

## The Owl Comes Into Its Own

From The New York Times  
Published: February 25, 2013  
By [NATALIE ANGIER](#)



Owls date back 60 million years or longer, and they're found in nearly every type of habitat: tropical, tundra, desert, Central Park. Some 229 species are known, and the list keeps growing: last summer, two new species of hawk owl were discovered in the Philippines, and earlier this month, researchers reported on a new species of screech-like owl from the island of Lombok, Indonesia.

The birds own the night, although some hunt at dusk and dawn and even during the day. And hunt owls tirelessly do. By one estimate, a group, or "parliament," of 10 owl families living in a barn in Central Florida cleared the surrounding sugarcane fields of about 25,000 cotton rats a year.

Owls were long thought to be closely related to birds of prey like hawks and eagles, which they sometimes superficially resemble — hence the names hawk owls and eagle owls. But similarities of beak or talon turn out to be the result of evolutionary convergence on optimal meat-eating equipment, and recent genetic analysis links the owls to other nocturnal birds, like nightjars.

The Global Owl Project is working with researchers in 65 countries to compile a vast database and celebration of all the world's owls, with descriptions, natural history, genetics, vocalizations, rough population estimates, owl myths and legends.

Westerners love owls, a tradition that dates back at least to the ancient Greeks and the association of owls with the wise goddess, Athena, and her gray "shining eyes." In some countries, though, owls are seen as bad omens and harbingers of death — perhaps because owls often nest in cemeteries, where

trees are left to grow undisturbed and the nesting cavities are comfortably large.

Would that owls might lend us their ears. Species like the barn, barred, screech and horned have some of the keenest auditory systems known, able to hear potential prey stirring deep under leaves, snow or grass, identify the rodent species and even assess its relative plumpness or state of pregnancy, based on sound alone.

Again, scientists attribute that to a consortium of traits. Professor Tim Birkhead of the University of Sheffield points out in his new book, "Bird Sense," that the owl cochlea is "enormous" and densely packed with sensory cilia. The barn owl, for example, has three times the number of hair cells expected for its body size. The paired ear openings are also exceptionally large and asymmetrically placed on either side of the skull, the better to help localize a sound's origin; the super-swively neck further enhances the power to sample the ambient soundscape.

Then there is the owl's famously flat face, also called the facial disk — pie-shaped in some species, heart-shaped in the barn owl. The facial disk serves as a kind of satellite dish, to gather sound waves, which are then directed to the owl's ears by stiff, specialized feathers along the disk circumference.

Even the owl's forward-facing eyes may have as much to do with hearing as with vision. [Graham Martin](#) of the University of Birmingham has proposed that with so much of the lateral real estate on the owl's skull taken up by the giant ear openings, the only place left to position its eyes is in the middle of the face.

*(thanks to Bill Baum for submitting this article to the Pileated Post)*

### MARCH FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

**Monday, March 10, 2014: Flathead Audubon General Meeting. Gateway Community Center, United Way Conference Room.** Bruce Farling presents "A Do-It-Yourself Safari to Namibia and Western Botswana." See page 3!

**Monday, March 3, 2014: FAS Board of Directors Meeting.** 6 PM at 295 3rd Ave. EN. All welcome.

**Saturday and Sunday, March 29 and 30, 2014: Annual FAS Freezeout Trip.** Details on page 6!

**Winter Boredom Be Gone! Lot of Field Trips on Page 8!**

# BIRD OF THE MONTH

By Lisa Bate

## The Red-naped Sapsucker: A Double Keystone Species

Have you ever heard what sounds like someone sending a Morse code message through the trees in spring? If so, go take a look and you will likely find that the Red-naped Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus nuchalis*) has returned to Montana for breeding season. Their drum sounds like Morse code because of irregular spacing between drum beats which typically starts with five rapid beats followed by slower beats; this slow, irregular drumming pattern is unique to sapsuckers.

Their Greek genus name comes from the words *sphura* which means "hammer" and *pikos* which means "woodpecker." The Latin species name *nuchalis* means "nape," referring to the red nape, or patch, on the back of the woodpecker's head. The common name "sapsucker" refers to the bird's unique method of feeding.

Red-naped Sapsuckers are a small-medium woodpecker with a white and black checkered pattern on their sides and backs. They are the only woodpecker with a wide, vertical white stripe running up the side. Their heads are red with a white moustache and black line above. They have a red nape. The male's throat and chin are completely red; the female's chin is usually white. Juveniles have an overall sooty-brown color to them. This cryptic coloring helps protect them when they first leave the nest and have yet to learn about predators. In addition to drumming, sapsuckers make numerous calls and sounds. Listen on-line to hear some of their different sounds ([http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/red-naped\\_sapsucker/sounds](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/red-naped_sapsucker/sounds)).

