



## SPARK BIRDS

By Marylane Pannell, Flathead Audubon Secretary

Recently I've read several articles about "Spark Birds", the birds that spark your interest in birding. The ones that make you want to see more birds. Many people have a spark bird but I could not narrow it down to one. I've had a number of experiences seeing birds for the first time and I appreciated the



allaboutbirds.org

knowledge and camaraderie of the other birders on these trips that kept me inspired.

Raised in Great Falls I saw and heard many Meadowlarks. But it was not until I went with Kathy and John Hughes and used their

binoculars and scope to get a close clear view that I truly appreciated those magnificent birds.

Just below our house on North Main Street in Kalispell, Karen Nichols led a spring trip in Lawrence

Park where I saw my first Lazuli Bunting on a cattail in the swamp. With Leslie Kehoe and Bob Lee I saw my first Snowy Owl on a roof top southeast of Kalispell in the Lower Valley.

In our old beat-up Coleman canoe on the Flathead River near Owen Sowerwine Natural Area I saw a Great Blue Heron, so close I could see the color of its eyes, on a trip led by Susannah and Dan Casey. At the Hawk Watch in Jewel Basin I saw Sharpshinned Hawks and Golden Eagles at close range. Barb Summers and bj Worth helped identify the many raptors flying through. Pete Fisher called in a Barred Owl near his home. With Steve Gnadek I observed Harlequin Ducks in Glacier National Park on McDonald Creek.



hww.ca

Thanks to all those who helped me find my spark birds. What is your "spark bird"?

## UPCOMING ELECTIONS – ALREADY!!

Amidst all the hoopla of the presidential race, another important election is soon upon us – the FAS Board! At the May potluck, FAS will elect a Secretary, Treasurer and several Director positions. It is not too early to start thinking about who you would like to see guide FAS for the near future. The person sitting next to you at the last meeting is a good choice, and the person sitting in your seat is also a good choice! If you

know of someone who would be a good leader, please contact Bob Lee (270-0371 or [m13@centurytel.net](mailto:m13@centurytel.net)); someone from the Nominations Committee will talk with them about roles and responsibilities and get them on the ballot. And anyone that would like to serve on the Nominations Committee should also contact Bob.

### MARCH FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

**Monday, March 14, 2016. 7 PM. Flathead Audubon General Meeting**, Gateway Community Center, US Hwy 2 West, Kalispell. See page 3.

**Monday, March 7, 2016. 6 PM. FAS Board of Directors Meeting**, 295 3rd Ave EN. All welcome.

**Saturdays & Sundays, January 9 thru March 20, 2016. Explore Glacier National Park on Snowshoes.** See page 6.

**Sunday, March 20, 2016. 10:30 AM to mid-afternoon. Early Spring Waterfowl and other Migrants.** See page 6.

**Saturday-Sunday, March 26-27, 2016. Soaring of the Snow Geese at Freezout Lake.** See page 5.

# BIRD OF THE MONTH

## The Greater Sage-Grouse Emblem of the American West

By Mary Nelesen

I have been interested in this iconic bird of the western sagebrush grasslands for many years but was unable to see one until last April, when my husband, Tom, and I, along with two friends, had an opportunity to view Greater Sage-Grouse on their lek outside of Dillon, Montana.



Our guide, Steve Sherman, has been counting sage-grouse on their leks for the past 25 years and for the last four to six years has helped place radio tracking devices to track the grouse and monitor their habits. He has been involved in a number of sage-grouse habitat improvement and research projects and has worked with the Bureau of Land Management for 32 years. We met Steve shortly before dawn on a dark, cold and windy morning with temps barely above freezing. After driving many miles on winding gravel roads, we arrived at our destination. We were told to turn off the head lights, stay in the car and wait for the male sage-grouse to begin their display dance.

