



Mary and Gary Sloan receive Conservation Achievement Recognition

Mary and Gary Sloan have been quiet, steady and innovative leaders in conservation in northwestern Montana for many decades. Never ones for the spotlight, they have inspired countless Montanans to get involved in Montana's natural history.

Gary hails from Troy, where he grew up helping his dad log cedar with cross cut saws during the later years of the great Depression. Mary O'Neil was born in Deerlodge and grew up in Superior. Each gravitated to Whitefish, he for the hunting and she for the skiing. Around the same time they were hired at Whitefish High School, he as an English instructor and she as a home economics teacher. Both Mary and Gary were much loved and respected by their students. Gary explored the conservation ethic with his students using the "Sand County



Almanac" for much of his career. In the classroom and the field Gary and Mary love to introduce others to the wonders of the nature.

Together, they have enjoyed a long history of volunteer projects for Flathead Audubon, Native Plant Society, Montana Loon Society, the Nature Conservancy, Montana Wilderness Association, Flathead Forestry Project, and the U.S. Forest Service. They have led native plant walks, monitored loons, conducted multi-year fire success research, and mentored new hunters. Gary became infamous for leading the uninitiated on "Sloan bushwacks" deep into the wilds.

In the early 1990s they volunteered with Flathead Audubon to map and inventory old growth
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New West Valley Bird Viewing Area is Open!

About 150 people gathered Saturday evening, October 6, to celebrate the completion of Flathead Land Trust's West Valley Wetlands Conservation Project, and to take part in the Grand Opening of the Project's



Gael Bissell

new West Valley Bird Viewing Area. Flathead Audubon was well represented by roughly 20 members

and officers. Also present were a couple dozen Sandhill Cranes, several hundred Canada Geese and ducks, and a small flock of Eared Grebes - and a Northern Harrier on the hunt. A Bald Eagle visited at

one point to chase a badger and then flush up waves of waterfowl. And as the sun got low in the sky,
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Linda Winnie

NOVEMBER FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

Monday, November 5, 2018. 6 PM. FAS Board of Directors Meeting, Gateway Community Center, US Hwy 2 West, Kalispell. All welcome.

Monday, November 12, 2018. 7 PM Flathead Audubon General Meeting, Gateway Community Center, US Hwy 2 West, Kalispell. All welcome. See page 3.

BIRD OF THE MONTH

Gadwall, *Mareca strepera*

by John Hughes

Gadwalls are medium sized dabbling ducks. Males are 19-22 inches in length with females being slightly smaller at 18-20 inches. Most people can pick out a male Gadwall fairly easily in a mixed flock of ducks. When asked to describe a Gadwall, what you most often hear is the gray duck with a black rump.

While this is a good description of a male Gadwall at a distance, upon closer inspection the male has intricate markings of gray, black and white feathers on its chest and flanks with a chestnut hue on the upper wings. It has a slate gray bill, yellow legs, a black-bordered white speculum and a white belly. As with other sexually dimorphic ducks, females are brownish overall but can be distinguished from other female ducks with similar coloration by an orange bill with a dark longitudinal midsection and dark lateral spots and a white speculum.

I remember the first time I viewed a male Gadwall through a spotting scope and was blown away at how beautiful it was. The genus name *Mareca* is from the Brazilian-Portuguese word *Marreco* meaning small duck. I was disappointed to find that the word Gadwall, while having been in use since the mid seventeenth century, was of unknown origin. Linnaeus first described the Gadwall in his *Systema naturae* in 1758. Perhaps one of our readers can help me out with the origin of the word.

Gadwalls are widely distributed throughout the world. In North America, breeding populations can be in the north-central U.S. and Prairie Provinces of Canada. Gadwalls are found year round in western Montana where open water exists during the winter months. In eastern Montana, Gadwalls migrate south for the winter. They tend to prefer wetlands and are found at most wildlife refuges or waterfowl

production areas but make use of sewage treatment plant ponds, stock tanks and other human made bodies of water. Migration begins in September and October for non-resident birds. Short distances are covered, usually at night with frequent stops along the way. North American populations winter in the southern U.S. and coastal

Mexico with the largest concentrations along the southern gulf states of the U.S., with the largest populations found in Louisiana and Texas.

A Gadwall's diet consists mainly of submerged aquatic vegetation, seeds and aquatic insects. They prefer shallow to deep wetlands where they feed over beds of aquatic vegetation on the surface to a depth of about 11 inches by submerging their

heads or tipping up. Gadwalls tend to feed in deeper water than most dabblers and are known to steal food (kleptoparasitize) diving American Coots. They will feed during the day and night and spend over 60% of their time feeding during the winter.