The Red-naped, Red-breasted, and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers used to be considered the same species with different distributions: the Red-naped resided in the Rocky Mountains, Red-breasted along the western coast, and the Yellow-bellied in the east and into northern Canada. They have since been separated into three species based on systematic studies, but they can hybridize where their populations overlap. Sapsuckers are a migratory woodpecker wintering in



southwestern US, Mexico, and central America. They breed throughout the Rocky Mountains in the US, British Columbia, and Alberta.

Sapsuckers don't really suck sap; rather, they sip it with a specialized tongue that works like a paintbrush. But first, they have to gain access to the sap! To do this, they drill numerous small holes, close together in a pattern, into the bark of a chosen tree to reach the phloem and xylem tissue. Willows, cottonwoods, birch, aspen, and Douglas fir are some of their favorites.

These unique structures are called sap wells. Sap will continue to seep as long as the wells are kept open. Just as we have clotting constituents in our blood to help seal cuts, when they are bleeding, so do trees. Therefore, sapsuckers have to maintain their sap wells constantly to keep them flowing and will vigorously defend this critical food resource all day. Sap is the primary food of sapsuckers. They also eat insects, spiders, and buds; they frequently can be seen fly-catching, or salying, around their nest trees.

Sap is so highly nutritious that multitudes of other species also seek out sap wells. This is one reason sapsuckers are considered a keystone species. A keystone species is one that makes up only a small number of the animals in an area, but whose presence allows for the presence of many other animals. For example, the distribution and migration patterns of Rufous Hummingbirds are closely tied to that of the Red-naped Sapsucker. This high-sugar food resource allows hummingbirds to arrive early in Montana, even before flowers are in bloom, to select a breeding territory. Rufous Hummingbirds choose nest sites near sap wells and follow sapsuckers on their sap well runs. Some other species that use sap wells are other hummingbirds, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, White-crowned Sparrow, Nashville, Orange-crowned, and Wilson's Warblers, mice, bats, and tree squirrels. Wasps, moths, butterflies, flies, ants, and beetles feed at sap wells. Sometimes they also become dinner for sapsucker nestlings.

"Bird of the Month, continued on page 4"





# March Program

*A DO-IT-YOURSELF SAFARI  
TO NAMIBIA AND WESTERN BOTSWANA*



At our FAS March meeting, Bruce Farling will describe the ecologically diverse and wildlife-rich neighboring countries of Namibia and Botswana in southern Africa. Bruce and his partner Bonnie Gestring spent a month last September and October driving more than 2,800 miles in Namibia and western Botswana. They visited parks and natural areas while camping most of the time. The presentation will provide background on the geography and cultural and natural history of the two countries, while also providing insights on how to do a safari on your own. Bruce will show photos of some of the remarkable wildlife and landscapes you can encounter there.

Botswana is famed for the Kalahari Desert and marshes of the world's largest inland delta, the Okavango Delta. Namibia borders the south Atlantic with its infamous shipwreck-littered Skelton Coast. The oldest desert in the world, the Namib, and some of the tallest sand dunes in the world are in Namibia. Botswana and Namibia are home to large populations of wildlife.

Bruce is in his 21st year as executive director of Montana Trout Unlimited. Previous to that he was conservation director for five years for the Clark Fork Coalition, a regional watershed conservation group. He also worked for the U.S. Forest Service for ten years, including nine years in Montana and Idaho working in wilderness management. He has a B.S. from the University of Oregon in Environmental Sciences and completed work towards an M.A. from the University of Montana School of Journalism. A long-time member of Audubon and regular commentator for Montana Public Radio, Bruce has been recognized in Montana and nationally for his conservation work. In 2009, TROUT magazine named him one of the ten most influential people in the first 50 years of Trout Unlimited. A native-born Pennsylvanian, Bruce came to Montana in his teens, 42 years ago.

Learn how to make a safari to Namibia and Western Botswana at 7 PM Monday, March 10 in the United Way Conference Room at the Gateway Community Center, off US Highway 2 West in Kalispell.

Please excuse our "dust!" [www.FlatheadAudubon.org](http://www.FlatheadAudubon.org) is being remodeled. We appreciate your patience!



## UPCOMING ELECTIONS

May is approaching faster than we realize – and for FAS, that means the annual potluck and, of course, elections! FAS elects officers for a 2-year term, with the President and Vice President elected one year, and Secretary and Treasurer elected the next, resulting in staggered terms. Board of Director positions are generally elected for a 3-year term, but occasionally for a 1-year term. Additionally, Committee Chairs may be appointed to serve as Board members for a 1-year term.

