



the Pileated Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

VOLUME 37

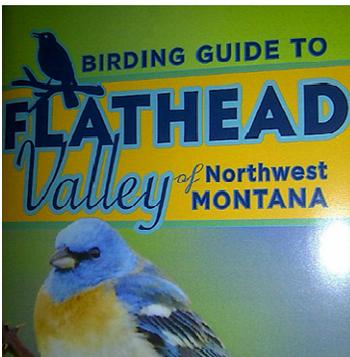
NUMBER 2

OCTOBER 2012

FLATHEAD VALLEY, MEET YOUR NEW BIRDING GUIDE!

Amidst the flurry of activity around the fantastic June 2012 annual Montana Audubon Bird Festival, FAS and its business partners published a wonderful new brochure, "**Birding Guide to Flathead Valley of Northwest Montana.**" This shiny new green brochure is an expansion of our previous brochure, "Birding Hot Spots in the Flathead," put together by FAS and Dan Casey a number of years ago. This updated new glossy guide is packed with the most current birding information, wonderful bird photos, detailed directions, habitat and seasonal information, and a great map showing trail areas. Directors Jan Metzmaker, Whitefish Convention and Visitors Bureau, and Diane Medler, Kalispell Convention and Visitors Bureau, recognized that the Flathead is drawing increasing numbers of birders to our valley each year. To meet this demand and help provide reliable information for visitors, they asked FAS to partner with the business community and help put together an updated and free birding guide.

The Board and members of the Flathead Audubon Society want to thank all the people who helped put together this new birding guide. Many thanks to Dan Casey for his prior efforts, foresight,



and the national attention to birding that he has helped bring to the Flathead. Denny Olson reached out to local professional photographers who graciously donated dozens of photographs for us to use without any cost. Gael Bissell provided editing and writing to complement Dan's efforts.

We thank Kurt Lindsay, KC Glatetter, Dick and Pam Walker, Paula Craft, Jim Sigg, and Dan Casey for the spectacular photos that perfectly illustrate our birding world here. Thanks to FAS Board members and Jan Metzmaker and Diane Medler, who reviewed and edited the text. We also want to thank Old Town Creative Communications, LLC of Whitefish for the fantastic layout and design. Finally, we thank the funders (Montana visitors who pay the accommodations tax) so that we could

print 2,000 copies for all of our local visitor centers, hotels, Bird Festival(s) attendees, etc. Copies of this beautiful and helpful brochure can be found at the Kalispell Chamber of Commerce, 15 Depot Park; Whitefish Chamber of Commerce, 307 Spokane in downtown Whitefish; Regional headquarters of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 490 N. Meridian Road and local hotels. FAS will also have free copies available at our monthly meetings.
From Gael Bissell

ATTENTION, READERS! You need to renew your FAS membership in order to receive future issues of this wonderful newsletter. Do It Now!!

OCTOBER FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

Monday, October 8, 2012: Flathead Audubon General Meeting. 7 PM at The Summit. Dave Haddon of Headwaters presents an update on progress in the North Fork of the Flathead. See page 3 for full details.

Monday, October 1, 2012: FAS Board of Directors Meeting. 6 PM at 295 3rd Ave. EN. All welcome.

Sunday, October 7, 2012: Field Trip: Fall Hawk Watch at Badrock Canyon. Noon to 4 PM at House of Mystery Fishing Access Site. Full details on page 3.

BIRD OF THE MONTH

By Gael Bissell

A GORGEOUS SUMMER MIGRANT

Guess which Flathead Valley summer bird (male) is orange and black, has a thick bill, and eats monarch butterflies in the winter but doesn't get sick? If you still aren't sure, the next hint is ... the male sounds like a loud robin on caffeine. You guessed it right; it's the Black-headed Grosbeak (and I know you didn't look at the photo). The adult males are brightly colored with a rich orange-cinnamon over most of the body and a patch of lemon yellow on the belly. The black wings have contrasting white bars, while the black tail has contrasting white spots. Females have a brownish head with buff to white or lemon yellow crown and distinct eye-stripe, dull cinnamon to buff body plumage with variable amounts of yellow and sometimes with black streaking. Her brown wings and tail have white bars/spots. Both have grayish thick bills and flash bright yellow under the wings.

This common summer bird is one of our larger, more brilliantly-colored western songbirds that migrate north from Mexico each spring to exploit insects, snails, spiders, fruits, and seeds in our deciduous forests, city parks, and backyards. The large finch-like bird breeds primarily west of the Mississippi and a bit into Canada.

