



the Pileated Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

VOLUME 37

NUMBER 5

FEBRUARY 2013



4-hobby.com

WELCOME TO A SPECIAL EDITION OF BIRDS AFIELD!



elainebrammell.com

It's the middle of winter in Montana and the only thing moving is ... BIRDS! In this issue of *The Pileated Post*, you'll find a full listing of all of the Christmas Bird Count results, the Jewel Basin Hawk Watch final tallies, plus important information for you about upcoming bird festivals, birding excursions, bird counts and exciting Flathead Audubon field trips. Why, there's plenty here to fill your calendar with enough birding to get you through to spring! But before you put on your coat and hat, look below at all of the fine folks who have donated to Flathead Audubon in our annual fundraising drive!

FLATHEAD AUDUBON DONOR HONOR ROLL

PLEASE PATRONIZE AND THANK OUR COMMERCIAL SPONSORS, TOO!

MY OWN VISION

Frances Patton
Gerald and Sally Askevold
Tom and Stephenne Harding
Ruth and David Kauffman
John and Judith Melin
Harry C. Gibson
Joel and Barbara Vignere
Robert and Rebecca Blickenstaff
Don and Mary Patterson
Barbara Lutz
Charles Williams
Janice Kienas
Laird Reed
Linda Hofman
June Ash
Eileen Carney
Sharon Manyx
Laura Law
Peggy Moore
C. R. and K. M. Meyers
Jennifer Clothier

KESTREL

Cheryl Klein
Bob Lopp
Lorinda Baker
Bill Schustrom
Edwin Prach
Ann and Marise Johnson
Three Rivers Bank
Richmond and Sarah Thomason
Linda and John Winnie
Michael Borkoski
Art and Susan Burch
Third Street Market
Robert and Inez Love
Barbara Boorman
Dean Robbins
Paula Smith
Bill Bruzek
Robert Lopp, Jr.
Dan and Susannah Casey
Richard and Susanne Hildner
Weese Enterprises, Rae Weese
Diane and Brentley Buchele

KESTREL (cont.)

Kay Mitchell
Frank and Linda deKort

MERLIN

Roy Dimond
Gary and Mary Sloan
Kathryn Bosket
Rod McIver
Gail Bissell
Bruce Tannehill and Gail Cleveland
John and Anne Collins
Tyler Bebee with D.A. Davidson
Jim Jokerst

SNOWY OWL

Bill and Carole Jensen
NorthWestern Energy

OSPREY

Whitefish Credit Union



FEBRUARY FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR—See Page 3

BIRD OF THE MONTH

By Lewis Young

The Northern Shrike

The Northern Shrike is a solitary "masked hunter" that may be found in the northern U.S., including the Flathead Valley, during the winter. Its scientific name is *Lanius excubitor* and means "butcher watchman." It is a pale gray bird with lightly barred under-parts and black wings, tail, and mask. The black wings have a distinctive white patch that can be seen when perched or flying and the tail has white outer feathers. The tail often bobs when perched. The black mask runs from the base of the bill, through the eye and well beyond. The bill has a distinct hook. Wingspan is about 12-14 inches and length is about 9-10 inches. Juveniles are brownish above and more heavily barred than adults. Immatures are somewhat intermediate in color but retain barring on under-parts until spring. A similar species, Loggerhead Shrike, breeds mainly in eastern Montana but winters farther south, whereas the Northern Shrike does not breed in Montana but winters here.

Northern Shrikes sing a medley of short liquid trills, whistles and harsh notes and often mimic the calls and songs of other birds, such as Blue Jays, Gray Catbirds, American Robins, and Song Sparrows. The call is a harsh shek-shek or a grating jaaeg. Both male and female Northern Shrikes sing throughout the year. The male sings especially in late winter and early spring.

Northern Shrikes live in semi-open country with lookout posts in the form of trees, shrubs, or other structures. They breed in the far north in Canada and Alaska in partly open or scattered spruce woods and in willow and alder scrub along streams or edges of tundra. Winter habitat is similar semi-open areas or sometimes in open grassland with a few high perches, but they seem to prefer some brushy areas nearby. They winter widely across the U.S. and southern Canada from coast to coast and as far south as northern Texas and New Mexico. Southern range limits and numbers on winter range vary unpredictably from year to year.

Northern Shrikes prey on insects, rodents, snakes, and small birds. They scan the countryside from a perch, then swoop down on prey with a direct flight. Occasionally, they may hover in the air above potential prey. Prey is seized near the ground with feet or bill and vertebrates are killed by



biting through the neck. Wings, spines, and stingers are removed from insects. Food may be impaled on thorns, barbed wire, or hung in the crotch of a limb at an area called the larder. Besides being stored for later eating, the larder is believed to be also used for marking territories and attracting mates. Such behavior was characterized by early observers as "wanton killing," but storing excess prey to eat later is an adaptation for surviving periods of food scarcity.

Nests are usually placed in a low tree or large shrub 6-15 feet off the ground. Probably built by both sexes, the nest is a loosely made, bulky open cup of twigs, grass, bark strips, and moss lined with feathers and animal hair. The nest is an open cup, but it is so deep that while incubating, the female is completely out of view except for the tip of her tail.