In 2014, we will elect a Secretary and Treasurer as well as a couple of Board positions. This is your organization - so if there is someone you would like to see in a leadership role, please contact me ([RML3@centurytel.net](mailto:RML3@centurytel.net) or 270-0371). I will talk with them about the roles and responsibilities of the positions.

Thanks, Bob Lee



## FAMILY FORESTRY EXPO

The 25<sup>th</sup> Family Forestry Expo takes place at Stoltze Lumber's Trumbull Creek Educational Forest north of Kalispell on Saturday, 10 May, from 9 AM—3 PM. The FFE is a family event that offers hands-on experiences of the role that forests perform in our everyday lives. Expo visitors 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. There will be a free "loggers lunch," demonstrations, exhibits, and forest walk with many different educational stops, including one by Flathead Audubon. Flathead Audubon has had a booth at the Expo for many years. We are looking for volunteers to help. If you enjoy being outdoors on a spring day talking to people about forests and ecosystems, please contact Ashley Mason, FAS Conservation Educator, at [AudubonAshley@gmail.net](mailto:AudubonAshley@gmail.net). And whether you are a volunteer, participant or just want to see what it is all about, everyone is welcome to come on out on Saturday, 10 May.

From Bob Lee

## Thank You!

to those below who made donations to Flathead Audubon from January 18 through February 18.

**Supporting Member + donation**  
**George Darrow**  
**Kelly Lynch**

## TAX TIME ALREADY

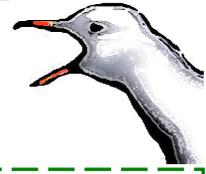
Be sure to check the "Watchable Wildlife" box on your Montana tax form to support our feathered friends!



## CHIRPS & SQUAWKS

From

Kay Mitchell for the Flathead Audubon Board



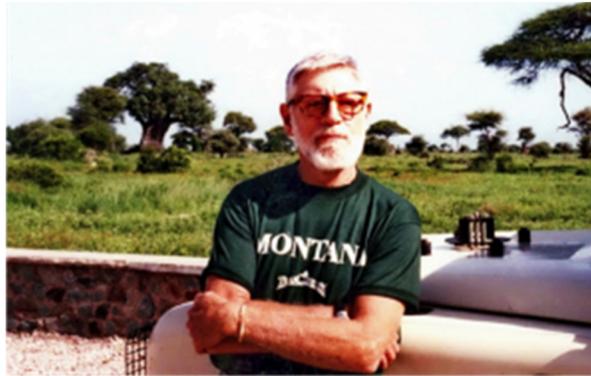
### Highlights from February 2014 Board Meeting:

- ◆ Heard progress and informational reports on FAS website design, FAS calendar design, western movement of white-nosed syndrome in bats, MT Audubon rebranding plans, visit to Intermountain Home construction site near Somers, activities planned for 50th anniversary of Wilderness Act.
- ◆ Discussed possibility of joint summer field trips with Native Plant Society and MT Wilderness Association.
- ◆ Agreed to send letters of support for Intermountain Home adjustment of building site location and Wild Wings Recovery license expansion to include use of bird skins.

Full minutes of every Flathead Audubon Board meeting are printed on Flathead Audubon's website, [www.flatheadaudubon.org](http://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!

### ART ORTENBERG – “A Compassionate Heart and Strategic Mind”

Flathead Audubon sends a fond farewell to friend Art Ortenberg, who passed away Monday, February 3, in New York. Through a very personal connection, FAS has been the grateful recipient of financial support from the foundation established and run by Art and his wife, Liz Claiborne. Art and Liz had a deep love of Montana, living in the Swan Valley and participating in the community there. Art enjoyed a strong bond of friendship with Rod and June Ash, Flathead Audubon members who were active and influential in conservation in the Swan and Flathead Valleys. When Rod passed away, in tribute to a great



friendship, Art has underwritten "Raptor Day in Memory of Rod Ash" since its beginning in 2007.

The Liz Claiborne/Art Ortenberg Foundation was the retirement project of Liz and Art and in Montana has funded numerous conservation easements, educational projects, efforts to save the grizzly bear, wolf and wolverine, a

conservation radio show, and the Montana Heritage Project which connects rural school students with their natural and cultural heritage.

Art Ortenberg was a man who used the fruits of his hard work to better the world and its inhabitants, human and animal alike.

