



the Silent Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

VOLUME 35

NUMBER 8

APRIL 2011



Montana Audubon's *Wings Across the Big Sky Bird Festival* Call for Montana Audubon Award Nominations!



Montana Audubon is now seeking nominations for 4 awards that will be given at Montana Audubon's annual meeting this year. The awards acknowledge individuals who exemplify a commitment to birds, other wildlife and habitat conservation. This year, awards will be given for Conservationist of the Year, Environmental Educator of the Year, Special Achievement, and Lifetime Achievement Award.

To nominate your candidate, please call the Montana Audubon office to request an award nomination form or download the form from our website at <http://mtaudubon.org/about/awards>. To be considered for this year's awards, nominations and all supporting material must be postmarked no later than May 16, 2011. All nominations and supporting material should be sent to Montana Audubon, PO Box 595, Helena, MT 59624, or by fax: (406) 443-7144. The award ceremony will take place on June 4 at Montana Audubon's Bird Festival in Glasgow. Questions? Contact Janet Ellis at 406-443-3949 or jellis@mtaudubon.org.

CHOO-CHOO!



With the Montana Bird Festival approaching, it is time to think about getting all the way to Glasgow. One alternative that looks attractive is riding Amtrak. There are some advantages to the train – you don't have to sit for a long trip across the highline and you get to enjoy the trip with your friends from Flathead Audubon. The disadvantage is having to forgo other birding opportunities along the way.

The train schedule is pretty convenient. The Empire Builder leaves Whitefish about 7:45 AM and arrives in Glasgow about 4:00 PM. It leaves Glasgow about 12:30 PM and arrives back in Whitefish about 9:00 PM. We have arranged to get transportation between the train station and the motel in Glasgow. This year, there are Festival workshops on Friday with the field trips on Saturday and Sunday. If you want to attend the workshops, you can go over on Thursday; if not, come over on Friday.

We don't have the number of riders necessary to get a group discount, so each individual will need to make their own reservations ... check the website at www.amtrak.com or call 800-872-7245. With Amtrak, the price increases as the train fills, so book early to get the best fares.

Various discounts are available – for seniors, AAA members, veterans and others. Be sure to check the website or ask when you call, to see if you qualify. It looks to be a little bit cheaper (about \$4 each way) to go from and to West Glacier rather than Whitefish.

Most field trips on Sunday should be able to get back in time for riders to catch the train back home.

The exception would be the Manning Lake trip and the Missouri River canoe trip. For folks wanting to go on the Bowdoin trip, they should board the train in Malta, which leaves about 1:30 PM from the station in Malta.
Train Info From Bob Lee



APRIL FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

Monday, April 11, 2011: Flathead Audubon General Meeting. 7 PM, Conference Room 3, The Summit. FVCC Recycling Club will be in the north parking lot 6:30-7 PM. For program information, see page 3.

Monday, April 4, 2011: Flathead Audubon Board of Directors Meeting. 6 PM at 295 Third Ave. E.N. All are welcome.

April-May Field Trips! See page 6

Monday-Saturday, May 2-7, 2011: Flathead Forestry Expo. See page 11 for details!

Friday-Sunday, June 3-5, 2011: Wings over the Big Sky. Montana Audubon Bird Festival, Glasgow, MT

BIRD OF THE MONTH

Prepared by Lewis Young

AMERICAN REDSTART

Although a member of the large family of wood-warblers that are sometimes difficult to tell apart, American Redstarts have distinctive color patterns and behavioral traits that make them relatively easy to identify. Adult males are glossy black with bright orange patches on wings, tail and sides. The belly and under the tail are white. Adult females are gray-olive above with white underparts and yellow patches on the tail, wings and sides. The birds are about 5 ¼ inches long with a 7 ¾ inch wingspan. Immature birds resemble adult females. American Redstarts flit about very actively and often hold their tail and wings partly spread as if to show off the patches of color. The name Redstart is derived from the male's "red" (actually orange) tail markings. The "start" in the name comes from Anglo Saxon *steort*, for tail. American Redstarts have a variable song that may be described as a series of high, thin notes usually followed by a wheezy, down-slurred note. Their call is a clear, high, squeaky chip.

Habitat preferences include moist second growth deciduous forest, mixed woodlands, and thickets such as willow or alder. They will nest in the deciduous trees and shrubs that regrow following fires in coniferous forests. Streamside riparian deciduous trees and shrubs often provide suitable habitat. The female picks the nest site, usually in the fork of a tree or shrub, 4 to 70 feet off the ground, although ground nests have been recorded. The nest is an open cup built by the female and consists of bark, grass, rootlets, and other plant fibers, with a lining that is usually made of feathers and hair. The outside may be camouflaged with lichen and bark, and the whole nest is held together with spider webbing.

The male displays to the female during courtship by fluffing plumage, raising crown feathers, spreading wings and tail, and bowing. Males perform a frequent boundary display flight toward rivals by flying out with stiff wing beats and gliding in a semicircle back to a perch. Two to five eggs (typically 4) are laid that are off-white in color with brown or gray marks. Incubation is done only by the female and lasts 11-12 days. Both parents feed the young, who leave the nest at about 9 days old. Nests are often parasitized by brown-headed cowbirds. The male American Redstart occasionally has two mates at the same time by holding two separate territories up to 500 m (1,640 ft) apart. The male starts to attract a second female after

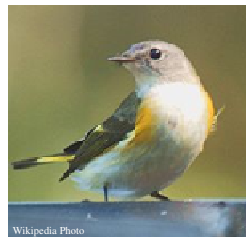


the first has completed her clutch and is incubating the eggs.