Gadwalls are monogamous with pair bonding occurring during fall migration. Ninety-seven percent are paired up by November. Breeding is initiated during May in Montana. Typically there is only one clutch per season unless there is nest failure and time to lay

another clutch. The pair will fly low over potential nest sites seeking spots with dense, tall

grasses, forbs or shrubs that afford adequate cover to conceal the nest. Nest density is greatest on islands but Gadwall will also nest in fields, meadows and on dikes. The distance from water can vary anywhere from one-tenth mile to 1.5 miles from water. The male stands guard while the female determines the suitability of the site. Females have been known to use the same site for multiple years indicating the female

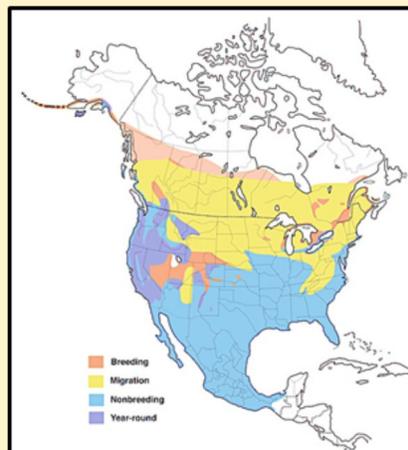
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THE BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA



November Program

Studying Bird Populations in Streamside Habitats Over 40 Years presented by Dave Manuwal

Dr. Dave Manuwal, who has studied birds in the western US for over 60 years, will be the featured speaker at the Monday, November 12 meeting of the Flathead Audubon Society at 7PM in the Gateway Community Room in Kalispell. He received his undergraduate degree from Purdue University and a Master's degree working with Dick Taber at the University of Montana in 1968. He received a PhD studying marine birds at UCLA in 1972. Dave taught and conducted bird research for 41 years at the University of Washington's School of Environmental and Forest Sciences. After retiring in 2013 as Emeritus Professor of Wildlife Science, he is now an affiliate professor at UM where he recently resurveyed his bird plots at Lubrecht Experimental Forest from 40 years earlier! He now resides in Kalispell with his wife Naomi.

Dr. Manuwal will talk about his study of birds found along streams in western Montana that was



initiated in 1967. Dave mapped the territories of males along three streams and compared the numbers of birds between 1967-68, 1980 and 2008. He also took data on when and where individual males established territories to see if they were responding to specific aspects of the habitat. Focal species were Hammond's Flycatcher, MacGillivray's Warbler, American Redstart, and Warbling Vireo. A catastrophic weather event in February 1989 drastically changed the structure of the vegetation. This had some consequences for future birds with territories along the streams. The American Redstart appeared to be the most impacted.

The program is free and open to the public. For more information, go to www.flatheadaudubon.org.

Improvements at Owen Sowerwine

On Saturday, 29 September, 15 FAS members got together in wonderful weather for the annual Owen Sowerwine Workday. Tasks included the traditional mowing of the main trail and pulling weeds. Additional tasks were to finish the bridge from the Montessori School to the north end of Owen Sowerwine and to install interpretive signs at the entrances concerning weed control.

Despite the presence of a young female grizzly bear, the work went off without a hitch. Rick Mace showed up with his telemetry gear and located the bear away from where our work was taking place. It was near Denny and John, so we didn't worry! The main trail looks good. Volunteers pulled enough weeds to fill 20 large trash bags. This is a never-ending but import chore. The Montana Noxious Weed Campaign working in cooperation with the Montana Adopt-A-Trail Program provided the in-

terpretive signs for us to install at the entrances. These are not only informative but also look great, and have a boot brush to clean your feet both coming and going.

We were finished in about 3 hours and everyone dispersed to tackle their own jobs that Saturday. We want to thank Montessori School for allowing us to use their facilities to assemble and delegate tasks. They are great to work with – please thank them whenever possible.

Although we'll formally see you next fall for the annual work day, visit OSNA often. While there, pick up a little trash, pull a few weeds and enjoy the serenity. Also, download a monitoring form from the FAS website and take a few moments to fill it out when you go ... good information helps us manage the area better. *by Bob Lee*

*photos by
Linda
Winnie*



**Bruce, Bob, Barb
working on trail**



Bringing out the weeds

Mary and Gary Sloan continued from page 1

forest groves on the Murphy Lake Ranger District. They have worked closely over the years with the Tally Lake Ranger District to monitor forests and wildlife. In the mid-1990s they were presented with the Danny On Award by the Flathead National Forest.