*"Bird of the Month, continued from page 2" . . .*

The second reason sapsuckers are considered a keystone species is because they are primary excavators. Each year sapsuckers excavate cavities in trees or snags with heart-rot. Only the heartwood decays, leaving the tree alive, with a solid layer of sapwood around the nesting cavity to protect the young from weather and predation. Once sapsuckers finish using the cavity, it becomes available to secondary-cavity nesting species: those species that nest in cavities, but are incapable of excavating their own. Swallows, bluebirds, squirrels, mice, weasels, and bats all have been known to use sapsucker holes. Chickadees and nuthatches will also, even though they are capable of excavating their own. Nest tree selection varies with area, but if aspen trees are present, this is their first choice. Aspen trees are highly susceptible to heart-rot making them one of the most important tree species for cavity-nesters.

Sapsucker nestlings cry incessantly for food. This draws in predators like black bears. Yet, bears are seldom successful opening the nest if it is in a live tree with intact sapwood. Look for claw marks on aspen trees with cavities next time you are out, to see how often they try. Surprisingly, the red squirrel is a huge predator on sapsucker nests. Most nests are lost during the egg and early nestling stage. Once chicks are feathered, the squirrels seem to leave them alone. To protect from predators during the night, the male always sleeps in the cavity.

Although sap wells are greatly beneficial to a suite of wildlife species, not all landowners feel as appreciative. So if you find sapsuckers taking over your favorite ornamental tree for their sap wells, wrap the trunk with burlap. Then hopefully, they will find another tree nearby for their food and you will be treated to hosting a double-keystone species in your yard!

**BIRD FEEDING MYTHS**

From birdsource.org (Great Backyard Bird Count)



**MYTH: IF BIRDS EAT UNCOOKED RICE, IT CAN SWELL UP IN THEIR THROATS OR STOMACHS AND KILL THEM.**

**Fact:** Plenty of birds eat uncooked rice in the wild. Bobolinks, sometimes called "rice birds," are a good example. While rice is okay for birds, many wedding parties now throw bird seed instead.

**MYTH: BIRDS CAN CHOKE ON PEANUT BUTTER.**

**Fact:** There is no documented evidence for this. However, mixing peanut butter with grit or cornmeal will break up the stickiness if you are concerned.

**MYTH: BIRDS BECOME DEPENDENT ON BIRD FEEDERS.**

**Fact:** Birds become accustomed to a reliable food source and will visit daily. However, birds search for food in many places, so if your feeder goes empty, most birds will find food elsewhere. During periods of extreme ice, snow, or cold, the sudden disappearance of food might be a hardship; if you are leaving town during freezing weather, consider having someone fill your feeder while you're away.

**MYTH: BIRDS' FEET CAN STICK TO METAL PERCHES.**

**Fact:** This is not likely. A bird's legs and feet are made up mostly of tough tendons that have little blood flow during cold weather. However, we've heard rumors of feet sticking to perches: if you observe this unfortunate circumstance, please take a picture and send it to Project FeederWatch.

**MYTH: FEEDING HUMMINGBIRDS IN LATE SUMMER CAN STOP THEIR MIGRATION.**

**Fact:** Some people believe they should stop feeding hummingbirds right after Labor Day because the birds' southward migrations will be interrupted. However, a bird's migratory urge is primarily triggered by day length (photoperiod), and even a hearty appetite won't make a bird resist that urge. In fact, your feeder might provide a needed energy boost along a bird's migration route.



Gael Bissell  
Photos



**WILD WINGS WISH LIST**

Wild Wings Recovery Center, who presented our fascinating February General Meeting program, are in need of the items listed below to help them care for injured and bonded birds at their facility. Kathy Ross will be at our March meeting to collect anything you can bring to help them out. You can also call 250-1070 or 249-7800 to arrange to get donations to them.

Frozen Rats, mice, quail, pheasant, quail Grouse, beef heart, fish Cut up venison, chicken, beef Veggies, berries (small pieces) Powdered Epsilac puppy replacement milk Kaytee/Zupreem bird formula Jars of baby food with meat Live Earthworms, wax worms Mealworms Dehydrated mealworms Poultry Starter Kitten and Puppy Kibble Unsalted peanuts, millet, birdseed Pedialyte Vitahawk Raptor Vitamins	Dishwasher safe Cutting Boards Knives Dishwasher Soap Pellets Cleaners Bleach, Simple Green, Awesome Scrub Brushes and Sponges Latex/rubber dishwashing gloves Unscented laundry soap Towels—paper or cloth Hand Wipes (unscented) Baby Wipes (unscented) Baby & Fleece Blankets New Feather Dusters <b>Heated Watering Bowls</b> <b>Very High Need</b> Heat Lamps and Bulbs Kiddie Pools Large Bird Toys	Snuggle Safe Microwave Heat Pad (amazon.com) Rakes Clipboards Utility Scissors and Shears Leather Welding Gloves Leather Work Gloves Ball Bearing Swivels Sampo, stainless steel (all sizes) Gift Cards Cenex, Murdochs, Petco, Costco, Smith's, Norwoods Falconry Kennels—all sizes, esp L and XL Artificial Turf or Grass Carpeting Chest Freezers Refrigerators Water and Food Dishes (ceramic or stainless) Horse black shallow rubber bowls
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## PARTNERS WITH FLATHEAD AUDUBON'S MISSION

During the remainder of 2014, in celebration of the 50th Anniversary of passage of The Wilderness Act, we will offer quotes honoring our wilderness heritage, like the following: "A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."