Clutch size varies from 4-9 eggs that are pale gray or greenish white, spotted with brown, olive, and gray. Incubation is mostly or entirely by the female and lasts 15-17 days. When born, the young have little down and are totally dependent on the parents. Both parents feed the nestlings, which leave the nest 19-20 days after hatching and then are tended by parents for several more weeks.

An odd historical note is that in the 1870's, when the house sparrow had just been introduced from Europe, a warden was hired to shoot Northern Shrikes on the Boston Common in winter to protect the sparrows!

Currently there are no known conservation concerns. Population trends are difficult to assess because of the Northern Shrike's rarity and remoteness of its breeding habitat; however, large areas of suitable breeding habitat in Alaska and northern Canada are protected. Currently the Northern Shrike is not on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's list of Birds of Conservation Concern, nor on the United States Watchlist, which is a joint project of the American Bird Conservancy and National Audubon Society.

Northern Shrikes, although not numerous, may be spotted fairly easily in the Flathead Valley in winter by looking for perched birds in prominent spots in mostly open areas. Trees, shrubs, fence posts, power lines and power poles overlooking open areas are good places to look. Enjoy them while they are here!





February Program

MONTANA'S BATS—THOSE FACINATING NIGHT FLYERS

Bats are a fascinating and often poorly understood component of the wildlife in Montana. Fortunately, knowledge about bats is expanding rapidly. At our February 11 program, Lewis Young will present a slideshow that will review all 15 bat species in Montana, including their biology and ecology, bat survey methods, and bat habitats. He has been involved with bat surveys each summer since 2006 and intermittently before then.

Lewis holds a Bachelor's Degree in Wildlife Management from Southwest Missouri State University and a Master's Degree in Wildlife Biology from Colorado State University. Retired from the U.S. Forest Service after a 30 year career working in Montana, North Dakota, California, and New Mexico,

Lewis remains active in wildlife conservation and management. He serves as the Conservation Committee Chair on the Flathead Audubon Society Board of Directors and remains active with the Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society. He also enjoys banding bluebirds and part-time consulting. Lewis lives in Eureka with his wife Lynda.

We will meet on Monday, February 11 at 7:00 PM at our new location in the United Way Conference Room at the Gateway Community Center on US Highway 2 West in Kalispell. The Conference Room is accessed from the parking lot on the west side of the Center. Enjoy cookies and coffee, visit with friends before the meeting, and find out which birds are being seen around the Flathead Valley!

FEBRUARY FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

Monday, February 11, 2013: Flathead Audubon General Meeting. 7 PM at Gateway Community Center, United Way Conference Room. Lewis Young presents program on bats. See page 3 for details.

Monday, February 4, 2013: FAS Board of Directors Meeting. 6 PM at 295 3rd Ave. EN. All welcome.

Friday, February 15—Monday, February 18, 2013: Great Backyard Bird Count. Details on page 7.

Swan Lake Refuge X-country Ski and Bird Field Trip: Date to be announced; see page 7.

FULL LIST OF MID-WINTER and EARLY SPRING FIELD TRIPS! Full details on page 7!



Freezeout Lake Snow Goose Migration: A Rite of Spring

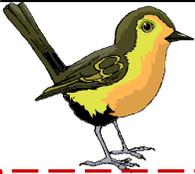


The annual Flathead Audubon trip to witness the extraordinary concentration of Snow Geese at the Freezeout Lake Wildlife Management Area south of Choteau is once again scheduled for late March. Every year, the majority of the Pacific Flyway population of Snow Geese stops at this wonderful wetland complex 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 23 and 24, and will be led by Dan Casey. Meet at the west end of the Super 1 parking lot on First Avenue East in downtown Kalispell Saturday morning at 10 AM. We will caravan/carpool to Choteau, planning on being at Freezeout in time for the afternoon "fly-out" of the geese. After dinner and a night in Choteau, we will head out before daybreak to watch the geese leave the lake, heading home shortly after noon, once the geese have flown in from the fields. We should arrive in Kalispell by 5PM Sunday. Dan will provide a suggested schedule and route, and will lead the group, but attendees may choose to follow the geese as much or as little as the weather (cold and windy) and birds allow. Make your own lodging arrangements; 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 (857-3143 or danielcasey55@gmail.com).

Words of John James Audubon

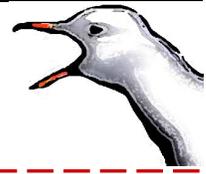
"Almost every day, instead of going to school, I made for the fields, where I spent my day."



CHIRPS & SQUAWKS

From

Kay Mitchell for the Flathead Audubon Board



Highlights from January 2013 Board Meeting:

- ◆ Saw a presentation from the FAS Conservation Educator and two Glacier High School teachers about building of native plant gardens at Glacier High and Helena Flats schools and watched photo/video show that Ashley Mason has put together on the project.
- ◆ Received an update from the Education Committee on their additional projects – Beauty of Birds, interpretive display for Owen Sowerwine kiosk, producing bird/nature calendar for 2014, addressing substantial demand for an owl trunk, and selection of a hard-to-serve population to target with the Conservation Education program in 2013.
- ◆ Discussed need for a consistent policy regarding use of written materials by other people and chapters.
- ◆ Heard committee reports and received update on fundraising and FAS current financial status.
- ◆ Decided to put OSNA Master Plan on FAS website and replace Cornell bird songs with Bruce Tannehill's. 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!



CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS

KALISPELL CBC (December 30, 2012): Record Effort, Record Results

A record 47 people participated in the 14th annual Kalispell Christmas Bird Count December 30, an overcast day with snow flurries. They found 20,902 birds of **83 species**, breaking our previous high of 77 species, set last year. Five species were new to the count: **Ring-necked Duck** north-west of Kalispell, **Common Loon** (possibly injured) on a small patch of open water on Foy's Lake, **Northern Saw-whet Owl** calling in the pre-dawn near McWenneger Slough, two **Pacific Wrens** along Ashley Creek west of town, and a **Spotted Towhee** at a feeder in Lakeshore Heights. These bring our 14-year total list to 121 species. We also tied or broke our previous high for another fifteen species, including **Lesser Scaup** (5), **Bufflehead** (89), **Cooper's Hawk** (5), **American Kestrel** (6), **Merlin** (11), **Ruffed Grouse** (8), **Great Horned Owl** (11), **Northern Pygmy-Owl** (4), **Downy** (61), **Hairy** (17), and **Pileated** (16) **Woodpeckers**, **Mountain Chickadee** (285), **Townsend's Solitaire** (19), **White-throated Sparrow** (1), and **Pine Grosbeak** (174). Another three species were seen during count week, but not on count day (**Prairie Falcon**, **California Gull** and **Great Gray Owl**). We are still learning just how special this count can be. Thanks to all who participated in the learning process!



Submitted by Dan Casey

90 SPECIES AT BIGFORK ONCE AGAIN

Twenty-nine people participated in the 39th annual Bigfork Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, December 15, and for the second consecutive year, we recorded 90 bird species. These included two species new to the count: a Cackling Goose among the large flocks of Canada Geese near the Flathead WPA, and a Spotted Sandpiper along the river near Egan Slough. We also established new high count totals for 19 other species, including Common Loon (5), Western Grebe (12), Trumpeter Swan (28), Red-breasted Merganser (19), Bald Eagle (62), Red-tailed Hawk (62, including 6 "Harlan's Hawks"), Rough-legged Hawk (62), Northern Pygmy-Owl (8), Townsend's Solitaire (27), and Pine Grosbeak (172). Thanks to all who participated on what proved to be a seasonally cool, overcast but highly productive day!

Submitted by Dan Casey

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2012 EUREKA AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The 20th annual Eureka Christmas Bird Count was on December 15, 2012. In temperatures slightly below freezing and light snow, eighteen field observers and 15 feeder watchers counted 66 species and 3618 individual birds. It ties the highest species total and is the highest total of individuals in the history of the count.

Highest number of a single species was 975 Bohemian waxwings. Other most numerous species were Canada goose, mallard, wild turkey, common raven, black-capped chickadee, and house sparrow. Only 1-2 individuals were sighted for 18 species with a few examples being redhead, great blue heron, golden eagle, American coot, killdeer, northern pygmy-owl, and chestnut-backed chickadee. A northern saw-whet owl was sighted for the first time ever on the Eureka count. Record high counts were made for Canada geese, great horned owls, northern flickers, and house sparrows. Snowy owl, Clark's nutcracker, and American robin were sighted during count week but not on count day.

Submitted by Lewis Young



hawkquest.org

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS



audubonbirds.org

2012-2013 GLACIER NATIONAL PARK CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

On December 16, 2012, 19 observers on 10 field routes and two at one feeder site (in West Glacier) recorded 455 birds of 31 species, the compilation of the 39th Glacier National Park CBC (since 1973-74), as part of the 113th year of the National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count tradition. This year's count produced fewer species than last year but with over 100 more individuals. Six additional species were observed on count week (the 3 days before and the 3 days after the count day).

On count day, the Common Raven was, once again, the most commonly observed species, having been observed on 9 of the 10 routes, totaling 24 individuals. The most abundant species was the Canada Goose, numbering 86 individuals. Common Goldeneye were quite common on Lake McDonald (57). While waterfowl were making use of the open waters of Lower McDonald Creek and the lake, owls made a showing in wooded areas: Great Horned Owl, Northern Pygmy-Owl, and a Northern Hawk Owl made appearances, one each. Common Redpolls were busy at the feeder site (60), and flocks of Pine Siskins were apparent along four of the routes and also at the feeder.

Weather was accommodating, with temperatures varying just below freezing. Light winds danced with scattered snow flurries throughout the day. Most folks were able to travel by snowshoes or skis, though a few areas required no equipment. Everyone reported a mostly enjoyable day! Thanks to all the participants for giving of their time and energy for this annual data-gathering effort, chronicling who's who in the early winter of this area of the park.

A complete tally will be posted at www.christmasbirdcount.org for the national site and at www.mtaudubon.org/birds/cbc.html for the state site. Submitted by Susan Sindt

Many thanks to John Hughes of the FAS Newsletter Committee for gathering and assembling all of the Christmas Bird Count results!

Upper Swan

Ten of us participated in this year's Upper Swan CBC on Sunday December 16. It was a reasonably nice day with a high of 33°F and a morning low of 17°F, with 7" of snow on the ground. Light snow showers on and off mixed with sunshine throughout the day.