The male Greater Sage-Grouse has spiky tail feathers and inflatable banana-yellow air sacs on its chest. It weighs between 2 to 3 pounds, is larger than a pheasant but smaller than a wild turkey and lives in sagebrush steppe in the American West. It is the largest native grouse species in North America. In the

1800's it numbered in the millions, but due to habitat destruction, its numbers have decreased dramatically over the years. It lives on some 165 million acres of sagebrush steppe habitat in 11 states in the American



West, including California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. According to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, unlike some western states, about two-thirds of Montana's sage-grouse habitat is on non-federal land, and often occurs across a mixed or "patchwork" distribution of private, state, and federal lands.

Each spring, at dawn, the sagebrush country fills with a strange burbling sound and an even stranger sight. Dozens of male sage-grouse puff their inflatable yellow air sacs and attempt to attract as many females as possible with their puffed up chest and fanned tail feathers. In preparation for a strutting display, male sage-grouse can gulp and hold a gallon of air in a pouch of their esophagus. By squeezing it out with force, they begin their display.

Although many male sage-grouse display at a lek (which are located in clear areas, on a ridge top, or grassy swale, or even a dry lake bed) only a few select males are picked by the majority of the females. We watched numerous males aggressively chase away their competition. Because of our distance from them, we were not able to observe the females mating with their chosen male, but we were able to watch females moving about on the lek.

*continued on page 4*



# March Program

## AMERICAN PRAIRIE RESERVE

Presented by Michael Wainwright

Our March 14 meeting is an opportunity to learn about the American Prairie Reserve from its spokesman Michael Wainwright. Wainwright is APR's Annual Giving and Foundations Manager. He lives in Bozeman where APR headquarters are located.

APR was privately created in 2004 for the purpose of conserving surviving mixed grass prairie of the Great Plains ecosystem and restoring critical wildlife habitat. APR is located one hour south of the hi-line town of Malta and east of Zortman. It borders public lands and the C.M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge.

APR now owns and leases 305,000 acres in Eastern Montana. However, its long-term vision is to



American Prairie Reserve

create largest wildlife reserve in the continental US by linking together more than three million acres of private and public land on the Northern Great Plains. The APR says: "Our mission is to create and manage a prairie-based wildlife reserve that, when combined with public lands already devoted to wildlife, will protect a unique natural habitat, provide lasting economic benefits and improve public access to and enjoyment of the prairie landscape."

We look forward to learning about APR programs at 7 PM on

Monday, March 14 in the United Way Conference Room of the Gateway Community Center, off US Highway 2 West in Kalispell. To learn more about APR, go to [www.americanprairie.org](http://www.americanprairie.org).

## Conservation Education Corner

by Lisa B. Flowers, FAS Conservation Educator

Fostering and increasing knowledge and appreciation of birds, wildlife habitat, and ecosystem diversity is the purpose of the Flathead Audubon Society's conservation education program and indeed is a team effort. Volunteers have stepped forth from the FAS membership to work, help organize the educational trunks and materials used by our local teachers, discuss how and where to continue offering resources, provide classroom and outdoor programming, develop local partnerships, and to dedicate their time and passion for birds and their habitats by teaching students of all ages in the classes we offer in the Flathead Valley. All the dedicated time and efforts are much appreciated and help make this a thriving program!

The national **Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)** took place from February 12 – 15<sup>th</sup>. Locally, Somers school 6<sup>th</sup> graders and their teachers enjoyed a preparatory session February 11<sup>th</sup> learning about how to identify common birds in their community, how to use their observation skills and binoculars to conduct their local bird count, and the importance of their personal involvement in citizen science. Kathy Ross had a successful day with more than 50 enthusiastic students and their teachers on February 12<sup>th</sup>. On February 14<sup>th</sup> and beginning at the Swan River School, Kathy also conducted another GBBC with a group of all ages. Flathead High School biology teacher Renee Cordes and her students hiked around Kalispell to

conduct their GBBC, it was a successful event in the drizzling rain on February 12<sup>th</sup>. These FHS citizen scientists enter their own data onto the GBBC website.