**Wilderness Act of 1964.**



### FLATHEAD AUDUBON MISSION STATEMENT

THE FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY IS A LOCAL CHAPTER  
OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY.



- ◆ OUR MISSION IS TO CONSERVE BIRDS, WILDLIFE HABITAT, AND ECOSYSTEM DIVERSITY.
- ◆ WE PROMOTE AWARENESS AND APPRECIATION OF THE NATURAL WORLD THROUGH EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND ADVOCACY PROGRAMS.
- ◆ WE WORK WITH DIVERSE GROUPS AND AGENCIES TO ACHIEVE SOUND DECISIONS ON NATURAL RESOURCE ISSUES.
- ◆ WHILE FOCUSING OUR EFFORTS IN NORTHWEST MONTANA, WE BELIEVE IN THE PROTECTION OF THE EARTH AND ALL OF ITS INHABITANTS.

## HEADWATERS MONTANA ANNOUNCES SECOND ANNUAL JACK POTTER GLACIER NATIONAL PARK STEWARDSHIP AWARD



*Headwaters Montana* is pleased to announce the 2013 recipient of the second award made for the protection of Glacier Park's natural resources. The winner, the [Glacier National Park Volunteer Associates \(GNPVA\)](#), is credited with marshaling the volunteer help of hundreds of citizen-volunteers to help with many facets of Glacier Park's operations and protection of resources.

The park's Volunteer Associates has functioned for years with the best interests of Glacier as its core mission. In 2013 alone, the Association's volunteers logged over 6,000 hours of free public service to Glacier. We think that commitment and what it represents to Glacier merits recognition and celebration.

The Associates has been an active partner with Glacier National Park for almost 25 years, and continues to increase its commitment to the park each year.

*Headwaters Montana* received five strong nominations for the award in 2013. Glacier Park finds itself in the care of many dedicated people who cherish the park for its own sake and who recognize the contribution the park makes to our quality and way of life.

This year's award citation notes that the Volunteer Associates gathers the collective energy and dedication of many citizens and has provided opportunities for service to the public and the park over decades of time that include, but are not limited to, backcountry and river patrol, backcountry preservation and

internships, operation of the Discovery Cabin learning center, assistance to the Native Plant Greenhouse, Transit Center, and restoration projects like the Mount Brown Lookout and Lower Nyack Cabin.

"This award to the volunteers of the Associates is a real honor. We are a one hundred percent volunteer organization dedicated to stewardship and conservation of Glacier Park," said Tom Nelesen, volunteer president of the GNPVA. "To my knowledge, we have never been recognized like this over the many years of service to Glacier Park."

The Jack Potter Glacier National Park Stewardship Award is given to an individual, park service employee, or non-governmental organization who demonstrates courageous or above average commitment to the stewardship and protection of the natural resources of Glacier National Park.

The award was established in 2012 to honor the 40-year service of its name-sake, Jack Potter, who retired from public service in Glacier Park as Chief of Science and Resources.

In a very real sense, the Volunteer Associates and its many volunteers deserved this award a long time ago. We're very pleased to provide this recognition at this time.

The award consists of \$200 and a hand-blown glass sculpture of a water ouzel by Bigfork artist Lee Proctor. The award presentation occurred at the February board meeting of the Associates.

## VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED

### 2014 OWEN SOWERWINE MONITORING BEGINNING

From Linda Winnie

Flathead Audubon needs volunteer monitors to aid in our management of the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area. **Can you help?**

If you already know how our Volunteer Monitoring Program works, then the information in this box is all you need. You don't need to read the next box below.

- To volunteer for a scheduled monitoring visit, please contact me ([lindawin@centurytel.net](mailto:lindawin@centurytel.net) or 755-1406), or talk to me or Richard Kuhl at an FAS meeting.
- Tell us which month (March through November) you want to sign up for, and whether you want to cover the first half or the last half of that month. You will get a reminder call or email shortly before your scheduled Monitoring Period.
- To help out by monitoring whenever you happen to visit OSNA, just print the Monitoring Form from the FAS website or pick one up at an FAS meeting or contact me. Take it with you to Owen Sowerwine, fill out the parts that apply to your visit, and send it in.
- And remember, even though our Volunteer Monitoring Program officially runs March through November, information gathered on a trip to Owen Sowerwine at any time of year is valuable. If you forget to take a form with you, just call or email Richard with your information.