American Redstarts forage very actively and often fly out to catch insects in midair or hover to take them from foliage. This flycatching behavior is one clue in identifying them. Their diet is mostly

insects such as beetles, caterpillars, moths, leafhoppers, and aphids, but they will occasionally eat spiders, berries, and seeds. It is believed they flash their tails and wings to startle insect prey. They sometimes hold large caterpillars and moths in the bill and bang them on the perch before eating.

Widespread, as their summer range includes eastern and northern US, and southern Canada, American Redstarts may be seen nearly anywhere in the lower 48 states during migration, but they winter almost exclusively south of the US in Central America, the West Indies, and northern South America (in Spanish they are called "candelitas"). A few do winter in the very southern regions of California, Texas and Florida. They are very rare vagrants to western Europe. The birds migrate mostly at night, with the fall migration beginning early, often in August. During migration, they may be found in areas outside the summer range and this is when they may eat foods other than insects more often.



Although American Redstarts are still widespread and common throughout their range, they have experienced declines in many regions. Some of these declines may be from habitat loss due to natural maturation of forests, but others may be directly or indirectly related to habi-

tat degradation from fragmentation. Fragmentation creates more edges, which initially attract more American Redstarts because of the increased brush in these areas. Later, however, predators and nest parasites are also attracted to edges, resulting in reduced productivity at forest edges. In a study in British Columbia, over 63% of American Redstart nests were parasitized by brown-headed cowbirds. In the West, many streamside forests have been eliminated or degraded, which may account for significant declines seen in some western populations.

In northwest Montana and the Flathead area, American Redstarts are considered common and may be found relatively easily with careful looking in preferred habitats. Expect them to return in May and watch for this colorful, very active warbler.



THE WOLVERINE WAY

By Doug Chadwick



The final chapter of Doug Chadwick's THE WOLVERINE WAY is titled "Freedom to Roam." At our March program we will hear directly from the author the reasons why the continued existence of the free roaming native species and symbol of the wild, *Gulo gulo*, depends on such freedom.

In 2004, Doug joined the Glacier Wolverine Project as a volunteer hands-on researcher. The Glacier Wolverine Project (2002-2007) studied the most important wolverine population left in the lower 48 states. It sought to answer questions about wolverine life and to understand the species habits and behaviors. Doug continues to be involved with the project. Only recently, he returned from a five-day trip into the wilds of Glacier Park to check on wolverines.

THE WOLVERINE WAY, published last year, grew out of Doug's experiences with the Glacier Wolverine Project. It is a totally engrossing story of an almost mythological animal that has been both not understood and misunderstood. In his program, Doug will describe what researchers have only recently learned about the natural history of the wolverine. He will also talk about the forces that threaten the future survival of an animal with unsurpassed survival skills.

Doug is a wildlife biologist who gravitated to journalism. He earned an M.S. in Wildlife Biology from the University of Montana. He writes about natural history and conservation and is a frequent contributor to NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC. His many books and articles about wildlife range from ants and beetles to elephants and whales, and include mountain goats and grizzly bears. Doug lives in Whitefish with his wife Karen Reeves.

Doug is also a founding board member of Vital Ground, a non-profit land trust that works to safeguard wildlife habitat and their travel corridors.

We look forward to seeing you at 7:00 PM on Monday, April 11 in the Community Room at The Summit, 205 Sunnyview Lane in Kalispell and learning that there is a "whole new dimension to wolverine life." Also, between the business meeting and the program, Ben Chappellow, MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks Warden, will give an interesting short talk about how to report violations at the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area. He will do a brief introduction and then show us how to approach people in the field.



MAY POTLUCK!



COME ONE, COME ALL! Flathead Audubon's May General Meeting and Potluck will be held at the **Whitefish Community Center on May 9**. Doors open at 5 PM, Potluck Dinner at 6 PM. Start your spring cleaning right away and gather good nature-related items to donate for the Silent Auc-

tion. Successful items from the past include bird houses and feeders, bird books, flowers, growing plants and trees, jewelry, art work, note cards, and many others. Full directions to the center will be printed in the next *Pileated Post*. Mark your Calendar Now!



IT'S RECYCLING TIME!

FVCC's Recycling Team will bring their trailer to the April FAS Meeting. Look for the trailer at the west end of The Summit's north parking lot from 6:30—7:00 PM. This will be their last recycling pickup of our Audubon year, so let's overwhelm them! Time to clean out the basement, pantry, closets, etc. Remember, REDUCE, REUSE, REFUSE, RECYCLE!

Save These Dates!

WHITEFISH BIRD CLASS

Introduction to Birdwatching for Families
 May 12 - 6:30 to 8PM – Class at Whitefish Library
 May 14 - 8:30 AM – Birdwalk on Whitefish River
 Contact Jill Fanning 862-8070

Beauty of Birds

Believe it or not, spring is just around the corner, and so is our annual spring birding class! Whether you're a brand new birder or a seasoned expert, Beauty of Birds has something for you. The class offers helpful hints on field marks, songs and calls, habitats, and local birding hotspots. Each class will feature a lesson, guest speaker, and local bird slideshow, with our final class culminating with practice in the field. Classes are held Wednesday evenings in April from 6-8 PM in the large lecture room at Flathead High School. The cost for the entire series is \$10. To sign up, call FHS at 751-3500. Hope to see you there!