We counted 26 species, totaling 360 birds and 6 more species during count week. As usual, the most common bird was the Common Raven with 69 seen. The only new species was a lone Bufflehead on a local lake. For the first time ever, in 20 years of counting, no Dippers were spotted on count day; they were counted during count week. It was a nice day to be out, and a pretty normal count for the Upper Swan.

Submitted by Jody Wolff

Libby Count

Twelve participants took to the field December 15 for the Libby Christmas Bird Count. Three individuals observed feeders during count day. After some fog and light snow in the morning, the remainder of the day was partly cloudy with mild temperatures. Four people covered 5 miles on foot and 8 people covered 200 miles by car for a total of 205 miles.

Fifty-seven species were observed with a total of 2,386 individual birds. A historic high count of 269 Black-capped Chickadees was achieved during the day. The most numerous species for the day was the Common Raven.

Submitted by Sandy Gerber

Ninepipe NWR Christmas Bird Count -- 2012

Twenty-five participants observed a record 81 species during the Ninepipes CBC on Sunday, December 16, 2012. The combination of a mild fall and early winter, the nice finch irruption, good coverage and good luck led to one more species than ever seen before on the count. Unsurprisingly, we had high counts for lots of the finches, including Pine Grosbeak (82), Gray-crowned Rosy-finch (11), and Common Redpoll (424), but we also had high counts for Wild Turkey, American Coot, Eurasian Collared-dove, Northern Flicker, Mountain Chickadee, and Golden-crowned Kinglet.

Nothing truly unusual pushed us to a record number of species, but other birds of note included a Gyrfalcon and Hoary Redpoll, both found by Radd Icenoggle, Chestnut-backed Chickadees and Canyon Wren found by Jim Rogers, and our second official record of Cackling Goose, found by Dan and Susannah Casey.

A big thanks to all the folks who showed up this year to help, and a special thanks to Jim Rogers for taking the lead when I couldn't make it back from Seattle in time for the count.

Submitted by Brian Williams

TROY

Don Jones, compiler of the Troy count reported 55 species, which is good for this count. No real rare birds were noted.



Five Years of Success at the Jewel Basin Hawk Watch



From Dan Casey

American Bird Conservancy, Flathead Audubon and Flathead National Forest completed our fifth year of hawk migration monitoring in the Jewel Basin this past fall (25 August – 3 November). Thanks to the efforts of our two paid technicians, Craig Hohenberger and bj Worth, stalwart volunteer counters Diane Lundgren and Barbara Summer, and more than 50 others who visited the site, we were able to conduct more surveys (48) than during any previous year. A total of 647 person-hours comprised our season's survey effort, with more than 491 of those hours donated by volunteers! These efforts resulted in record counts of Cooper's Hawks (427), Red-tailed Hawks (225), Golden Eagles (502), and Peregrine Falcons (22), as well as our second highest overall count in the five years we have conducted surveys at the site (see Table). We have now counted more than 12,000 raptors, including >5,500 Sharp-shinned Hawks and >2,000 Golden Eagles passing this wonderful site!

Species	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Turkey Vulture	5	6	0	0	5
Osprey	8	19	6	7	5
Bald Eagle	41	25	30	37	39
Northern Harrier	46	62	36	45	51
Sharp-shinned Hawk	779	812	1541	1221	1142
Cooper's Hawk	302	389	321	297	427
Northern Goshawk	50	30	35	26	27
Unidentified Accipiter	50	69	66	59	79
Broad-winged Hawk	2	22	6	12	17
Swainson's Hawk	1	1	2	0	1
Red-tailed Hawk	173	152	178	136	225
Ferruginous Hawk	1	1	1	0	1
Rough-legged Hawk	41	1	17	7	14
Unidentified Buteo	11	8	11	13	21
Golden Eagle	474	240	390	468	502
American Kestrel	35	100	38	73	74
Merlin	21	31	24	26	20
Peregrine Falcon	16	6	13	11	22
Prairie Falcon	7	9	1	10	6
Gyr Falcon	0	0	0	1	0
Unidentified Falcon	1	3	2	6	8
Unidentified Eagle	3		1	2	3
Unidentified Raptor	46	24	22	13	31
TOTAL	2113	2010	2741	2470	2720
Survey Days	41	42	40	46	48
Effort: In hours	243	272	241	278	327
Passage Rate (birds/hr)	8.7	7.4	11.4	8.9	8.3
Total Species	17	17	16	15	17

We counted 2,720 raptors of 17 species during the 2012 migration season, our second highest season-long total to date. Our average passage rate (8.3 birds/hr for the season) was our second lowest, however. We attribute that to fewer days with favorable SW winds. Our highest single day count was 155 birds (of 8 species), 14 September, our earliest (and lowest) peak count date in five years of season-long surveys.

One advantage of our ridgetop site in the Jewel is that most migrants fly close enough for us not only to identify them to species, but often to sex and age. This year we were able to classify the age class of 82% of all the raptors we counted.

(Jewel Basin Hawk Watch Results, continued on page 8 ...)

**MID-WINTER FIELD TRIPS****COME ON! IT'S THE 2013 GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT!**

The 2013 Great Backyard Bird Count takes place Friday, February 15, through Monday, February 18. GBBC is an annual 4-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are. Everyone is welcome—from beginning bird watchers to experts. Take as little as 15 minutes on one day, or count for as long as you like each day of the event. It's free, fun, and easy—and it helps the birds. Participants tally the number of individual birds of each species they see and enter these numbers on the GBBC website.