#### To learn what this Volunteer Monitoring business is all about, read on!

The Owen Sowerwine Natural Area (OSNA) is a 442-acre State Natural Area located just east of Kalispell and north of Leisure Island, where the Flathead and the Stillwater Rivers begin to merge. The main entrance is at the east end of Treasure Lane; Treasure Lane is the first street that turns east off Willow Glen Drive when driving south from the Willow Glen Montessori School.

OSNA is jointly funded and managed by Flathead Audubon and Montana Audubon. Flathead Audubon handles the local, on-the-ground management of the Area. In 2008, the OSNA Volunteer Monitoring Program was established to help with this management.

Volunteer Monitors in this Program are the eyes and ears of Flathead Audubon's management of Owen Sowerwine. They provide on-site information about management needs as they arise – a trail needs clearing, for example, or the kiosk needs to be repaired, a fence or gate needs fixing, debris and unattended structures need to be removed, or the kiosk brochure box needs restocking.

Volunteer Monitors also help gather data on visitor use, and as they encounter visitors or OSNA neighbors, they gather comments and suggestions that will help improve our management. In addition, Volunteer Monitors provide information that helps expand our growing knowledge of which bird and other wildlife species are present at OSNA, and what types of vegetation grow there.

**The 2014 Volunteer Monitoring Season begins in March**, and we are looking for volunteers to help. *It is easy and fun.*

The fun part is visiting OSNA and walking some of the trails. The easy part is using the OSNA Volunteer Monitoring form to give feedback from your visit. The form has spaces and check-off boxes that guide you on what to look for and make it easy to record your observations. The completed form is mailed to Richard Kuhl using the address provided on the form. See the box above for how to get the form. We also provide online and at meetings a trail map that locates the places referred to on the form.

There are **two different ways** you can do volunteer monitoring: fill out a form whenever you visit OSNA or do a scheduled monitoring visit. The scheduled visit option works like this. We try to schedule 2 monitoring visits each month, March through November, to ensure feedback on a regular basis. So we need at least 18 volunteers, one (or more) for each half-month-long Monitoring Period. A scheduled volunteer makes one Monitoring Visit to OSNA sometime during the half-month of his/her choice. Group monitoring visits are also welcome – get your friends together and sign up for your chosen Monitoring Period as a team.

See the box above for instructions on how to volunteer.



## FIELD TRIPPING WITH THE BIRDS



**Sunday March 2, 2014: Lower Valley Late Winter/Early Migration Field Trip.** FAS is offering a field trip exploring the Lower Valley with premier birder Craig Hohenberger. We will look for wintering raptors, snow buntings, nesting owls and, if the weather is mild and we have open water, we may possibly find Swans and early migrating waterfowl. Meet at 9 AM at Somers Park-n-Ride to carpool from there. We will return by noon. Dress warm, bring binoculars and spotting scopes. Please call to let us know you are coming. All ages and birding abilities are welcome! Kathy Ross, 837-3837.

**Saturday, March 22, 2014: Smith Lake/West Valley Birding Tour.** Dan Casey of the American Bird Conservancy will lead a bird watching tour of the wetlands around Smith Lake and in the West Valley, sponsored by Flathead Land Trust. Come along and see part of the spring migration of waterfowl and other birds in the Flathead and one of our newest conservation projects! For more information, contact Laura Katzman at 752-8293 or [lkatzman@bigsky.net](mailto:lkatzman@bigsky.net).



### GLACIER NATIONAL PARK WINTER SNOWSHOE WALKS

**Saturday & Sunday, through March 22, 2014 at 10:30 AM & 2:00 PM**

Explore Glacier National Park on a two-hour ranger-led snowshoe walk and take an intimate look at the park in winter. Search for signs of wildlife, discover the plants and animals of the park, and enjoy the solitude of winter during this unique experience. Not recommended for children under age 6.

Meet at Apgar Visitor Center. Participants may use their own snowshoes or rent snowshoes for a nominal fee at the Visitor Center. Snowshoe rentals are also available in neighboring communities.

If you have questions regarding this offering, please call 406-888-7800 or visit [Snowshoe Walks](#).