Distribution by Season of Black-headed Grosbeaks from Cornell Lab of Ornithology



Black-headed Grosbeaks are one of only a few bird species that eat Monarch butterflies which also migrate to Mexico in winter. Apparently this species can tolerate the noxious chemicals that accumulate in these butterflies from their milkweed diet. How-

ever, Black-headed Grosbeaks only eat Monarchs in about 8-day cycles, allowing them to rid their bodies of the toxins between feedings.

Another cool fact about Black-headed Grosbeaks is that it usually takes males 2 years to mature and sport their breeding plumage. First year males vary from looking like a female to looking nearly like an adult male. Only those yearling males closely resembling adult males may attempt to breed. The female Black-headed Grosbeak builds a thin open cup nest, usually on an outer branch of a small willow, alder, cottonwood, or other broadleaved tree or shrub. The nest materials include twigs, weeds, tiny roots, and needles and are lined with hair and other fine plant materials. They lay 2-5 greenish-blue eggs with red spotting.

Male Black-headed Grosbeaks sing their resonating robin-like song from conspicuous perches. To attract females, males also fly with wings and tails spread. Both sexes sing, but have different songs. Black-headed Grosbeaks are monogamous for the entire nesting season; both share in the incubation and other chick-rearing duties. The adults brood the young for about two weeks until hatch and continue to feed the young for another two weeks until fledging. Black-headed Grosbeaks only raise one brood a year. After the nesting season, these birds will group in relatively large flocks and exploit berry crops before heading south for the winter. In Montana, this species arrives in mid-April but is gone by the end of July.

Black-headed Grosbeaks like large, predominantly deciduous trees with a rich understory, such as in groves of cottonwood, aspen or alder and willows along stream margins. In our drier western habitats, they would be associated with pinion-juniper woodlands and oak-savannas. Based on breeding bird surveys across the west, this population appears to be slightly increasing, probably due in part to their adaptation to suburban areas with large shade trees, parks, and feeders, and tolerance to human disturbances. This is certainly one bird that you'll have no trouble adding to your bird list next summer.





October Program

NORTH FORK UPDATE



For longer than most of us can remember, the fate of the North Fork of the Flathead River has been in question, a tug-of-war between industrial mining and drilling or preservation of water quality and wildlife. Dave Had-den, director of Headwaters, Montana, an organization advocating for preservation of the North Fork, will update us on the current situation at Flathead Audubon's October 8 general meeting.

Dave will describe efforts to increase the size of Waterton Lakes National Park, the status of Senate



Bill 233, the "North Fork Watershed Protection Act of 2012," introduced by Senators Baucus and Tester, and explain why this area is such a vital wildlife corridor.

Please join us on Monday, October 8, in the Community Room (Room 3) of The Summit, 205 Sunnyview Lane, Kalispell, at 7 PM. Flathead Audubon programs are always open to the public. The meeting will also include a report on the accomplishments of Owen Sowerwine Work Day activities, as well as recent local bird sightings. Enjoy refreshments and shade-grown coffee, too!



FIELD TRIP!

Fall Hawk Watch at Bad Rock Canyon: Sunday, October 7, 2012

Join Kathy Ross and others at the House of Mystery Fishing Access Site along Highway 2 between Columbia Falls and Hungry Horse from noon to 4 pm on Sunday, October 7, 2012, for the **first ever** coordinated count of hawks, accipiters, and eagles as they cross Bad Rock Canyon. If weather permits, we will communicate our observations to birders who are counting raptors at the Jewel Basin Hawk Watch site further south. Bring binoculars, scopes, chairs, and appropriate clothing. Contact Kathy Ross, 837-3837, for more information. To volunteer with the Jewel Basin Hawk Watch that day or any other day in September or October, contact Dan Casey, dcasey@abcbirds.org or 756-2681.



Fifth Year of Surveys at the Jewel Basin Hawk Watch Going Strong

At an elevation of 7,100 feet on the northwest flank of Mount Aeneas in the Flathead National Forest northeast of Bigfork, the Jewel Basin Hawk Watch site is uniquely situated for stunning views of passing migrant raptors. This year marks the fifth consecutive year that American Bird Conservancy, Flathead National Forest and Flathead Audubon are collaborating to conduct season-long hawk migration monitoring at the site.