As the count progresses, anyone with Internet access can explore what is being reported from their own towns or from anywhere in the world. Participants may also send in photographs of the birds they see for the GBBC photo contest. A selection of images is posted in the online photo gallery.

Why count birds?

Scientists and bird enthusiasts can learn a lot by knowing where the birds are. No single scientist or team of scientists could hope to document and understand the complex distribution and movements of so

many species in such a short time. Scientists use the GBBC information, along with observations from other citizen-science projects, such as the Christmas Bird Count, Project FeederWatch, and eBird, to learn what is happening to bird populations and to help scientists investigate far-reaching questions, like these:

- How will the weather influence bird populations?
- Where are winter finches and other "irruptive" species that appear in large numbers during some years but not others?
- How will the timing of birds' migrations compare with past years?
- How are bird diseases, such as West Nile virus, affecting birds in different regions?
- What kinds of differences in bird diversity are apparent in cities versus suburban, rural, and natural areas?



funnyfailpictures.com

To participate and for more information, go to <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/whycount.html> or contact FAS Conservation Educator Ashley Mason at AudubonAshley@gmail.com and see below.

Great Backyard Bird Count and Concurrent Field Trips

Join Flathead Audubon on two great winter birding field trips. Both are ½ day trips geared to families that want to get out and see birds together, but everyone is welcome. Please sign up, as space may be limited. Field trip leaders (below) will also provide copies of the Great Backyard Bird Count forms on both field trips.

Swan River/Bigfork Great Backyard Bird Count Field Trip Saturday, February 16

Meet Kathy Ross at **9:00 AM** at the Swan River Hall on Highway 83 across from Swan River School/Echo Lake Café to see birds in the Bigfork/Swan River area. Bring binoculars, snacks, and warm clothes and plan on carpooling as much as possible. Kathy will have a spotting scope. Limit about 25 people. To sign up or for more information, contact Kathy at 406-837-3837 or mtkat@montanaport.net.

Flathead Valley Great Backyard Bird Count Field Trip Sunday, February 17

Meet Bob Lee at **9:00 AM** at Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks office, 490 N. Meridian Rd., Kalispell, to tour the best winter birding areas in the Flathead. Bring binoculars, snacks, warm clothes and plan on carpooling as much as possible. Bob will have a spotting scope and extra binoculars. Limit about 25 people. To sign up and for more information, contact Bob at 406-270-0371 or rml3@centurytel.net.

Future Field Trips—Save the Dates!**Swan Lake Refuge X-country Ski and Bird, TBA in February**

When weather conditions are right, Kathy Ross will lead a x-country ski or snowshoe day-long field trip across Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge to see wildlife tracks and birds, while also getting great exercise. Trip may be any day of the week and meets at Swan River Hall at 8:30 AM. Provide Kathy (406-837-3837 or mtkat@montanaport.net) with your contact information and schedule so she can call/email you a few days before the trip. The first part of February usually offers best snow conditions. Bring warm clothes, binoculars, snacks, and warm drink.

Early Spring Migrants - Flathead or Smith Valleys on Saturday, March 23

If you can't make it to Freezeout Lake this weekend, you can still see thousands of early migratory waterfowl with Craig Hohenberger, avid birder/science educator from Monterey, California, and now retired to the Flathead Valley. Field trip will focus on birding hot spots in Lower Valley but may go elsewhere depending on conditions. Limited to about 25 people. To sign up, contact Craig (755-0140 or asoleado2003@yahoo.com.)

Give a Hoot (Barred Owls) on Saturday evening, April 13

Pete Fisher will again host an evening of listening and calling for Barred and possibly other owls in the east Flathead Valley. Limited to about 25 individuals. Contact Pete (250-9624 or fisherpete88@yahoo.com) to pre-register; if there is overwhelming interest again, FAS will try to schedule another night of hooting and owling adventure.



Save the Date!

14th Annual “**Wings Across the Big Sky**” Festival takes place **June 7 - 9, 2013**
in the geographic center of the state, Lewistown, Montana!

Join Montana Audubon and Lewistown for dynamic birding field trips, great speakers, interesting presentations, and fun festivities as we celebrate efforts to conserve our birds and wildlife in the heart of Montana!

One of only ten cities nationwide selected to receive an Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds grant, the Lewistown community and surrounding areas are gearing up to welcome birders to the region. The Urban Bird Treaty program, administered by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, “brings together private citizens, as well as federal, state, and municipal agencies and non-governmental organizations to conserve migratory birds through education programs, participation in citizen science, conservation and habitat improvement strategies, and reducing hazards to birds in urban/suburban areas.”

Keynote speaker John Marzluff will share the amazing world of corvid intelligence with us! Visit www.mtaudubon.org, for a sneak peak at John's work.

Experience all that this Central Montana landscape has to offer, either through festival field trips or your own exploration!