### Annual Snow Goose Migration Celebration

There is nothing quite like the spectacle of 100,000 or more Snow Geese swirling against the backdrop of the Rocky Mountain Front. And Flathead Audubon is once again planning a field trip to witness the extraordinary concentration of Snow Geese at the Freezeout Lake Wildlife Management Area south of Choteau. The majority of the Pacific Flyway population of Snow Geese stops at this wonderful wetland complex and the surrounding barley fields every spring, to rest and refuel on their trip from their central California wintering grounds to arctic nesting areas (some as far away as Russia). Thousands of Tundra Swans, 10's 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 29 and 30**, rain, snow or shine, 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, and we will caravan/ carpool to Choteau, planning on arriving in time for the afternoon "fly-out" of the geese. After dinner and a night in Choteau, we will head back out before day-break to watch the geese leave the lake, heading home sometime shortly after noon, once the geese have flown back in from the fields. We should arrive back in Kalispell by 5 PM 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 the birds allow. Make your own arrangements for lodging; primitive camping is available at Freezeout for those willing to brave the cold in order to listen to the geese throughout the night. Hotel options include the Big Sky (466-5318) and the Stage Stop (888-466-5900). For more information, contact Dan Casey (270-5941) [danielcasey55@gmail.com](mailto:danielcasey55@gmail.com).

**Saturday Evening, April 19, 2014: AN EVENING WITH THE BARRED OWLS.** Pete Fisher will host an evening of listening and calling for Barred and possibly other owls in the east Flathead Valley. Space is limited to 25 individuals. Contact Pete (250-9624 or [fisherpete88@yahoo.com](mailto:fisherpete88@yahoo.com)) to pre-register.

**Eighth Annual Cohen Stroll - Date will be announced in April Pileated Post.** Celebrate our beautiful quality of life in the Flathead as Ferne and Marty Cohen have taught us...by getting outdoors and leaving a small carbon footprint. We will meet at 9 AM at the pond northeast of the North Valley Hospital in Whitefish. This is just north of the soccer fields on the south edge of Whitefish. In the past, we have seen waterfowl on the pond and riparian species in the wetland. We will stroll along the Whitefish River on the bike path. This two-hour trip is accessible for wheelchairs and strollers. Bruce Tannehill, leader. Call 862-4548 for information.

**Save the Date! FAS Warbler Weekend, June 13-14-15, Tally Lake Campground!**

From Gael Bissell and Kathy Ross, Field Trip Co-Chairs



**FOR YOUR CALENDAR: Wings Across the Big Sky**  
**June 6-8, 2014, Bozeman, Montana**



**Come join us** for Montana Audubon's Annual Bird Festival, this year co-hosted by Sacajawea Audubon Society, June 6-8, 2014, at the Best Western GranTree Inn, 1325 N 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Bozeman, MT. We are very excited about this facility, which will be the center for all festival activities Friday through Sunday, including registration, birding field trip departures, guest speaker presentations, meals, banquet festivities, and much more. The GranTree is located right off the interstate in the heart of the Galatin Valley and provides easy access to all our birding activities and field trips.

Currently we have 80 rooms blocked out for festival-goers Friday and Saturday nights. Be sure to tell them you're with the Bird Festival group to get the special rate! We suggest you make your reservations soon at the hotel directly at 1-406-587-5261.

Our Festival Registration Brochure is scheduled to be mailed by March 3, with our online registration system going active on March 5. Use either the registration form with the brochure or the online system to make your registration for this annual event. The brochure is full of information on the festival events and all the field trips that will be available.

**A Sneak Peak at Some of our Scheduled Events for the Festival including our lineup of Saturday Presenters:**

We are excited to feature a diverse array of Saturday afternoon speakers to educate and inspire us. We will host break-out sections from highly regarded researchers, conservationists, and bird aficionados. The hardest part will be choosing which talk to see! Topics include:

- ◆ Montana's nesting Ospreys and toxins
- ◆ Sage-Grouse conservation
- ◆ Bird migration in the Middle East
- ◆ A new "Field Guide to Birds in a Changing Climate"
- ◆ Bridger Raptor Migration Project; and
- ◆ Birds, Beetles, and Burns

Plan now to attend this event and learn about the amazing world of crows from our keynote speaker, and then hear from our breakout speakers about birding in far-flung places, as well as our Montana concerns and interests, including osprey, sage-grouse, raptors, forest birds in burned forests, and how birds will fare in Montana with our rapidly changing climate.

**Call for Montana Audubon Award Nominations!**

Please nominate a deserving person for their work for conservation and/or Audubon! We are now seeking nominations for awards that will be given at Montana Audubon's June annual meeting in Bozeman. 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, Citizen Scientist of the Year, and Lifetime Achievement.

