Checklist and an accompanying map of Owen Sowerwine can be printed from the FAS website, or I can send them to you. Copies of the Checklist and the map are available at the FAS meetings. The map shows the areas and trails referenced on the Checklist.

Monitors are encouraged to use a camera to document their observations. The filled-out Checklist, along with any documenting pictures, should be sent to Brent Mitchell, Owen Sowerwine Committee Co-Chair.

The Checklist is also your way to help grow the Owen Sowerwine Bird List. If you find a species as yet unreported for Owen Sowerwine, tell us about it on your Monitoring Checklist, and we'll see that it gets added to the Bird List. Volunteer Monitors are encouraged 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. Use the Checklist to report these findings.

* * * * *



THERE ARE TWO WAYS TO BE A VOLUNTEER MONITOR.

First way: Sign up to do a **regularly scheduled visit**. These visits ensure that we get a minimum number of monitoring visits each month, so we get regular feedback. See below for details on how the scheduled visits work and how to sign up to do one.

Second way: do some monitoring whenever you visit Owen Sowerwine for any purpose; take along a Monitoring Checklist. Use the Checklist to take notes on what you see when you are there, and then mail it to Brent.

Whether you choose to sign up for a scheduled monitoring visit or just do your monitoring whenever you happen to visit the Area, you will be making an important contribution to the FAS management of Owen Sowerwine. We encourage all members to be the eyes and ears of FAS at Owen Sowerwine.

Thanks to all of you who have served as Volunteer Monitors over that past two years. Your help has been essential and is greatly appreciated. We hope you will be able to help out again this year!

* * * * *

REGULARLY SCHEDULED MONITORING VISITS – HOW THEY WORK AND HOW TO SIGN UP

The scheduled visits ensure that Owen Sowerwine is monitored at least twice a month, March through November. Each of these nine months is divided into two Monitoring Periods – the first half of the month, and the second half. We need at least one volunteer for each of these 18 Monitoring Periods.

The volunteer who signs up for a given Monitoring Period should make at least one thorough Monitoring Visit to Owen Sowerwine in that Period. More than one visit is allowed, of course.

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 even sign up for more than one Monitoring Period, if you wish.

On a scheduled Monitoring Visit, we ask volunteers to do as thorough a job as they can. Try to check on as many of the places and items listed on the Checklist as possible. A thorough Monitoring Visit usually takes about 2 hours. Some people enjoy taking 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.

If possible, do at least one thorough Monitoring Visit on a weekend, when more people tend to be present. Sometimes a weekend visit is not possible, of course, because of weather or high water or other adverse conditions. Then do the thorough visit some other time in the Period.

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

KIDZ



Let's Learn More About Squirrels

By: Mary Pat McNicoll 5th grade, age 10, and Grace Cady 4th grade, age 9
Kalispell Montessori Elementary School. David Cummings, Teacher.

O



Ever look at a squirrel and wonder how he/she gets around, takes care of themselves, gathers and stays alive at the same time? Well they don't need technology, stores or most things we do. Squirrels live in every part of the world except Antarctica and Australia. Squirrels usually hang around where they have made their nests. But it depends on how the area is, if there's good gathering supplies, mating and other things.

during the night. Most flying squirrels live in southern Asia. They are hard to find because they are sleeping in the day time. In Montana we have the Northern Flying Squirrel.

Don't forget Ground Squirrels! They have short tails, and live mostly in grasslands and tundra. The Columbian and Golden-mantled Ground Squirrels can be found in north-west Montana.

R

N

Did you know that squirrels make up one of the largest families of rodents? The family includes chipmunks, marmots, woodchucks and prairie dogs, too! Did you know that there over 200 species of squirrels? They may be divided into 3 groups: (1) Tree squirrels, (2) Flying Squirrels, and (3) Ground Squirrels.

We can help squirrels near our homes by setting out peanuts or corn or even making bigger holes in bird houses for them to stay in. Squirrels are unique creatures who love our world. They're harmless, smart and help to grow trees by spreading seeds. Squirrels just want to have fun!

E

Tree Squirrels are basic bushy-tailed squirrels. They're the type you see in your backyard or being chased by your cat. They are very active and daring during the day, and weigh from one ounce to six and a half pounds.

References:

- ◆ World Book Encyclopedia
- ◆ Rocky Mountain Nature Guide
- ◆ <http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/squirrel>
- ◆ <http://fieldguide.mt.gov>



R

Flying squirrels are nocturnal. That means they sleep during the day and are active

Kids Korner is coordinated by our Conservation Educator, Nancy Zapotocki. If you have a topic of natural history interest and a budding student author, send Nancy an email at naz@centurytel.net. Include the topic, school, grade, student and teacher name. Your idea could be the next article. A teacher may even give extra credit 😊 "Kids sharing nature with kids!"

FAS Education Committee Update from Chair Ansley Ford

The Education Committee has been busy as bees (or shall I say, "busy as birds?") preparing for spring! Springtime is definitely "for the birds," and for the dedicated folks on the FAS Education Committee, spring is also the time for bird education! Our enthusiastic group of educators met in February for an afternoon session of updating, brainstorming, and planning for the upcoming season, and there certainly was a lot to discuss! Our goal is to reach all kinds of members of the community, from school children to busy adults, to retired folks looking for a new hobby. Thanks to Nancy Zapotocki, our Conservation Educator, we've been able to reach more Flathead Valley residents than ever before. We hope that FAS offers something for everyone this spring, and we look forward to seeing YOU at one of our upcoming events! Here is just a sampling from our spring schedule:

- ◆ February 12-15: Great Backyard Bird Count at participating schools
- ◆ April 7, 14, 21, 28: Beauty of Birds Class at Flathead High School
- ◆ April 24: FAS booth at Earth Day celebration at Depot Park
- ◆ May 9: Bird Booth at Forestry Expo
- ◆ May (date TBA): Family Birding Introduction at Whitefish Library
- ◆ September 11: Third Annual Raptor Day, In Memory of Rod Ash, at Lone Pine State Park.



For more information and a complete list of FAS programs, field trips, and educational offerings, please see our website, www.flatheadaudubon.org.



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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. **Deadline for newsletter copy is the 18th of each month. Contact newsletter editor at 755-1406; email submissions to: pileatedpost@flatheadaudubon.org**

Website: www.flatheadaudubon.org

FlockMaster - John Kyle: jkyle@fastmail.us

Conservation Educator - Nancy Zapotocki: naz@centurytel.net

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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)
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