Ansley Ford, Instructor



BOARD MEMBER CHIRPS & SQUAWKS

Article and Photos From
PAULA SMITH, FAS Vice President



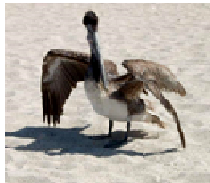
WINTER BIRDS OF MEXICO'S PACIFIC COAST

Montana has its share of snowbirds, both human and avian kinds, who migrate to more southerly latitudes in wintertime. On Mexico's Pacific Coast in the tourist destination of Puerto Vallarta, I have encountered people from Kalispell, Polson, Missoula, Troy and Glendive. While birding is usually not the reason thousands of Americans and Canadians venture south of the Tropic of Cancer during winter months, many become curious about unfamiliar bird species they might be seeing. The region's many ecosystems—marine, coastal, valley, steep mountains with tropical deciduous forest (dry in winter), rivers and marshes—provide diverse habitats for hundreds of bird species. Without even half trying, I have enjoyed seeing many of the common species this area has to offer.

The two birds I always notice immediately upon arriving are Magnificent Frigatebirds and Brown Pelicans. Magnificent Frigatebirds are truly prehistoric in appearance. They are large and black-gray with long split tails and long hooked bills. They are the "coast guard"—all day, every day, soaring high above the shoreline—as if patrolling the coastline to see if everything's all right down below. They are never on land, except when they nest at night off-shore on Los Arcos.

If I am walking along and suddenly large shadows glide over the ground before me, I look up and usually observe a stately procession of Brown Pelicans flying in V-formation. The Brown Pelican became the poster bird for last year's oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. However, they seem to be okay on Mexico's Pacific coast. They have an awesome ability to fly with their wingtips almost touching water and to dive almost perpendicular to the water for fish and crustaceans. They also nest off-shore.

Along the coast, Laughing Gulls and beautiful Heerman's Gulls are common. Out over the waters of the Banderas Bay, Brown Boobies might be mistaken for gulls. Where a river flows into the sea, Snowy Egrets will hunt from salt-water ponds and at the edge of incoming waves, never venturing too far into the



surf, and never seeming to be disturbed by beach walkers. Following the river inland, I might find Neotropic Cormorants, shorebirds and wading birds, such as Little Blue Herons, Tricolor Herons, White Ibises, Spotted Sandpipers, Greater Yellowlegs and Black-necked Stilts. I might even see a Green Kingfisher flying upstream.



Above the river corridor, I will often see a Common Black-Hawk, or a Gray Hawk perched in a tree. Turkey Vultures also soar overhead or hang out in groups in trees. The dense vegetation along the river is home to smaller, more difficult to study birds as well—Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Yellow-breasted Chats and numerous warbler species (guaranteed to pique the interest of experts).



The woodland and its edges are good places to see many Streak-backed Orioles, occasional Orchard Orioles and gorgeous Painted Buntings. Rufous-backed Thrushes are common, too, but I have yet to hear one sing. And these brushy uncultivated areas and gnarly, old bougainvilleas in gardens are good places to glimpse Broad-billed and Cinnamon Hummingbirds.



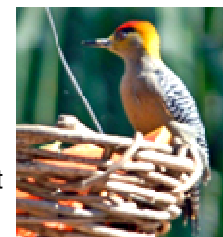
Great-tailed Grackles seem to be the most abundant bird in the urban area. Not fussy about habitat, they may be seen alone or in flocks anywhere, everywhere and anytime. The males are big, black birds with yellow eyes, long keel-shaped tails and iridescent feathers. Females are brown. Great-tailed Grackles are very social and have shrill calls. These are the clean-up crews that help dispose of our garbage.



Groove-billed Anis are also common black birds with long tails—tails almost the length of their bodies. However, they are distinguished by their great, curved and grooved bills. Small flocks of Groove-billed Anis will follow lawnmowers to see what may be revealed in new-mown grass.



Yellow-winged Caciques are abundant, too. I sometimes think I am seeing a Great-tailed Grackle—until I glimpse the flashes of yellow in the wings and under the tail. Hanging



Birds, continued on next page ...



...to those below who have made special donations to Flathead Audubon from February 18 to March 18.

EAGLE

Soroptomists of Whitefish



MERLIN

Milt and BJ Carlson
Martin Cohen



Mexico's Birds, continued from page 4 ... baskets of sliced papaya often provide good views of birds with striking colors—Yellow-winged Caciques, the indescribable blue backs of San Blas Jays, and the beautiful orange and yellow heads of Golden-cheeked Woodpeckers. Greyish Saltators also enjoy papaya, but they are, well, grayish.

I am likely to hear noisy Great Kiskadees the first thing on any morning before I see them. They are noticeable for their bright yellow undersides and the white stripe separating their black heads and eye masks. Sometimes I will mistake smaller Social Flycatchers for Great Kiskadees because they are also abundant. Lovely Tropical Kingbirds also inhabit the same area. Their underparts are a softer yellow and their voices would never be confused with those of raucous Great Kiskadees.