They are the brains and brawn behind the native flower herbarium at the Whitefish Public Library, which is featured on the National Geographic

Crown of the Continent MapGuide. They built an attractive wooden case specifically for the library collection, and they pressed, described and displayed more than 100 Montana native plants in the collection. Mary also puts together a poster display of the "Native Plant of the Month" for the Library. Ever the adventuresome explorers, they regularly add new specimens to the herbarium. *by Steve Thompson*

Bird Viewing Area continued from page 1

4 Trumpeter Swans flew in low over the celebration tent and landed in the pond below the viewing area. It was a grand Grand Opening!

The West Valley Ponds complex is where hundreds of Sandhill Cranes gather in the fall to prepare for migration. The Land Trust Project has placed conservation easements on 400 acres of agricultural fields and pothole wetlands in the complex. The ¼ acre public bird viewing area overlooks a 45 acre pothole wetland that is one of the places the cranes roost at night. The viewing area was developed and funded by Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (FWP). It features informational signage and space for parking, and will eventually be landscaped with native vegetation. FWP provided free standing spotting scopes for the Opening, and hopes to eventually install permanently mounted scopes. But for the near future, birders should bring their own scopes.



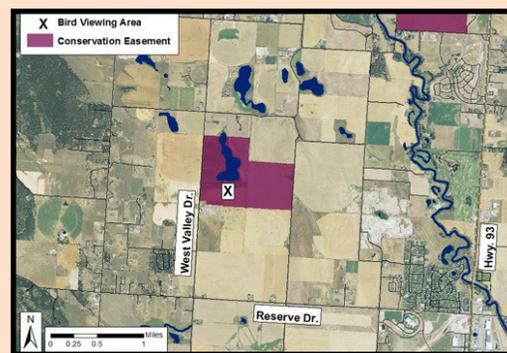
To get to the bird viewing area, first go to the intersection of West Valley Drive and Reserve Drive. From there go north on West Valley Drive about one mile, where you will see a sign saying "West Valley Wildlife Viewing Area". Just beyond the sign is a gravel road heading east. Turn onto this road, and go about ¼ mile. The viewing area is on the north side of the road. To find the location of the viewing area on Google Maps, search for "West Valley Bird and Wildlife Viewing Area".

FWP recently released a short video about

the viewing area that features Chris Hammond (FWP), Laura Katzman (Flathead Land Trust), and Flathead Audubon's own Denny Olson. Chris was involved in developing the bird viewing area. (You will remember Chris from his presentations on Common Loons at our meeting last March and on Black Swifts last April.) Laura planned and spearheaded the Wetlands Conservation Project, and promoted inclusion of the public bird viewing area. (Recall that Flathead Audubon recognized her for these achievements last month at our October meeting.) To see the video go to <https://youtu.be/U34O4ZpMOGM> - or check it out on the Flathead Audubon website, in the News section. Be sure to listen for Denny's Sandhill Crane imitation near the end.

Sandhill Cranes are present in the West Valley Ponds area spring through fall, and are there in great numbers during the time they gather to stage for migration – September and October. They can often be seen from the viewing area any time of day, but the two most reliable times to see a lot of them are during the half hour after sunset, when the cranes come to roost in the shallow water of the pothole wetland below the viewing area, and around sunrise, before they leave to feed in the nearby fields during the day.

by Linda Winnie, Gael Bissell, Kay Mitchell



LOST, NOT FOUND

Flathead Audubon's sound system has gone missing. It disappeared over the summer months and we would like to welcome it back home. Many members have commented on being able to hear better during programs because of the amplification. The

system is about 3 feet tall, has roller wheels and is housed in a large silver suitcase. Can you help? Anybody who helps find our "noise box" will rate a standing ovation and picture in The Pileated Post! Contact Kay Mitchell at 756-8130.



Conservation Educator's Niche

By Denny Olson

Probably the most photographed education activity – maybe the most photographed thing in the entire history of Flathead Audubon – is a little kid in our old standby felt bird costume. It's pretty cute, especially if it's your own child, and the "littles" walk away with a good concept of what makes a bird a bird. Beaks, feet, wings, tail, body down, primaries, secondaries, crests – they know the basics.