- . Lewistown Trail System
- . Snowies, Moccasins, Belts, Judiths, and Highwoods
- . Big Springs Trout Hatchery
- . Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge
- . Big Spring Creek Fishing



An official Cornell Lab of Ornithology eBird Trail Tracker, the first and only in the state, will be available in the lobby of the festival hotel, the Yogo Inn, to record your sightings! Watch www.mtaudubon.org and this newsletter for updates and information about how you can register and participate!



mrscauldwellss.blogspot.com

Montana's Wildlife Needs Your Voice

With the 2013 Montana Legislature now in session, many important issues impacting wildlife, wildlife habitat, and our environment are at stake. The passionate and reasoned voices of Auduboners across the state can make such a difference. We anticipate that most of our work at Legislature will be defensive. **Our priorities are:**

- ◆ **Fighting for Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat** by supporting wildlife program budgets—and fighting legislation that prohibits the purchase of any new public land, including for wildlife habitat.
- ◆ **Advocating for Climate Change Solutions** by ensuring that Montana's energy development remains as wildlife-friendly as possible—and that the state continues to make progress on energy efficiency, renewable energy, and other climate change solutions.
- ◆ **Defending our Environmental Laws**, including the Montana Environmental Policy Act (which requires a review of environmental impacts before the development of new mines, large subdivisions, oil and gas wells, timber sales, etc.), land use laws designed to regulate uncontrolled development (from subdivisions to gravel pits), and laws that protect our clean air and water.

Please lend your voice to help Audubon in Helena by signing up for our Action Alert program at www.mtaudubon.org. We limit the use of our Action Alert program to the most critical times!

If you are already our Action Alert list, you do not need to sign up again. If you are not sure if you are signed up, just sign up again—we make sure that duplicate email addresses are weeded out.

From Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon

BIRD CODES

Several years ago, the Breeding Bird Lab developed four-letter codes for bird names, to facilitate note-taking. Many of these codes have found their way into more widespread use. FAS will be posting a list of these codes for Montana birds on our website:

www.flatheadaudubon.org. You can use this information to help with your own note-taking or to more easily understand someone else's notes. You can download this spreadsheet and sort it using either the codes or the bird names, whatever is most useful for you.

From Bob Lee

you know you're a serious birder if ...

- ☺ you have more binoculars than shoes
- ☺ you have a “wedding day” bird list
- ☺ A migrating duck walks into a drug store to buy chapstick. The clerk says, “Will that be cash or charge?” The duck says, “Just put it on my bill!”
- ☺ Two duck hunters are out in a marsh duck hunting. One says to the other, “We're not having much luck today getting any ducks.” The other one says, “Maybe we're not throwing the dog high enough.”



International Trips with Audubon Nature Odysseys

Panama is celebrated for having some of the best birding in Central America, with over 900 species in only 80,000 square kilometers. Join us for a week at the world-famous Canopy Tower at Soberania National Park, where the bedrooms are at treetop level and every morning's wake-up call is the sound of Panama's great rainforest. The Canopy Tower, originally a US Air Force radar station, was converted into a birding lodge in 1999. Experienced birder Rich Merritt of Audubon New York will lead this Audubon Nature Odysseys exclusive birding and natural history tour. For a full itinerary and more information, please visit: <http://getoutside.audubon.org/panama-canopy-tower-soberan-national-park>.

To book your trip, contact Eric Horvath at 541-867-6791 or horvath@pioneer.net.

NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR: SEABIRD CAPITAL OF NORTH AMERICA

JUNE 20 — JULY 2, 2013

With over 350 species of birds, there's no question Newfoundland and Labrador are major destinations for bird watching. This summer odyssey takes us to one of the best places to see gannets, puffins, petrels and North American nature in all its glory. On this tour, designed exclusively for members of Audubon and led by Audubon leader and lifelong birder, David J. Ringer, you will witness chaotic gatherings of gannets, puffins and petrels along with hawks, falcons, ospreys, owls and over 800 American bald eagles.

The tour begins at the Witless Bay Ecological Reserve, home to North America's largest Atlantic puffin colony. After exploring the beautiful Terra Nova National Park and the Beothuk Archeological site at Boyd's Cove, take in the exceptional beauty and unique geological features of the UNESCO World Heritage site, Gros Morne National Park. Then cross the Strait of Belle Isle to Labrador, watching for several species of whales that migrate through the strait, including humpbacks and orcas breaching the surface of the water. Newfoundland and Labrador are close to home and a world away! We invite you to join this 12-day tour to discover Atlantic birds, wildlife and their habitats.

For a detailed itinerary and for more information, please visit: <http://bit.ly/V2t7Tx>. To reserve your space on this small group tour, please contact our travel partner, Worldwide Quest at 1-800-387-1483 or travel@WorldwideQuest.com.



SAVE THE DATE:

The 43rd Annual

Rivers and Wildlife Celebration: Nebraska's Crane Festival

March 21-24, 2013

Holiday Inn - Kearney, Nebraska

For more information: NebraskacraneFestival.org / 402-797-2301

- ◆ Hundreds of thousands of sandhill cranes - experience one of the great wildlife migrations on Earth!
- ◆ Dan O'Brien — Wildlife biologist, author, and falconer
- ◆ Noppadol Paothong — Photographer, author
- ◆ Rowe Sanctuary's crane viewing blinds on the Platte River
- ◆ Field trips to area birding hotspots - Prairie grouse, cranes, geese, and more
- ◆ Family-friendly Wild Experience Room & crane behavior class

Registration available in early January 2013: Call, write, or go online: Audubon Nebraska, P.O. Box 117, Denton, NE 68339; 402-797-2301; ne.audubon.org. Crane viewing reservations: [Rowe Sanctuary](http://RoweSanctuary.com), 44450 Elm Island Road, Gibbon, NE 68840; 308-468-5282.