Small flocks of tiny White-collared Seedeaters busily feed in grassy lawns or weedy lots. Males are easily identified by their white collars, which don't quite go all the way around the backs of their black heads or necks. They have very chunky bills and cinnamon underbodies. The black and white heads of Stripe-headed Sparrows may also be seen feeding in garden borders. Yellow-crowned Night Herons are also reportedly common birds. I was lucky to encounter one in a cultivated landscape. It appeared to tolerate late night bird watchers as long as a distance of a few feet was maintained. Otherwise, it



would quickly turn its back and be perfectly camouflaged by the night.

These are just some of the common birds that I look forward to finding on a winter visit to Mexico's Pacific Coast.

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 Menke, 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 a notification of this gift to:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

* * * *

Donor's 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.

THIS BEARS REPEATING!

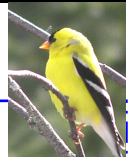
Spring is Sprung, and guess who's coming out of hibernation? Yep, it's the bears, both black and grizzly. And after their long winter's nap, they're HUNGRY. Help them out by bringing in your bird seed and suet feeders, so that they seek natural foods, not yours! Store your pet and horse food indoors, too. It's all part of living cooperatively with wildlife. And the critters will thank you "bearly" much!



flathead.audubon.com



APRIL AND MAY AUDUBON FIELD TRIPS



Jeanne Marcure Photo

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

BIGFORK BIRD CLUB BIRD OUTINGS, SUNDAYS, April 10, 17, 24, and May 1, 8, 15, 8 AM to 10 AM. Join Neal Brown for a morning of birding with emphasis on nesting waterfowl. Park at the East entrance of the Bigfork Nature Trail. (Swan River Road) Follow the signs to the Bigfork Bird Club Blind (approximately 400 meters). A spotting scope will be provided. Bring binoculars, water and snacks. Arrive and leave as you please.

SATURDAY, APRIL 23: FIFTH ANNUAL COHEN STROLL. Meet at 9:00AM at ball fields off Highway 40. Enter through Monterra subdivision and turn right at Youth Ball Fields. The first Cohen Stroll honored Marty's 85th birthday: this is the fifth Cohen Stroll commemorating Marty's 90th birthday! We will wander along the pond and river on accessible trails searching for waterfowl, shorebirds, woodpeckers, and corvids. Please come and join us for this two-hour morning stroll.

SATURDAY, MAY 7: CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY with a field trip to Swan Lake area and the Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge from 8:30 AM to 1:00 PM. We will meet at 8:30 AM at the Swan Lake Picnic Area. Please bring binoculars, warm clothes if needed, and a snack or lunch. Boots are appropriate in case it is muddy. It is a good time to see and hear American Bitterns, Sandhill Cranes, and Bald Eagles, along with returning warblers, sparrows, swallows, and occasionally flocks of snow geese and swans. Please contact Kathy Ross at 837-3837 to sign up and for more information.

SATURDAY, MAY 14: INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY AT THE NATIONAL BISON RANGE. The main event is the opening of the splendid Red Sheep Mountain Drive for the summer season, weather and road conditions permitting. This is a wonderful drive through the range which travels through a variety of habitats, a great place to see a broad range of birds. Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day with many activities for all ages. For more information and other events, call the National Bison Range at 406-644-2211.

SATURDAY, MAY 14: SPRING LOON CENSUS DAY. Montana Loon Society and the Montana Common Loon Working Group need volunteers to help observe and count loons on lakes throughout northwest Montana on or close to this date. Contact one of the following folks for survey forms and information. For areas west of Kalispell, call Chris Hammond at 751-4582; for north of Kalispell, call Laura Holmquist at 758-3501; for southern Flathead Lake and Mission Valley, call Janene Lichtenberg at 883-2888; for the Troy area, call Glen Gill at 295-4693; for the Swan Valley, call Jane Ingebretson at 837-7539; for the Eureka area, call Christie Ferruzzi at 882-4451; and for Glacier National Park, call Jamie Belt at 888-7986. **This year's Summer Loon Census Day will be Saturday, July 16, 2011.**

SATURDAY, MAY 14: SPRING LOONS IN GLACIER NATIONAL PARK. Here is a chance to volunteer in one of Montana's most beautiful places. Volunteers with some bird experience or previous training are needed to look for and count Loons in Glacier National Park. Call Jamie Belt at 888-7986 to sign up.

SATURDAY, MAY 28: BIRDING IN GLACIER NATIONAL PARK. This trip will focus on identifying neotropical migrants by sight and ear. We will walk along McDonald Creek listening and looking for birds and stop at the Fish Creek Campground to search for Harlequin Ducks and scan the cottonwoods for vireos and warblers. We may head up the inside North Fork Road or drive along the Camas Road, stopping along the way in search of Black-Backed Woodpeckers, Olive-sided Flycatchers and Northern Hawk Owls. This trip is limited to 20 participants. Please sign up for this trip with Steve Gniadek at 892-7406. We will be meeting at the Alberta Visitor Center in West Glacier at 8:00AM and returning by noon. Please note: a Glacier National Park entrance fee or park pass is required.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 25: AN EVENING WHITEFISH TRAIL FIELD TRIP. Hunt for spring wildflowers and explore possibilities for an educational interpretive display. Meet at the trailhead at 6:00PM. Follow Hwy 93 1.2 miles west of Whitefish. Turn right onto Lion Mountain Loop Road and follow it to the trailhead 1.2 miles up the road on your right. Contact Jen Hintz for details 862-7028 or jhinz2004@yahoo.com. This trip is sponsored by the Montana Native Plant Society.