The remarkable late summer weather allowed us to conduct 20 days of surveys through September 18, with continued sunny days predicted. We recorded 864 raptors of 12 species over the course of these surveys, the most we have ever recorded by this point in the season, with higher than normal numbers of Sharp-shinned, Broad-winged and Red-tailed Hawks, American Kestrels, and Peregrine Falcons. Since the biggest flights are typically in the latter half of September, things are looking good for one of our strongest flights ever. We already achieved several long-term benchmarks early in the season: an immature Sharp-



shinned Hawk on September 12 was the 10,000th raptor counted over the history of this count; we had our 150th Northern Goshawk September 11, our 50th Peregrine Falcon September 12, and our 50th Broad-winged Hawk September 16. By season's end, we will have recorded our 2,000th Golden Eagle, and our 5,000th Sharp-shinned Hawk!

These surveys would not be possible without the financial and logistical support of Flathead Audubon and Flathead National Forest, including hundreds of hours donated by volunteer observers every year. Surveys will continue, on all days with suitable weather, until the first week of November; beginning in early October, Golden Eagles are the most common species seen passing the site. We rely on a combination of volunteers and paid technicians to get the counts done, and it's always best to have more than one person on site for the surveys. Anyone is welcome to participate! Contact Dan Casey of American Bird Conservancy, dcasey@abcbirds.org, 406-756-2681, for more information and to volunteer.





CHIRPS & SQUAWKS

From
Flathead Audubon Board



Highlights from September 2012 Board Meeting:

- * Voted to donate \$1000 to American Bird Conservancy in support of Jewel Basin Hawk Watch
- * Gratefully welcomed Audubon member Marylane Pannell as Secretary for the Board
- * Appointed committee chairs Kathy Ross, Mike and Jill Fanning and Kay Mitchell to one-year positions as voting Board members
- * Voted to donate \$100 to Flathead Nonprofit Development Partnership in support of educational and development programs for local nonprofit organizations (including FAS)

Full minutes of every Flathead Audubon Board meeting are printed on the Flathead Audubon's website, www.flatheadaudubon.org after they are officially accepted at the following month's meeting. Click on "About Us," then "Board Meeting Minute Archives." Take a look!
Kay Mitchell, FAS Board



YOUR LEAST EXPENSIVE ENTERTAINMENT OF THE YEAR!



Flathead Audubon chapter memberships all renew in October. Without renewal, this will be the last month you receive *The Pileated Post*.

Please consider signing up for the e-mail (color) version of the Newsletter. It's a good way to save your chapter \$20 a year and receive *The Pileated Post* conveniently straight to your computer. And we *never* rent or sell our e-mail list to ANYONE. To receive the email version of *The Post*, click [here](#) and say, "Please send me the e-Post!"

Our membership fee of \$20 covers the basic expenses of the chapter: newsletter, monthly meetings, field trips, etc. Because this amount does not cover special programs such as Owen Sowerwine Natural Area and our education program, we also offer supporting membership at \$35. We encourage all who are able to subscribe to the supporting membership.

You can still join National Audubon, of course. Your membership fee will support National's many excellent nation-wide education and conservation programs, **but your money will not go to your local chapter.** The National Audubon fee is \$20 for first-time members (\$15 for Seniors and Students), and then \$35 to renew your membership after that.

We strongly suggest that you join Flathead Audubon and then choose either to join National Audubon or not. Over the years, Flathead Audubon has been well supported by valley residents through donations and fundraising activities. We hope your support will continue and be supplemented by a large group of local chapter members.

Use the form on the last page to join now!
Mike Fanning, Membership Chair



Wintertime—and the Living's Not Easy

In much of North America, winter is a difficult time for birds. Days are often windy and cold; nights are long and even colder. Lush vegetation has withered or been consumed, and most insects have died or become dormant. Finding food can be especially challenging for birds on extremely cold days. Setting up a backyard feeder makes their lives easier and ours more enjoyable. To observe birds at a feeder, you don't need to brave the elements—you can watch from the comfort of your own home. Participants in the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Project FeederWatch help scientists track changes in the abundance and distribution of winter bird populations, by counting birds at their feeders during this winter-long survey. Great Backyard Bird Count participants provide valuable data with a much shorter time commitment—as little as fifteen minutes!

Types of Feeders

The ideal bird feeder is sturdy enough to withstand winter weather, tight enough to keep seeds dry, large enough that you don't have to refill it constantly, and easy to assemble and keep clean. In general, seed-feeders fall into three categories: tray feeders, hopper feeders, and tube feeders. Tray feeders are typically placed close to the ground and attract ground-feeding birds such as juncos, sparrows, and towhees. Tray feeders also work well when mounted on deck railings, stumps, or posts. Hopper feeders are often hung from trees or attached to decks or poles. These feeders are especially good for larger species such as cardinals, jays, and grosbeaks. Tube feeders are typically suspended from trees and posts. They are excellent for finches, titmice, and chickadees.