The FVCC Senior Institute course - **Birds of Northwestern Montana** begins Friday, February 19<sup>th</sup> and runs every Friday from 1 – 2:50 PM through March 25<sup>th</sup>. This course will provide seniors with information about the behavior, form and function of the avian world with a more in-depth look at several species that are native to Northwest Montana. Students will be provided with instruction on bird identification and an opportunity to practice those skills during outdoor experiences to include a field trip to a local birding hotspot. Additional birding resources and opportunities both locally and on-line will also be included. Volunteer class speakers include Bob Lee, Kathy Ross, Kari Gabriel, Denny Olson, and Joe & Lana Batts. The senior students are in for a treat!

The adult education class - **Beauty of Birds** will be held at Flathead High School on Wednesday evenings from 6 – 8 PM through the month of April. Students will learn about local and regional birds, habitat, behaviors, sounds/calls, and identification. The first class is April 6<sup>th</sup> and students will enjoy a presentation on Glacier National Park Birds by Steve Gniadek. Other class speakers/volunteers for this class include Kari Gabriel, Denny Olson, Leslie Kehoe, and Bob Lee.

*Greater Sage-Grouse continued from page 2*

Once mating has occurred, the female makes a nest scraped into the ground under large sagebrush and lines it with leaves, grasses, and feathers that she plucks from her breast. Females do all the nest-building, incubation and raising of the chicks. Clutch size is between 4-11 eggs and the incubation period is 25-29 days.

Because sage-grouse chicks cannot digest sagebrush for their first 3 weeks after hatching, the chicks eat a wide variety of insects, especially cricket and grasshopper nymphs, butterflies, moths and their caterpillars as well as ants, bees, wasps and spiders. Females often lead their chicks to summer feeding areas in higher elevations or a wet area. Adult sage-grouse also eat insects, but they consume a greater proportion of buds, flowers and fruits, with sagebrush leaves being the mainstay of their diet. During the winter, sage-grouse actually manage to gain weight and strength in preparation for the breeding season by feeding on the leaves of sagebrush. They get their water from snow.

The Greater Sage-Grouse can live up to 9 years in the wild with an average of 3 to 6 years. Females are more likely to live longer, due to high predation of males on leks.

The best way to see Greater Sage-Grouse is to visit a lek before dawn in early spring (March to May). As sage-grouse are very sensitive to disturbance, some leks are closed to the public. However, there are leks prepared for public viewing and may feature viewing blinds and/or guided tours. In past years, Montana Audubon has offered spring field trips to view sage-grouse on leks. These trips fill up quickly, so when a trip is offered be sure to sign up early.

This past September it was determined that the Greater Sage-Grouse was not warranted for listing under the Endangered Species Act. Regarding that decision, Montana Audubon's Janet Ellis stated, "*The announcement is confirmation that Montana's Sage-Grouse conservation program is on the right track. Using a science-based approach, the state will now act to conserve sage-grouse habitat in an effort to bolster this bird's populations across Montana.*"

According to Montana Audubon, this conservation program is critical if Montana intends to continue to manage this iconic sagebrush-dependent bird. State programs such as Montana's, help ensure that these spectacular dancing birds will survive for many generations to come.

## Curlew Volunteers Needed!

Are you ready to hear the 'currleeeee' of the Long-billed Curlew? Well, grab your binoculars and get ready, because this charismatic shore-bird needs you. Montana's curlews will be trickling back into the state in less than two months and we need your help finding as many as possible in and around the Mission Valley!

We have known that Montana and the Mission Valley harbor the very important grassland and wetland habitat that curlews rely on during breeding and migration. In 2014, we decided that this species offered the perfect opportunity to involve citizen scientists, like you, to collect more details on local curlew hotspots with focused surveys. Now you have the opportunity to join our great network of conservation partners, through the Mission Valley Curlew Initiative. This is your opportunity to help advance conservation of curlews and their habitats by choosing an available survey route and getting out into the field!

It's easy. Survey routes consist of early morning road-side stops repeated every half mile. At each stop, you will get out of the car for five minutes and look and listen for curlews. Along the way you will collect important data on the time, habitat, and presence or absence of curlews. And, the great thing is that you only need to look for one big beautiful bellow-



ing bird. So all you have to do is choose a route and catch up on Curlew identification and you are all set.

The best way to get involved is to visit our weebly website and view the routes available in the Mission Valley and Flathead Indian Reservation: <http://missionvalleycurlews.weebly.com/>.