Field Trips, continued on next page ...

APRIL AND MAY AUDUBON FIELD TRIPS

SATURDAY, MAY 21: A TOUR OF THE LAZY CREEK AREA ABOVE THE HEAD OF WHITEFISH LAKE.

Join FAS on this three-hour field trip for a tour of this not-often-visited area. This trip provides a great opportunity to observe Warblers, American Redstarts, Northern Water Thrush, Black-Headed Grosbeak, and other birds. Meet at the McDonalds in Whitefish 8:00 AM with an 11:00 AM return. If you have questions or to sign up, call Bruce Tannehill at 862-4548.

For all Field Trips, dress for the weather, bring binoculars or spotting scope if you have them, wear sturdy footwear, and drive and pull off the road safely.



Fastest-moving Bird
Peregrine Falcon at 200 mph (320 km/h)

Longest-submerged Bird
Emperor Penguin at 18 minutes

BIRD TRIVIA

From *The Bird Almanac*
By David M. Bird

Keenest Sense of Hearing
Barn Owl

Greatest Wingspan
Wandering Albatross at up to 11 ft 11 in



LOONS AND LEAD—A SOLUTION TO A BAD COMBINATION

From Lewis Young, FAS Conservation Chairman



Here in northwestern Montana, we are fortunate to have both a population of common loons and good fishing in many of those lakes that support loons. Unfortunately, the lead sinkers and jigs often used for fishing pose a significant threat to loons because of the lead's toxicity to loons when they swallow lead fishing tackle. One lead sinker can kill a loon. Lead sinkers and jigs 1 ½ inches or smaller along the longest axis are the sizes known to cause loon mortality. In our neighboring state of Washington, 1/3 of loon mortalities from 1999-2010 were attributed to lead poisoning. Numerous other studies around the country have documented the same adverse effects. In addition to loons, many other species such as waterfowl and fish suffer from lead toxicity.

The good news is that non-toxic alternatives for fishing tackle are available both locally at the stores listed below and online from many sources. A list of 35 companies that sell lead-free tackle is available on the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency website (www.pca.state.mn.us, then search for nontoxic tackle). Tell all your fishing friends about the problem with loons and lead tackle and be sure to add that non-toxic alternatives are easily available. The quicker more people become aware of the problem and switch to non-toxic fishing tackle, the quicker the lead poisoning rate in loons will decline. Additional information about loons and lead poisoning is available from the Montana Loon Society at www.montanaloons.org and the Montana Common Loon Working Group at chammond@mt.gov.

Snappy Sports Senter

Kastmaster – Assorted Lake Trout Jigs made of tin
Danielson – Steel sinkers, eggs, and worms
Danielson – Tin split shot

Sportsman/Ski Haus

Danielson enviro quest steel sinker
Danielson envro quest tin removable split shot
Panther martin stainless steel lead free spinners

SCIENCE

HUNTING COOPERATIVELY

Taken from THE BIRD by Colin Tudge

Predatory bird species such as raptors are usually solo hunters. There are exceptions. A new one for me is Europe's Eleonora's Falcon. These small falcons breed in colonies on some of the islands in the Mediterranean. Their young do not hatch until late in August. This late start works, because just when the young require the most food, the migrating song birds fly south over the Mediterranean to Africa. In one study, a group of 150 Eleonora's Falcons were observed spacing themselves out at about 100 – 200 yard intervals 3000 feet above the ocean in a line about ten miles wide. Migrating birds must fly this gauntlet. After being harried by multiple falcons until exhausted, they become easy prey.

Twelve thousand falcon young are raised at the expense of about ten million song birds. If there were 1.2 million falcon young, it would require one billion song birds. This would put the birds of Europe at risk of extinction. It is interesting to speculate on the natural forces that prevent this by controlling the Eleonora's Falcon's population. Is it the food supply, nesting habitat or perhaps some social control we do not know about?

From Bruce Tannehill

TIDBIT



CAN YOU HELP?

Summer Volunteer Monitors for Owen Sowerwine are Needed

From Linda Winnie, Co-Chair, Owen Sowerwine Committee
 Our fourth season of Volunteer Monitoring at Owen Sowerwine has begun!
 Volunteers are needed to make monitoring visits to the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area (OSNA) throughout the coming summer.

The information gathered by volunteers on these monitoring visits is crucial to the success of Flathead Audubon's management of the OSNA. Volunteer Monitors alert us to developing management needs at OSNA. They gather data on visitor use. Their reports of bird and wildlife sightings and other field observations add to our growing knowledge and understanding of the natural life and ecology of Owen Sowerwine.

Here are 2 ways you can help.

1. Take an OSNA Volunteer Monitoring Form with you *whenever* you visit Owen Sowerwine.

Record what you see and hear on your visit and mail or email this information to Richard Kuhl, Co-chair of the FAS Owen Sowerwine Committee (his addresses are on the form).