Feeders, continued on next page ...



NaturEner Rim Rock Wind Farm and Montana Audubon Announce Major Wind Farm Changes to Limit Impact to Sensitive Raptor Habitat and the Signing of an Historic Memorandum of Understanding

San Francisco, CA/Helena, MT – August 16, 2012

NaturEner USA, LLC (NaturEner), a San Francisco-based wind energy development company and Montana Audubon announced today major changes to the Rim Rock Wind Farm in direct response to concerns over raptors and their habitat. Kevin Rim, in north central Montana, has been known to harbor up to 60 active nests of 10 raptor species in a given year. The Rim Rock Wind Farm is currently under construction on private lands near to, and west of, the Kevin Rim. At the urging of Montana Audubon, NaturEner voluntarily agreed to relocate each of 25 wind turbines to provide a buffer of approximately ½ mile from historic and active raptor nests. This commitment was made after the project design was finalized, financing completed, and actual construction had begun. In addition, NaturEner and Montana Audubon have entered into an historic Memorandum of Understanding which reflects an unprecedented level of cooperation and commitment between a wind energy company and a wildlife conservation organization.

The Rim Rock Wind Farm, which was conceived in 2005 and for which preliminary construction work was begun in August, 2011, is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2012, with a name-plate rated capacity of 189 megawatts and a total expected annual electrical generation of approximately 662,000 MWh, enough energy to power 60,000 average U.S. homes each year.

As the project was being developed, Montana Audubon voiced concern over whether the turbine locations as designed would be sufficiently distant from historic raptor nests to limit the potential for displacement and/or disturbance of one of the most active raptor nesting areas in Montana. Although the land-based wind energy guidelines developed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) did not specify a setback distance, NaturEner was aware of the concerns and consulted with both the USFWS and Montana Audu-

bon in an effort to find common ground regarding the planned turbine placement. After numerous meetings and the desire of both NaturEner and Montana Audubon to find an acceptable solution to minimize potential impact to these sensitive bird species, the final design plan was changed.

“Montana Audubon applauds the response of NaturEner,” said Steve Hoffman, Executive Director of Montana Audubon. “They listened to our recommendations, and agreed to relocate 25 wind turbines in the Rim Rock wind project. These changes have occurred late in the process, after construction had begun and at great expense to NaturEner.”

The Memorandum of Understanding signed by both parties memorializes the efforts of both NaturEner and Montana Audubon to provide a framework of understanding between the two organizations that has as its fundamental objectives: regional economic development, an environmentally sustainable clean energy project, and the preservation of wildlife and its habitat. The MOU also provides the structure for cooperation and understanding between Rim Rock and Montana Audubon for additional wildlife studies and an opportunity to coordinate regional issues of mutual interest relating to wind energy development.

“NaturEner recognizes the valuable contributions and recommendations of Montana Audubon during the development of the Rim Rock project, particularly its advice and counsel regarding wind turbine setback requirements from historic and existing raptor nests,” said José M. Sánchez Seara, Chief Executive Officer of NaturEner Rim Rock Wind Energy, LLC.

Montana Audubon’s primary adviser on the project has been Janet Ellis, MA Program Director.



NaturEner photo

Feeder Placement

Birds visiting feeders are often killed in collisions with windows. Feeders attached to windows or window frames, or placed within 3 feet of a window, are safest because birds are more likely to notice the glass, and if they don't, aren't flying at top speed if they do collide. Window feeders are often the easiest for us to observe and maintain.

If possible, place your feeder close to natural shelters such as trees or shrubs. Evergreens are ideal, providing maximum cover from winter winds and predators. Trees and shrubs can also provide good jumping-off places for squirrels that may be eyeing the seeds, and hiding places for cats that may be eyeing the birds. About 10 feet seems to be a happy compromise. You can provide resting and escape cover for ground-dwelling birds, such as Song Sparrows, by placing a large, loosely stacked brush pile near your feeders.

HOWEVER, ...

Leave your feeders empty until the bears have hibernated. The PP will tell you when it's safe to feed!