Stay in Kearney: Over 1,500 hotel rooms; 80+ restaurants; Variety and unique retail shops, historical and cultural attractions. For a complimentary visitor's packet, 800-652-9435; visitkearney.org.

Auto Insurance Discount for Audubon Members

Audubon protects nature. Nationwide® protects people. That's why Audubon has collaborated with Nationwide® to help nature's guardians protect the ones they love. Plus, with an exclusive auto insurance discount for Audubon members, protecting your loved ones can also protect your wallet at the same time. See how much you could save. Learn more at <http://bit.ly/Q8ftf2>.



ANNUAL APPEAL FOR OUTDOOR EDUCATION PROGRAM STILL UNDERWAY

Many thanks to all of our dedicated members and friends who have donated to support our educational outreach. FAS is proud to be the only local chapter in Montana (or in the entire region, as far as we know!) that offers far-reaching outdoor education programs to schools, families and community organizations. This money funds our education program supervised by extraordinary Conservation Educator Ashley Mason. The value of this program was summed up eloquently in a recent Pileated Post article by education chairman Denny Olson:

"The Audubon Outdoor Program is not about having some extra recess "fun-time" at the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area. Ultimately, it's not even about learning the wonderful life-long skills of birding. It is lots bigger than that. It is about a life-long, life-changing sense of belonging to the rest of the world, of not having to feel alone, of peace and quiet, of contemplation skills, of radically increased attention spans, of self-awareness and self-worth, and of reacquaintance with where we originated, and where we are going."

\$11,500 has been raised so far through fundraising appeals, foundations and grants. Most of the donations from the year end appeal were from FAS members. Thank you! It is never too late to send your donation to Treasurer Bruce Tannehill, 239 Deer Trail, Whitefish, MT 59937. From Linda deKort

Jewel Basin Hawk Watch, continued ...

The ratio of young birds to adults in the fall flight can help indicate health of the population, and even with just five years of data, we have seen some apparent trends. Red-tailed Hawk totals, for example, have fluctuated; but we have seen a steady increase in the number of young birds in the flight. This year 54% of the Red-taileds we counted were immatures, up for the fifth consecutive year from a low of just 10% of the flight in 2008.

Badrock Canyon. This season we experimented with some additional survey efforts at the river access at the mouth of Badrock Canyon. We counted 159 birds over 10 hours of observation on three days, one each in September, October, and November. Kathy Ross led a group of 22 people there October 7 and 92 birds were counted (including 51 Golden Eagles). Though the site does not offer the intimate looks we get in the Jewel, it offers a valuable, easily-accessed opportunity to enjoy the raptor migration spectacle in the Flathead Valley.

If you have not yet visited the Jewel Basin site, plan now to make the hike in 2013. There is nothing quite like sitting at 7,100' on a crisp fall day, as dozens (or hundreds!) of hawks ride the wind past you, so close you can almost touch them. Field trips to both the Jewel Basin and Badrock Canyon sites will be planned this fall. Surveys will begin 25 August, and continue through 7 November, weather permitting. An electronic copy of our 2012 report is available upon request from Dan Casey (dcasey@abcbirds.org).

SPECIAL GIFTS

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



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

* * * * *

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.

RECYCLING NOTES

Too many bags flopping around your house? Drop off paper and/or plastic grocery bags at the Flathead Food Bank in the Gateway Community Center. They'll use them to package food items for their shoppers.

Thanks to Lois Drobish for this timely tip!



Cheryl Hester photo

Ben Young receives Grant from Kalispell Education Foundation for “Bird On! A Fowl Adventure!” program.

Ben Young, science teacher at Glacier High School, and member of FAS board of directors, was granted a classroom set of binoculars through Kalispell Education Foundation. “The KEF grant comes at a great time for Ben and his students, considering it comes on the heels of a new native plant garden at GHS. Ben wants students to gain experience monitoring the new garden, looking for the seasonal migrations of birds. He will then guide them to apply these skills to other challenges such as conducting wildlife assessments for neighboring land owners. Birds are reliable indicators of environmental health, and observations of birds can tell investigators about the effects of pollution and changing weather patterns. Much more than just looking through binoculars, the skills involved in identifying different species and reporting findings to a national database will create a life-long learning experience.” Congratulations Ben! And thank you KEF!



<http://kalispelleducationfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/GrantsnewsletterFinalA.pdf>

HOW TO AIM BINOCULARS

Though holding a pair of binoculars up to one's eye may seem easy, many beginning birders initially struggle to find birds through their binoculars. By following these simple tips, you can develop a method to easily locate birds through your binoculars.

Preparation Is The Key To Success

As you enter the birding area, set the binocular focus to the distance where you expect bird activity. This can save valuable seconds. Once you see a bird, *don't take your eyes off it!* Keep your eyes fixed on the subject as you bring the binoculars up to your face. This technique puts the optics of the binocular in your line of sight while you keep your eyes on the bird. Because lower magnifications have a wider field of view, it will be easier to do this with a 7x or 8x binocular than a 10x or 12x magnification.