Here you will find survey details such as the protocol, data sheets, and route maps. You can also contact Amy or Janene if you would like us to send you a route packet. Feel free to take a partner, do a route more than once, or do more than one route. The Curlews are just waiting to be found!

To brush up on your Curlew identification before heading into the field visit Montana Audubon's webpage: <http://mtaudubon.org/birds-science/long-billed-curlew-initiative/> for a link to the Curlew's call and much more. Also visit Cornell Lab of Ornithology's All about Birds: [http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Long-billed\\_Curlew/id](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Long-billed_Curlew/id).

Surveys can start as early as April 8<sup>th</sup>, so get those taxes done early! For more information contact Janene Lichtenberg: [janene.lichtenberg@skc.edu](mailto:janene.lichtenberg@skc.edu); 406.275.4896; or Amy Seaman: [aseaman@mtaudubon.org](mailto:aseaman@mtaudubon.org), 406.210.9449

## CHIRPS & SQUAWKS

### Highlights from February 2016 Board Meeting:

- ◆ The February Board Meeting was cancelled due to lack of a quorum.

### SOARING OF THE SNOW GEESE AT FREEZOUT LAKE

Saturday-Sunday, March 26-27, 2016.

There is nothing quite like 100,000 Snow Geese swirling against the backdrop of the Rocky Mountains. The annual Flathead Audubon trip to Freezout Lake will be over the last weekend in March with Bob Lee again leading. We will meet at the K-Mart parking lot (on the corner of Highways 2 and 35 in Kalispell) on Saturday morning at 10 AM and caravan/carpool to Choteau, arriving in time for the afternoon "fly-out" of the geese. After dinner and a night in Choteau, we will head back out before daybreak to watch the "mass ascension" from the ponds of Freezout. After the morning's birding, we, too, will head home in the early afternoon arriving in Kalispell around 5 PM on Sunday. Bob will provide a suggested schedule and route, and will be in the front of the

group, but attendees may choose to follow the geese as much or as little as they, the weather and birds allow. The various Choteau accommodations fill fast so make your reservations early. The 3 most popular motels in Choteau are: Stage Stop (406-466-5900), Gunther (406-466-5444) and Big Sky (406-466-5318). Be sure to mention that you are affiliated with Flathead Audubon. If you have any questions, please contact Bob Lee at 270-0371 or [rml3@centurytel.net](mailto:rml3@centurytel.net).



Lewis Young

### FAMILY FORESTRY EXPO

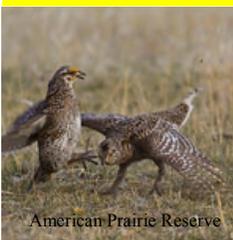
The 27th annual Family Forestry Expo will take place at Stoltze Lumber's Ron Buntemeyer Educational Forest located to the north of Kalispell along Trumble Creek on Saturday, 7 May, from 9 AM — 3 PM. The FFE is a family event that offers hands-on understanding of the role that forests play in our everyday 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 is a free "loggers lunch," demonstra-

tions, exhibits, and a forest walk with many educational stops, including one run by Flathead Audubon Society. FAS has had a booth at the Expo for many years and are always looking for volunteers to engage visitors. If you enjoy being outdoors on a spring day talking to people of all ages about forests, ecosystems and especially birds, please contact Lisa Flowers, the FAS Conservation Educator, at [auduboneducator@gmail.com](mailto:auduboneducator@gmail.com) or call 406-781-1721. Whether you are a volunteer, participant or just want to enjoy a day in the woods, everyone is welcome to come on out on Saturday, 7 May.

### AMERICAN PRAIRIE RESERVE -- A UNIQUE FLATHEAD AUDUBON FIELD TRIP

May 20-22, 2016



American Prairie Reserve

Flathead Audubon is offering a weekend filled with the breathtaking beauty and wide open spaces of eastern Montana grasslands and the American Prairie Reserve (APR). The Reserve is working to link together thousands of acres of private and public land on Montana's legendary Northern Great Plains, protecting critical habitat for native flora and fauna. According to the APR brochure, we will

"discover the power of dark skies, quiet trails and remote, unbroken land." It will be a time of mating sage-grouse, bison calves and spring bird migration. Kathy Ross, will be coordinating the trip and can be contacted at 406-837-3837 or email, [mtkat67@gmail.com](mailto:mtkat67@gmail.com).