Business Sponsors of FAS Conservation Education Program

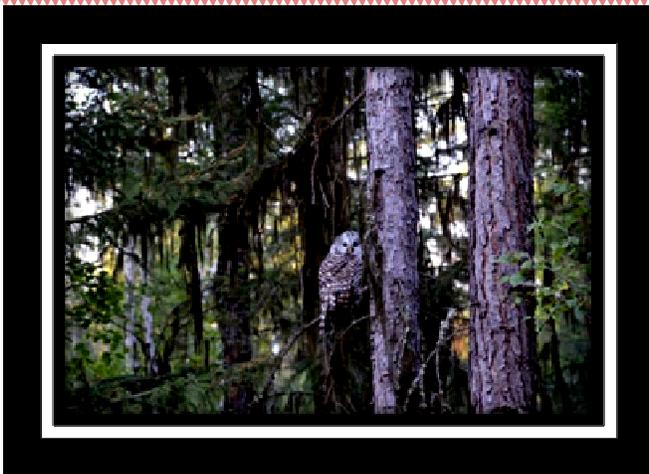
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To our delight, FAS member Mary Aley sent us this photo that she took from her front steps. She emailed the photo to Denver Holt and he confirmed that it was a Barred Owl. Mary says, "We have lived on our place (Beaver Lake Area, outside of Whitefish) for 14 years and I have recorded 62 bird species here, and still counting!!!" Thanks very much, Mary—your photo reminds us how special it is to live in Montana!

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+
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The FAS activity which most interests me is:

- Education Programs
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COMING SOON!

Next month's Pileated Post brings you a special section of suggestions for budget-wise, bird-related holiday gifts for friends and family. If you have ideas you'd like included, please email them to lindawin@centurytel.net or kbmitch@centurytel.net by October 18.

RAPTOR DAY HITS THE JACKPOT!

The sixth annual Raptor Day was our most successful yet! Attendance was up considerably from last year, which also had record numbers of attendees. Around 40 kids and adults joined Ansley and Rose Ford on the Family Bird Walk! Presentations began with an inspiring talk by June Ash and our own Brent Mitchell about the life's work of Rod Ash and his contribution to conservation in Montana. County Commissioner Dale Lauman then lent his expertise on the importance of land-use planning. Glacier Park Ranger Pat Hagan kept everyone howling with laughter as he talked about some of the more fascinating facts about birds, and then Audubon Board member Bruce Tannehill wowed the crowd with his Beauty of Birdsong presentation. Between programs, kids and adults enjoyed games and activities provided by Lone Pine State Park employees, educational booths, and Wildlife Return's awesome owls! The weather was beautiful and the air was full of laughter and joyful noise. A very fun day indeed!

From Ashley Mason, FAS Education Consultant

PFW

If you enjoy watching birds at your feeders, consider joining Project FeederWatch. PFW's 24th season begins on November 13 and lasts until April 8. More than 15,000 participants count birds at their feeders as often as once per week and send their observations to scientists at the Cornell Lab. These reports help our scientists better understand population trends and movements of our favorite



backyard birds. See the results for yourself in Winter Bird Highlights, a summary published after the count ends. Will siskins and redpolls return to our feeders this winter? Did Eurasian Collared-Doves continue to move across the continent? We need your help to know! Join at any time at www.feederwatch.org or by calling 800-843-2473.

Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while care will drop away from you like the leaves of Autumn. John Muir

New Species Discovered by Cornell Grads, Named for Cornell Lab Director

On a remarkable expedition in 2008, a team of young explorers including three Cornell graduates discovered an undescribed bird in Peru. Now named Sira Barbet, the new species graces the cover of the July 2012 issue of *The Auk*, and receives its formal scientific description inside. Its scientific name, *Capito fitzpatricki*, honors the contributions of John Fitzpatrick, director of the Cornell Lab, who did pioneering work in Peru (including discovering seven new species of his own) and also helped mentor the Cornell graduates on the expedition. "Fitz's contributions to Neotropical ornithology, and his enthusiasm for exploration, stoked our dream for the expedition," said Ben Winger, one of the Cornell grads. "He has in-



Photo by Michael Harvey

spired generations of young ornithologists in scientific discovery and conservation, and we are honored to name this species for him."

The 2008 expedition was supported by Lab donors, a National Geographic Young Explorers grant, and donations to the Lab's student World Series of Birding team. In addition to the discovery of the Sira Barbet, the expedition documented 670 species and brought back 490 sound recordings for the Cornell Lab's Macaulay Library's archives. The three-week expedition ventured into remote highlands that had never before been the subject of an ornithological study.



OCTOBER 2012



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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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Board President: Dan Sullivan
443-4229



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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