To nominate your candidate, visit our website at <http://mtaudubon.org/about/awards.html>. To be considered for this year's award, nominations must be submitted no later than May 23, 2014. Nominations can be submitted by email or mailed to Montana Audubon, PO Box 595, Helena, MT 59624, or by fax: (406) 443-7144. Questions? Contact Janet Ellis at 406-443-3949 or [jellis@mtaudubon.org](mailto:jellis@mtaudubon.org).



**THE BEAUTY OF BIRDS**

**Want to learn about local birds, how to identify them, where they live, what their songs sound like? Confused about how to use a pair of binoculars? Wondering what migration is all about? Then sign up for Flathead Audubon's Beauty of Birds classes to be held on Wednesday evenings in April. You'll be treated to talks by local bird experts, pictures of birds, even a field trip to find the birds you've learned about. Cost is \$10 for the entire series of classes—what a deal! Sign up now by calling (406) 751-3461 to register, or Ashley Mason [AudubonAshley@gmail.com](mailto:AudubonAshley@gmail.com) for more information.**



male Mountain Bluebird  
by James Cox

**West Valley Naturalist** programs are a big

hit; a HUGE thank you to Denny Olson, FAS Education Committee Chair, and Ashley Mason, FAS Conservation Educator, for making it so. Ashley's presentation on Montana Geology (with her darling daughters as assistants) and Denny's recent presentation on local birds and bird calls were enthusiastically received. One member remarked that it was great to hear a robin on that blustery day in winter! West Valley Naturalists meet Thursday March 6 at 7 PM in the West Valley School Library, 2290 Farm to Market Road. Jeanine Keller Buettner, whose family came to West Valley in 1891, has done extensive research on early settlers of this region. She will share her findings as well as treasured vintage photos. All are welcome. There is no charge. For more information call Susan Bernt at 755-1658.



Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

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

MARCH 2014



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The Flathead Audubon Society is affiliated with Montana Audubon and the National Audubon Society. Flathead Audubon meets on the second Monday of each month from September through May. Meetings start at 7:00PM and include a featured guest who presents a conservation or nature program. The Board of Directors meet the Monday preceding the general meeting, at 6PM at 295 3rd Ave. EN, in Kalispell. Both meetings are open to all those interested.

**THE PILEATED POST** is published September through May and is sent to members of Flathead Audubon Society as a membership benefit. For membership information or address change, please call Mike Fanning at 862-8070. **To receive this newsletter electronically, email your request to: [lindawin@centurytel.net](mailto:lindawin@centurytel.net). Deadline for newsletter copy is the 18th of each month. Contact newsletter editor at 755-1406; email submissions to: [lindawin@centurytel.net](mailto:lindawin@centurytel.net)**

Website: [www.FlatheadAudubon.org](http://www.FlatheadAudubon.org)

Conservation Educator - Ashley Mason: [AudubonAshlev@gmail.com](mailto:AudubonAshlev@gmail.com)

**FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY DIRECTORY**

**OFFICERS**

President	Bob Lopp	<a href="mailto:boblopp@bresnan.net">boblopp@bresnan.net</a>	752-7026
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Treasurer	Bruce Tannehill	<a href="mailto:tanneland@bresnan.net">tanneland@bresnan.net</a>	862-4548
Past-President	Paula Smith	<a href="mailto:paulabobsmith@centurytel.net">paulabobsmith@centurytel.net</a>	837-0181

**DIRECTORS**

2013-2016	Jan Wassink	<a href="mailto:janwassink51@gmail.com">janwassink51@gmail.com</a>	249-6590
2012-2015	Steve Gniadek	<a href="mailto:gravjaybro@yahoo.com">gravjaybro@yahoo.com</a>	892-7406
2012-2015	Lewis Young	68 Garrison Dr., Eureka 59917	889-3492
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2011-2014	John Hughes	<a href="mailto:birdwatcher.hughes@gmail.com">birdwatcher.hughes@gmail.com</a>	261-2506
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2013-2014	Bob Lee	<a href="mailto:rml3@centurytel.net">rml3@centurytel.net</a>	837-4467

**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			
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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			
	Bob Lee	837-4467			
Nominations	Richard Kuhl	257-5793			
Program	Paula Smith	837-0181			
Publicity	Jill Fanning	862-8070			
Sales	Kathy Ross	837-3837			
Refuges					



**MONTANA AUDUBON**  
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443-3949  
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[shoffman@mtaudubon.org](mailto:shoffman@mtaudubon.org)  
Board President: Fred Weisbecker  
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 Conservation Education and Owen Sowerwine Natural Area)
- Additional Donation of ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
to Education Fund
- Owen Sowerwine Fund
- Wherever needed

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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