Space is limited to 20 for the May field trip.



American Prairie Reserve

Wisdom, the Laysan Albatross, is the oldest tagged bird in the wild. The 64 year old beauty has returned again to her nesting ground in the Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge, laid her annual egg, and should be welcoming a chick any day now.



Audubon

**WINTER/SPRING FIELD TRIPS FOR YOU!**

All Flathead Audubon field trips are free and open to the public and are geared for all ages and levels of field experience. They are led by area biologists, retired professionals, and some of the best birders in the region. For all Field Trips, dress for the weather, bring binoculars or spotting scope if you have them, wear sturdy footwear, and drive and pull off the road safely. All drivers must have their own vehicle insurance. For more information, contact Kathy Ross, 837-3738, or Gael Bissell, 261-2255, or the individual field trip leader listed below. Also, a free brochure, "Birding Hotspots of the Flathead" is available at the Flathead Audubon general meetings and on [www.FlatheadAudubon.org](http://www.FlatheadAudubon.org).



**EXPLORE GLACIER NATIONAL PARK ON SNOWSHOES.** Saturdays & Sundays, January 9 thru March 20, 2016. Enjoy 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. Trips leave at 10:30 AM & 2:00 PM. Participants may use their own snowshoes or rent snowshoes for a nominal fee at the Visitor Center. Snowshoe rentals are also available elsewhere in the Flathead Valley. If you have questions regarding this offering, please call on weekdays 406-888-7931, weekends, 406-888-7940.

**THEY'RE BACK! EARLY SPRING WATERFOWL AND OTHER MIGRANTS - EAST FLATHEAD VALLEY.** Sunday, March 20, 2016. 10:30 AM to mid-afternoon. Explore Creston and East Valley wetlands with premiere birder Craig Hohenberger. This is the peak time for migrating Tundra Swans, Canada Geese, Mallards, Northern Pintail, American Wigeon, and Green-winged Teal heading north to breeding grounds. We will also be able to find good numbers of Greater and Lesser Scaup, Ring-necked Ducks, Common and Barrow's Goldeneyes, Canvasbacks, and Redheads as well as some of the later migrating waterfowl and songbirds. Meet at the Creston elementary school, located one block north of Highway 35 on Creston Rd. north of the Creston Fire Hall. Bring lunch and foul weather gear and do plan to carpool. Please sign up by contacting Gael Bissell at 406-261-2255 or [gbissell535@gmail.com](mailto:gbissell535@gmail.com).

**SOARING OF THE SNOW GEESE AT FREEZOUT LAKE.** Saturday-Sunday, March 26-27, 2016. See page 5 for details.

**GIVE A HOOT!! BARRED OWLS WITH PETE FISHER.** Saturday, April 16, 2016, 7 PM. Pete will again host a night of hooting and owling for Barred Owls and possibly other species that may be in the East Flathead Valley area. Field trip is limited to 25 individuals. Email Pete to pre-register: [snake\\_chickadee@yahoo.com](mailto:snake_chickadee@yahoo.com).

**FLATHEAD VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE BIOBLITZ.** Saturday, April 23. On this Saturday in April, the Flathead Valley Community College is hosting a Bioblitz, a full day of a campus-wide citizen-science effort to inventory all living things. Activities will include birding, hunting for insects, and inventorying plants and other animals. Details on opportunities to join in this effort will follow in the April Pileated Post.