Help Yourself and Others

Before applying these skills in the field, practice with still objects in the backyard. Another helpful habit to develop is to note the details of the habitat surrounding the bird. Is the bird to the left of the patch of dead leaves, near the right side of the trunk, or on the V-shaped branch? This will help you locate the bird and help others try to spot those speedy little warblers.



From Eagle Optics



Wintertime—and the Living's Not Easy Water, Water Everywhere

Unfrozen water can be as hard for birds to find in winter as food. Birds do drink and bathe in snow or from dripping icicles, so providing water is not as urgent as some people believe, especially during extreme cold when wetted feathers can instantly freeze. But a dependable supply of fresh water will attract many birds to your yard, including species that don't normally visit feeders. A shallow, easy-to-clean birdbath is best—an upside-down garbage can lid or large frying pan works well. An immersion-style water heater can keep your birdbath unfrozen in the winter, though it's wisest to keep it turned off when the temperature is below 20, to prevent birds from freezing their feathers. Clean your birdbath often and keep it filled with fresh water.



BEAUTY OF BIRDS COMING IN APRIL!

Learn about local birds through a series of workshops and field study. Topics will include: general bird anatomy, habitats and behavior, local bird identification by sounds, marks, and silhouettes.

There will be an introduction to Bird Biology and Form, a class on how to identify birds in the field through field markings, behavior and habitat, a class on the incredible complexities of bird song and a field trip to observe local birds in their native habitat.

Classes will be held at Flathead High School on the evenings of April 10, 17 and 24 and May 1 from 6:00 – 8:00 PM. The cost for this month-long adventure is only \$10. What a bargain! Please contact [Debbie Newman](mailto:DebbieNewman@flatheadvalley.edu) at (406) 751-3461 to register or Ashley Mason AudubonAshley@gmail.com for more information.

Want a real mid-winter treat? Take a look at Cornell University's Birds-of-Paradise Project!

[Click here: Birds-of-Paradise Project](#)



FEBRUARY 2013



Non-Profit Org.
Postage Paid
Permit No. 115
Kalispell, MT
59904-9173

P.O. Box 9173
Kalispell, MT 59904-9173

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**

Website: www.FlatheadAudubon.org

FlockMaster - John Kyle: jkyle@fastmail.us

Conservation Educator - Ashley Mason: AudubonAshley@gmail.com

FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY DIRECTORY

OFFICERS

President	Paula Smith	paulabobsmith@centurytel.net	837-0181
Vice-President	Bob Lopp	boblopp@bresnan.net	752-7026
Secretary	Marylane Pannell	kuhlpan@cyberport.net	257-5793
Treasurer	Bruce Tannehill	tanneland@bresnan.net	862-4548
Past-President	Bob Lee	rml3@centurytel.net	837-4467

DIRECTORS

2012-2015	Dennis Hester	kivotee@bresnan.net (on leave of absence)	755-4964
2012-2015	Steve Gniadek	grayjavbro@yahoo.com	892-7406
2012-2015	Lewis Young	68 Garrison Dr., Eureka 59917	889-3492
2012-2013	Ben Young	youngb@sd5.k12.mt.us	257-2286
2010-2013	Jan Wassink	janwassink51@gmail.com	249-6590
2011-2014	Richard Kuhl	kuhlpan@cyberport.net	257-5793
2011-2014	John Hughes	birdwatcher.hughes@gmail.com	261-2506
2011-2014	Gael Bissell	gbissell535@gmail.com	755-8709
2011-2014	Denny Olson	docwild@centurytel.net	249-3987
2012-2013	Kathy Ross	mtkat@montanaport.net	837-3837
2012-2013	Mike Fanning	shrdlu@centurytel.net	862-8070
2012-2013	Jill Fanning	shrdlu@centurytel.net	862-8070
2012-2013	Kay Mitchell	kbmitch@centurytel.net	756-8130

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Christmas Bird Count	Dan Casey	857-3143	Website	Jan Wassink	249-6590
Conservation	Lewis Young	889-3492	Wetlands	John Hughes	261-2506
	Steve Gniadek	892-7406			
Education	Denny Olson	249-3987			
Field Trips	Kathy Ross	837-3837			
	Gael Bissell	755-8709			
Finance	Mike Fanning	862-8070			
Donations	Mary Nelesen	755-7678			
Hospitality	Lois Drobish	756-7405			
Membership	Mike Fanning	862-8070			
	Jill Fanning	862-8070			
Owen Sowerwine	Richard Kuhl	257-5793			
Natural Area	Linda Winnie	755-1406			
Newsletter	Linda Winnie	755-1406			
	Kay Mitchell	756-8130			
Nominations	Linda deKort	755-3704			
Program	Richard Kuhl	257-5793			
Publicity	Paula Smith	837-0181			
Sales	Jill Fanning	862-8070			
Refuges	Kathy Ross	837-3837			



MONTANA AUDUBON
P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624
443-3949
www.MTAudubon.org

Executive Director: Steve Hoffman
shoffman@mtaudubon.org
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)
- Additional Donation of \$ _____
to Education Fund
- Owen Sowerwine Fund
- Wherever needed

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____ - _____

Email _____

How do you wish to receive the Pileated Post?
Electronic copy/email Paper copy/U.S. mail

Mail this form with your check to:
Flathead Audubon Society Membership
20 Hanson Doyle Lane
Whitefish, MT 59937