2. Sign up to do a scheduled monitoring visit.

In order to get feedback from OSNA on a regular basis, we schedule at least one monitoring visit to OSNA each half month, March through November. We already have volunteers for some of these regular visits, but still need people to make monitoring visits during the following half-month periods over the summer:

May 16-31 June 16-30 July 1-15 July 16-31 August 16-31

If you would like more information or would like to sign up to do a monitoring visit during one of these periods, please call or email me (755-1406 or lindawin@centurytel.net). All volunteers will get a reminder call or email shortly before the period they have volunteered to cover.

The new 2011 OSNA Volunteer Monitoring form can be printed from the FAS website (www.flatheadaudubon.org), and will also be available at FAS meetings. A trail map that helps you locate the places referred to on the form can also be obtained from the FAS website, and at FAS meetings.

AND A THIRD WAY TO HELP

New Owen Sowerwine Bird List Out!

A new, updated Owen Sowerwine Bird List is now available – straight from the desk of the OSNA Bird List Compiler, Dan Casey. You can find the updated list at the FAS website (www.flatheadaudubon.org) or if you don't have access to the Internet, contact Linda Winnie (755-1406) to have a copy mailed to you.

We would like to grow this list! You can help by reporting any species you see at OSNA that is not on the list to Dan Casey (dcasey@abcbirds.org or 756-2681).

Here is a list of species not on the list that Dan thinks can reasonably be expected in OSNA.

American Wigeon
 Gadwall
 Bufflehead
 Barrow's Goldeneye
 Rough-legged Hawk
 Greater Yellowlegs
 Herring Gull

California Gull
 Barred Owl
 Western Screech-Owl
 Hammond's Flycatcher
 Pygmy Nuthatch
 Winter (now "Pacific") Wren
 Bewick's Wren

Nashville Warbler
 Spotted Towhee
 Lincoln's Sparrow
 Common Grackle
 White-winged Cross-bill



Our newest feature, For E-Your Eyes Only, takes off this month. Hope you enjoy the bird photography that our amateur (and professional) photographers have sent in. All photographers, including kids, are encouraged to submit bird-related photos. We can print one photo per person per month. And if you're still reading that paper copy of the *Post*, just send your email address to Linda Winnie to join the E-gang! We Want YOU!



GIVE THOSE BIRDS A HAND!

It's that time of the year, when we are crunching numbers and filing our tax returns. This year, as you fill out your Montana tax form, consider that support for our non-game species (birds, frogs, squirrels, etc.) is under attack in Helena. If you possibly can, check the "Non-Game Wildlife" box near the bottom of your form, and support programs that help maintain our little critters.



Hardy Birders Dodie Rayborg,
Debbie Moon and Michelle Tyler

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT FIELD TRIP

By Kathy Ross

Neither sharp wind chills, heavy blowing snow reducing visibility, nor unplowed roads could deter three diehard birders from counting birds on Friday of this year's Backyard Bird Count! And neither were the birds deterred by the exciting weather. In a short two hours of birding along a small area near Swan River Road we counted large flocks of Red-winged Blackbirds, House Finches and Goldfinches, Downy Woodpeckers, Northern Flickers, Pigeons, Pine Siskins and Evening Grosbeaks. A little open water on the Swan River allowed good views of Mallards, Common Goldeneyes, Buffleheads, Hooded and Common Mergansers.

The group of hardy birders pictured was delighted to count at one home 31 House Finches, 40 Pine Siskins and an incredible flock of 50+ Goldfinches. Filling the trees and shrubs at this one location on the Swan River, all of these flocks were trying to feed out of one bird feeder. Also vying for a place at the feeder were a number of Black-capped Chickadees, one Red-breasted Nuthatch and 1 Evening Grosbeak. Definitely an extraordinary feeding frenzy!

Later in the day at my own house, besides my usual feeder visitors, Chickadees, Pine Siskins, Flickers and Pileated Woodpecker, I was delighted to see the first flock of White-winged Crossbills in over 2 years! To my birding delight, they stayed for a couple of days.

WWF Calls for Volunteers

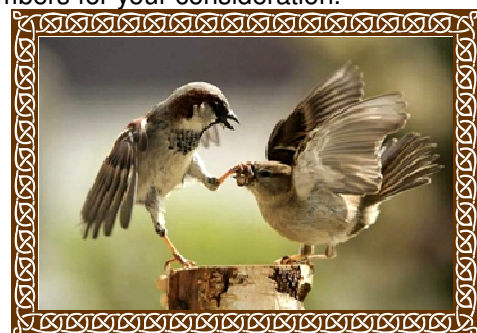
World Wildlife Funds (WWF) Northern Great Plains (NGP) Program is seeking enthusiastic volunteers for a unique opportunity to assist in annual counts of Greater sage-grouse, *Centrocercus urophasianus*, displaying on leks (dancing grounds) during the month of April on the American Prairie Reserve www.americanprairie.org in Phillips County, North Central Montana.



Although some knowledge of sage-grouse behavior and experience attending active sage-grouse leks is an asset, it is not a requirement because a local WWF biologist will provide on-site orientation and training prior to initiating counts. Volunteers will be directed to one or more specific leks to conduct counts, preferably committing to volunteer for a period of at least three days. Counts will be conducted from 30 minutes before sunrise to two hours after sunrise. Data forms and recording materials will be provided. Volunteers should feel free to explore all that the American Prairie Reserve and the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge have to offer outside of survey hours. Accommodations will not be provided, but volunteers will be directed to two public campsites in the vicinity of the leks and drinking water will be provided. It is hoped that volunteers will have some flexibility in scheduling should rain result in the need to shift scheduled survey dates because roads may become hazardous in the area in wet conditions. Regrettably, volunteers should also recognize that forecasts for extended periods of rain during the survey period may result in cancellation of activities as human safety is of key concern. As a result, volunteers with 4 wheel drive or all wheel drive vehicles will be given preference.