**MISSION VALLEY— CURLEWS AND MORE.** In April, with Janene Lichtenberg. Watch for details in the April Pileated Post.

**BIKE AND BIRD MCWENNEGER SLOUGH AND FAIRVIEW MARCH.** Saturday, May 14, 9:00 AM to noon. Join us for a bike and bird tour of McWenninger Slough and Fairview Marsh, hosted by Flathead Land Trust, Flathead Audubon, and the Flathead River to Lake Initiative. We will bike about 8 miles on a 412-acre Flathead Land Trust conservation easement that includes a large portion of McWenninger Slough and in the Fairview Marsh area. Pete Fisher, the conservation easement landowner and bird expert of Flathead Audubon will help lead this trip. We will meet for the trip at the Fisher residence at 390 Columbia Falls Stage Rd. Because we will be traveling on both paved and gravel roads we recommend mountain or fat tire bikes that can be rented from Wheaton's (Kalispell) or Glacier Cyclery (Whitefish) for the day. Wear a bike helmet and appropriate clothing and bring water and binoculars. Please RSVP to Laura Katzman of Flathead Land Trust at 752-8293 or [lkatzman@bigsky.net](mailto:lkatzman@bigsky.net).

**WARBLER "EARLY WEEKEND" AT TALLY LAKE.** Thursday to Saturday, June 9-11. Come join FAS at the Tally Lake Campground for an extraordinary 2 or 3 days of birding and relaxing. We reserved the spacious group pavilion-campsite at the campground for both Thursday and Friday nights. Throughout the event, we will be focusing on bird identification, birding by ear, and photography. This is an ideal time of year to find a wide variety of migrant and resident birds; most notable is that all of the warbler species that can be found in NW Montana are found here. *continued on page 7*

*Field Trips continued from page 6*

Plenty of other activities can be enjoyed at Tally Lake as well. Cost of camping is FREE courtesy of FAS. Call Jill or Mike Fanning at 862-8070 if you have questions about this outstanding adventure into the world of birds.

**COMMON LOONS AND LOON CHICKS.** Sunday, June 12, 8:30 AM- 2:00 PM. Join the Tally Lake/Kalispell West Loon Ranger to see recently hatched common loon chicks and adults on several local nesting lakes. Actual destinations will depend on timing and success of this year's loon hatch. Trip is ideal for people of all ages and young families. Walking may be necessary for short distances and down hills or trails to observation points. The Loon Ranger intern will provide an excellent spotting scope and information about northwest Montana loons, loon behaviors and loon interactions with each other and humans, the result of years of banding efforts, as well as other little known facts about our local loons. Meet at 8:30 AM at Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 490 North Meridian Road in Kalispell. Bring lunch, binoculars, warm clothes, boots and rain gear. Return will be between 12:30 and 2:30 PM depending on distance to the lakes. To sign up or for more information, contact Laura Holmquist at the Flathead National Forest ([laholmquist@fs.fed.us](mailto:laholmquist@fs.fed.us) or 758-3501).

**LOST TRAIL NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE.** Sunday, June 19, 8:30 AM-2:00 PM. Join refuge wildlife biologist Beverly Skinner and tour the incredible wetlands and grasslands of this hidden jewel west of Kalispell. See restored Dahl Lake with nesting Trumpeter Swans, Black Terns and an abundance of waterfowl well as many bird species associated with Palouse prairie, riparian/wetland, and larch/pine forest habitats (Williamson's Sapsucker) of the 9,000+ acre Lost Trail National Wildlife Refuge northwest of Marion, MT. The trip should include seeing one of the Refuge's rarest plant, the threatened Spalding's catchfly, and finding/viewing boreal toads. We will drive and walk along some of the refuge's closed roads with short hikes to the best viewing sites. Meet at the Lost Trail Refuge Headquarters (about 45 miles northwest of Kalispell) between 8:15-8:30 AM. For location and more information about the refuge, go to [http://www.fws.gov/refuge/lost\\_trail](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/lost_trail). To sign up for the field trip or get more information about the trip and possible carpooling with others, contact Beverly at 406-858-2286 or [beverly\\_skinner@fws.gov](mailto:beverly_skinner@fws.gov).

#### UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS/EVENTS

**Forestry Expo Family Day**, May 6, Columbia Falls. See page 5.

**FAS Birdathon**, June 18 (Bruce) Tannehill's Tanagers vs. John's (Hughes) Jays!

**Wild Horse Island**, June 26, with Doug and Don MacCarter.

**Alvord Lake**, July 8, FAS/Montana Loon Society field trip (near Troy).

**Going Batty? Looking and Listening for Bats**, August 12, with Lewis Young and Lisa Bate.

## West Valley Naturalist

**Thursday, March 10, Early settlers of West Valley.** What was the West Valley like at the turn of the century? Who were the early settlers in this area? What are the stories behind some of the old barns and other structures that still stand from this by-gone time? These are some of the questions that will be answered by Jeanine Buettner, life time resident of West Valley. Jeanine's relatives settled here in 1891 and Jeanine

has been documenting her research for the past 25 years. She has fresh information every time she presents her finds. The presentation will begin at 7 PM in the West Valley Middle School Commons. Please use the main West Valley School entrance at 2290 Farm to Market Road. For more information please contact Jeanine at 755-4733 or Linda de Kort at 755-3704.

## Nongame Wildlife Tax Check-off

When filling out your Montana tax form this year, think "wildlife" by donating to the Nongame Wildlife Program, found on line 18a (short EZ form) or 69a (long form). If your taxes are prepared, tell your accountant that you want to donate to wildlife! Your contri-



feps.edu

butions are tax deductible on next year's return. Look for the soaring Bald Eagle in the instruction booklet. Montana has more than 500 species of "nongame" animals that benefit from public support each year at tax time. Since 1983, the check-off has contributed over \$27,000 annually to this important wildlife program.



liveanimals.tv

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

### 2016 Owen Sowerwine Natural Area Volunteer Monitoring Season Starts this Month

Flathead Audubon's OSNA Volunteer Monitoring Program begins its 10<sup>th</sup> year in March. This Program provides on-site information that is fundamental to our management of the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area (OSNA).

Reports from Volunteer Monitors keep our OSNA On-the-Ground Manager up to date on maintenance needs at OSNA, and contribute data for our record of bird, wildlife, and native vegetation species present at OSNA. In addition, Volunteer Monitors relay feedback from OSNA visitors and neighbors that may improve our management efforts.

**YOU CAN HELP** by serving as an **OSNA VOLUNTEER MONITOR**. It is easy. Just take an OSNA Volunteer Monitoring Form with you when you visit OSNA, and use it to tell us what you observe. The fill-in-the-blank and check-list parts of the Form give guidance on what to look for, and there is also space for recording additional information and writing comments. Use the form to report sightings of new bird species; they will be used to up-date the OSNA Bird List. Send the filled-out form to Rick Mace (address on the form). We provide a trail map for your use.

We also need Volunteer Monitors to do scheduled monitoring visits. We try to schedule at least one monitoring visit each half month, March through November. Pick your half month period, and make one monitoring visit in that time.

To sign up for a scheduled monitoring visit, contact me, Linda Winnie, and tell me which month you want to sign up for, and whether you want the first or last half of that month. To get the Monitoring Form and trail map, print the form and the map from the OSNA section of the Flathead Audubon website (under CONSERVATION), or ask me to mail or copies to you. For more information on the OSNA Volunteer Monitoring Program, see the OSNA section of our website, or contact me at [lindawin@centurytel.net](mailto:lindawin@centurytel.net) or 755-1406.

**THANK YOU to all who have served as Volunteer Monitors over the years.** Your help has been invaluable! Please let me know if you are able to help again this year.

From Linda Winnie, Co-Chair, Owen Sowerwine Committee.



*Come join us for Montana Audubon's Annual Bird Festival, this year co-hosted by Five Valleys Audubon in cooperation with Bitterroot Audubon, June 3-5, 2016, at the Holiday Inn Downtown in Missoula. We are very excited about our facility at Riverfront Park along the Clark Fork River, where all festival activities will take place Friday through Sunday, including registration, field trip departures, guest speaker presentations, meals, banquet festivities, and much more. The Holiday Inn Downtown is located off the Van Buren or Orange Street exits off I-90 and provides easy access to all our birding activities and field trips.*

Currently we have rooms blocked for festival-goers Friday and Saturday nights. Be sure to tell them you're with the Montana Audubon Bird Festival group to get the special rate! If you're planning to arrive early or late to take in the pre- and post-trips sponsored by Five Valleys Audubon, the Holiday Inn will try to accommodate you at our contracted rate outside the block. We suggest you make your reservations soon by calling 1-800-399-0408 or 406-721-8550.

Our Festival Registration Brochure is scheduled to be mailed early March, with the online registration system active soon after. Use either the registration brochure or the online system to register. The brochure is full of information on the festival events and all the field trips that will be available.

## Call for Montana Audubon Award Nominations!

Please nominate a deserving person for Montana Audubon's annual awards! 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 Award. To nominate your candidate, visit our website at [mtaudubon.org/about/award/](http://mtaudubon.org/about/award/). To be considered

for this year's award, nominations must be submitted no later than **May 19, 2016**. Nominations can be submitted by email ([jellis@mtaudubon.org](mailto:jellis@mtaudubon.org)) or mailed to Montana Audubon, PO Box 595, Helena, MT 59624. Questions? Contact Janet Ellis at 406-443-3949 or [<jellis@mtaudubon.org>](mailto:jellis@mtaudubon.org).

**Seldom used binoculars?** Thank you to the FAS member who left a nice pair of Bushnell binoculars in our mailbox, they will be put to good use in a needy school in the Amazon Basin. We are still hoping to gather more seldom used binoculars to take to rural schools in Ecuador this spring along with bird and ecology curricula. Please call us (755-3704) or meet us at the March general FAS meeting if you are able to contribute. Thanks. Frank and Linda de Kort.



# Thank You!

...to those below who have made donations to Flathead Audubon through January 2016

## Supporting Member + donation

K.C. Voermans



## 46<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL LIBBY CBC

The 46<sup>th</sup> Libby Christmas bird count took place on December 19<sup>th</sup> with 12 observers. The day was mostly overcast with a low of 25 degrees and a high of 36 with no wind and light to heavy snowfall in the afternoon. Thirty-five species and a total of 1650 birds were counted on a relatively quiet day in our area. Bald Eagles were plentiful with 65 and the Wild Turkey population continues to thrive. There was a conspicuous absence of Dark-eyed Juncos of which none were observed. A special thanks to all participants, especially Jon Jeresek and Mark Mason who floated about 20 miles of the Kootenai River on a slow day for waterfowl but did pick up one Canvasback which is not common to our area. By Gene Reckin



courtesy of Jeanine Buettnner

## 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 \_\_\_\_\_

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Please do not acknowledge my gift in the Pileated Post

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Please make checks payable to:

Flathead Audubon Society

P.O. Box 9173

Kalispell, MT 59904

Your gift is tax deductible.

## 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.





Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

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

MARCH 2016



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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 PM and include a featured guest who presents a conservation or nature program. The Board of Directors meet the Monday preceding the general meeting, at 6 PM at 295 3rd Ave. EN, in Kalispell. Both meetings are open to all.

**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 - Lisa Flowers: [auduboneducator@gmail.com](mailto:auduboneducator@gmail.com)

**FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY DIRECTORY**

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**DIRECTORS**

2014-2017	Jim Rychwalski	<a href="mailto:james_rychwalski@yahoo.com">james_rychwalski@yahoo.com</a>	755-3229
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2015-2016	Bob Lee	<a href="mailto:rml3@centurytel.net">rml3@centurytel.net</a>	270-0371

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Christmas Bird Count	Vacant		
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Newsletter	Linda Winnie	755-1406	
	Kay Mitchell	756-8130	
	John Hughes	261-2506	
	Lewis Young	889-3492	
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Program	Bob Lee	270-0371	
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Sales	Jill Fanning	862-8070	

Refuges Kathy Ross 837-3837  
Website Paula Smith 837-0181  
Wetlands vacant



**MONTANA AUDUBON**  
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Board President: Fred Weisbecker  
443-4229  
Board Member representing FAS  
Bob Lee [rml3@centurytel.net](mailto:rml3@centurytel.net) 270-0371

**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

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The Pileated Post is sent to FAS members by email. If you wish to receive a paper copy by USPS, check this box.

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