Dennis Jorgensen, WWF's NGP Program Officer, will coordinate volunteer registration and offer the on-site orientation and training. Initial contact will be via e-mail, but once interest has been expressed, subsequent communication will include follow-up on the telephone to address any questions regarding this opportunity. In the event of the expression of interest beyond the need for volunteers, we will create a list of volunteers for future participation. Thanks so much to all of you Audubon members for your consideration.

Dennis Jorgensen
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World Wildlife Fund
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P.O. Box 225
Zortman, Montana 59546
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Dennis.Jorgensen@wwfus.org
www.worldwildlife.org/what/wherewework/ngp



I SAID, "QUIET!"



Oldest Known Wild Bird and a New Mother at 60!

11 March 2011 – A few weeks ago, the oldest known wild bird in the Northern Hemisphere was spotted at Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge in Hawaii. The bird, a female Laysan Albatross named Wisdom, is at least 60 years old; she is also a new mother.

Wisdom was spotted with her chick a few weeks ago by John Klavitter, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist and the deputy manager of the Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge. She has sported and worn out five bird bands since she was first banded by U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) scientist Chandler Robbins in 1956. At the time, he estimated the albatross to be about five years old. Robbins rediscovered Wisdom in 2001, when she was at least 50.

“She looks great,” said Bruce Peterjohn, the chief of the North American Bird Banding Program at the USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, Maryland. “And she is now the oldest wild bird documented in the 90-year history of our USGS Fish and Wildlife Service and Canadian bird banding program,” he added. “To know that she can still successfully raise young at age 60-plus, that is beyond words. While the process of banding a bird has not changed greatly during the past century, the information provided by birds marked with a simple numbered metal band has transformed our knowledge of birds.”

Wisdom, Peterjohn said, has likely raised at least 30 to 35 chicks during her breeding life. Almost as amazing as being a parent at 60 is the number of miles she has likely flown. Adult birds average about 50,000 miles annually, so Wisdom has flown at least two to three million miles since she was first banded. That’s the equivalent of four to six trips from earth to the moon and back again, with plenty of miles to spare!



Two New Bird Species Discovered

11 March 2011 – It is not every day that a new species is discovered, let alone two new bird species in only a few weeks. A new species of Storm-petrel has been found and captured from the area of Puerto Montt, Chile. A summary of the expedition, including stunning photographs, can be found at [http://www.sofnet.org/apps/file.asp?Path=1&ID=6447&File=A+New+Species+of+Seabird+Peter+Harrison+Feb+2011+\(1\).pdf](http://www.sofnet.org/apps/file.asp?Path=1&ID=6447&File=A+New+Species+of+Seabird+Peter+Harrison+Feb+2011+(1).pdf). The species has yet to be formally described in scientific literature, but it will be named Puerto Montt Storm-petrel *Oceanites australis*.

Another new species, this time from Madagascar: the Tsingy Wood-rail *Mentocrex beankaensis* is related to the Kiolooides Rail *Mentocrex kiolooides*, an endemic from Madagascar. The scientific name comes from the Beanka Forest, a largely intact area resting on exposed limestone formation with razor-sharp pinnacle-like structures, which are known in Malagasy, the language of Madagascar, as tsingy. For more information on this incredible discovery, see http://www.fieldmuseum.org/museum_info/press/press_madagascar_bird.htm.



OLDEST FEATHERED DINO SHOWS ITS COLORS

By Sid Perkins

Another week, another colorful feathered dinosaur. Hot on the heels of a recent report identifying pigments in fossilized dino feathers and filaments, a different team of scientists says that it has mapped the full pattern of plumage sported by the oldest known feathered dinosaur.

Paleontologists first described *Anchiornis huxleyi*, which lived in what is now northeastern China between 151 million and 161 million years ago, in September 2009. Reports of the lithe, peacock-sized dinosaur caused quite a stir, not least because the feathered creature was older than *Archaeopteryx*, which is considered by many scientists to be the oldest known bird.

Now, analyses of fossil feathers from all parts of *A. huxleyi*'s body — reported online February 4 and in an upcoming *Science* — provide a detailed look at the dino's color scheme. The new findings also bolster the notion that feathers first evolved for a purpose other than flying, scientists say. *A. huxleyi* had black and gray body plumage, the team's investigations suggest. And while the long feathers on the front and side of the creature's crest were gray, those sprouting from the top and back of its head were reddish-brown. Along with reddish-brown spots on its head and neck, *A. huxleyi* sported white racing stripes on its legs and its winglike forelimbs.

Knowing when color appeared in feathers or filaments may help solve the conundrum of why those structures evolved in the first place. *A. huxleyi*'s feathered forelimbs weren't sufficiently large enough to carry the creature's weight in flight. The fact that feathers appear in the fossil record long before flight-capable birds suggests that feathers initially served a behavioral function, possibly one related to sending visual signals, and only later began to serve an aerodynamic function.



K I D Z



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In March I had the honor of reviewing dozens of science projects at the County Science Fair. Flathead Audubon gave two awards that day for excellent work in Natural Science.

There were many excellent projects. I chose two projects that demonstrated the student's curiosity about some aspect of bird life and behavior. The recipients of the Audubon Natural Science Award are "Messy Situation" by Melanie Gassaway, a 7th grader at West Valley School, and "Chickens and Colors" by Marina Korchmar, a 6th grader at Helena Flats School. Here is a summary of Marina's work.

Great work, young ladies!!

Ashley Mason, FAS Conservation Educator

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Let's Learn More About **Chickens and Colors** by Marina Korchmar

I chose this project because I have New Hampshire chickens and was wondering why lots of chicken feeders are bright red and not any other color such as green, yellow, black, pink, orange, white, or blue! I thought maybe it was because it attracted them. So then I decided to test the topic.

The methods I used to test this project were to first collect the materials, which were 7 different-colored chicken feeders which include: blue, green, red, orange, black, white, and brown, a camera, a pencil, one notebook, chicken feed, 5 New Hampshire chickens, and a fenced-in area with no distractions. Then I filled each feeder with exactly 1 cup of chicken

feed. Then I laid the feeders out in the fenced-in area and let the chickens out. Then I recorded the data in a data table and took pictures. Then I repeated the procedure 3 times.

My work revealed that chickens are attracted to black and white more than any other color, even if they are color blind. I also learned that this experiment would work better in the summer, because the chickens are focused more on the food, because there are no natural plants alive in the winter at our place.

If you want more information on this topic, go to this link:

www.hiyt.afhe.ualberta.ca/spring09projects/color.pdf

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COME LEARN ABOUT OUR FORESTS!

The Family Forestry Expo is a one-day weekend event for families and a five-day event for 5th graders that gives hands-on exposure to the role forests play in our everyday lives. Expo participants explore how the different parts of a forest are connected to make up a dynamic living system, how people and all parts of the environment are dependent on one another and how each affects the other. The outdoor event takes place at the Trumbull Creek Educational Forest on Stoltze Lumber Co. land, north of Kalispell. On Saturday, there is a free "loggers lunch," demonstrations, exhibits and forest walk with different educational stops.

This year, the Family Forestry Expo is scheduled for May 2 through 7 and recognizes the International Year of Forests with the theme "Celebrating Forests for People." For more information about the Expo, please contact Teresa Wenum at twenum@fs.fed.us.

Flathead Audubon will have a booth and activities at the Expo. We are looking for volunteers to help with the booth, so if you would enjoy being outdoors on a spring day talking to people about the forests and ecosystems, please contact Ashley Mason, FAS Conservation Educator, at AudubonAshley@gmail.net.

Whether you are volunteer, participant or just want to see what it is all about, all are encouraged to come on out on Saturday, May 7!

Teresa Wenum and Ashley Mason

Oldest Feathered Dino, continued ...

Philip J. Currie, a paleontologist at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada, agrees: "Ancient creatures didn't just sprout feathers and start flying. The feathers were there for another reason first." Fossils reveal that dinosaurs often had very large eyes and sizable optic lobes in their brains. "Dinosaurs were very visual animals, just like birds are," he adds.

Besides communicating to members of its own species — a "come here, cutie" to members of the opposite sex, say, or a "back off" message to rival suitors — a quick flash of boldly-colored plumage could startle an attacking predator or flush prey out of hiding, the researchers say.

From Science News, Volume 177, #5, page 9



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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: lindawin@centurytel.net**

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FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY

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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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FOR E-YOUR EYES ONLY

(SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT FOR READERS OF THE ELECTRONIC POST)

Photographs Submitted by Flathead Audubon Members



“Recognize anyone in the photo? Here's a few hints. There are 14 birds and a mammal, a fish, a reptile and an amphibian. Among the birds there are three different owls, a hawk, a falcon and a hummingbird. Some of these are pretty hard. If you can identify half, then you're doing pretty good. If you get more than half, you are a biologist -- go back to work.” *John Ashley*

Give up yet? Answers at the bottom of next page—don't peek!

Many Thanks to John Ashley, professional photographer, for allowing us the use of his stunning collage to kick off “For E-Your Eyes Only.” Be sure to visit John's website, www.JohnAshleyFineArt.com to see his outstanding photos and enjoy his blog.



A Bald Eagle dines on a coyote carcass in Shelter Valley.

Photo by Jeannie Marcure



Clark's Nutcrackers feeding one another near Rogers Lake.
Photo by John Winnie, Sr.



A Brown Creeper scours a Douglas Fir trunk for insects in Smith Valley.
Photo by Brent Mitchell

Answers to John Ashley "Eyes" Collage: From top left to bottom right: Harris' Hawk, unidentified fish, White-winged Dove, black-tailed prairie dog, Scrub Jay, lizard, Costa's Hummingbird, Great-horned Owl, parrot, Screech Owl, Barn Owl, Black-necked Stilt, Band-tailed Pigeon, female Cardinal, Prairie Falcon, frog.

Do you have a bird-related photo that you would like to see on this page? All Flathead Audubon members are encouraged to submit photos for the next E-page. As early spring darkness gives way to bright summer days, we expect to find more species and more color on this page. Your photos don't have to be perfect—just snap away as you watch your favorite birds! Email photos to lindawin@centurytel.net.