But I've always felt that the name "Bird ID and Costume" for the trunk, was not really about "Bird ID", but about bird morphology, or the "parts" of all birds. Because the costume was so brightly colored in primary reds, yellows, blues and greens, it was not meant to "ID" a local bird. So it was time to give ID its proper due.

Almost everyone, kids included, knows what a Chickadee looks like. What they probably *don't* know, *adults* included, is that we have four kinds of Chickadees in the Flathead – Black-capped (the one they do know), Mountain, Boreal and Chestnut-backed. To my way of thinking, this is the "perfect storm" of backyard birds to teach the subtleties of field marks, habitat, habits and vocalizations – all things we birder-types use to identify bird species. Enter: the shiny, new "Chickadee Who's Who: Bird ID Basics" educational trunk, designed as the next step from the original colorful "bird parts" trunk. That original trunk has a target age of pre-school and primary grades. This one will follow up with somewhat older students and get into the nitty-gritty of bird Identification.

But, to do that, there were some special skills needed, none of which are mine (except for the "habits" part). Bruce Tannehill, our own Godfather of the World of Bird Song Geeks, put together a beautiful thumb drive of songs, calls, agitated calls, gurgles, etc. of all four Chickadees within a few hours of my request. (After teaching week-long Birding in Glacier courses with him the last few years, I just knew he would have what I needed. And more.)

As for the interchangeable Chickadee costumes, Kay Mitchell pointed me straight to Sandi

Vashro, a very talented artist and designer, who has produced an amazing set of Chickadee costumes. Three hoods with beaks, four different tunic backs and fronts, and a single set of wings and tail later, we have a costume that shows the different field marks of all four chickadees. Despite a long planning process, this was all constructed in a very short timeline, and probably not painlessly ... As you read this, I can say we premiered this trunk at the Educational Trunk Teacher's Workshop on October 18th. Proudly.

From there, I had the easy part, having students read cards to their cohorts with 19 bits of Chickadee lore, about things like the "snake act" female Chickadees do by hissing and striking the sides of their nest cavity when they feel threatened. Or the fact that Mountain Chickadees yearly grow larger brains each winter when they live at higher elevations. Or, that Boreal Chickadees are the only ones who can survive minus 50 degree temperatures.

Chestnut-backed Chickadees are darker in wetter, shadier climates.

All this is designed as a practicum on solving the puzzles of bird identification, using a bird that is very familiar. But, kids need a reason to care about what they are learning, so a lesson on the value of birds to we humans is included as well.

Take a kid fishing? Sure. But take them bird-watching too. They may give you some tips ...



Sheena Pate

CHIRPS & SQUAWKS

Highlights from October 1, 2018 Board Meeting

- ◆ Derrick Rathe was nominated and approved to fulfill Barb Summer's position on the Board.
- ◆ Cathy Ross will create a native plant garden at the West Valley Viewing Area. Suggestions were made for other donations from FAS including benches, bluebird houses and a spotting scope.
- ◆ Denny Olson stated approximately 800 attended the Birds of Prey Festival at Lone Pine Park in September.

FALL/WINTER FIELD TRIPS FOR YOU!

All Flathead Audubon field trips are free and open to the public (except those organized for the bird festival which require registration) 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. Please read our field trip guidelines at www.FlatheadAudubon.org. 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 at 837-3837 or Cory Davis at 257-3166, 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.



No field trips are scheduled in November. Watch the December issue for a listing of Christmas Bird Counts occurring in our area.

Gadwall continued from page 2

may direct the male in the location of a nest site. Nests are created by scooping out a depression and pulling sticks and grasses around her body and finishing with down feathers in the middle plucked from the females brood patch area. Seven to twelve oval, whitish to greenish eggs are laid at a rate of one per day. The male guards the female during egg laying but leaves once all the eggs are laid. The female is responsible for incubation and care of the young. The female relies on fat reserves during this period. She also consumes more invertebrates during this period for protein. Incubation lasts about 26 days with the female spending 85% of her time on the nest. The chicks are precocial at birth and leave the nest within 24-36 hours after hatching. Brooding begins at hatching and last for about 14 days. The hen will lead the young to a brood-rearing area, which usually consists of tall emergent aquatic vegetation.

The chicks acquire their own food consisting of aquatic invertebrates in the beginning and transitioning to aquatic plants. The female abandons the

brood at about 10 weeks. Flight is achieved approximately 50 days after hatching.

The Gadwall is listed as a species of least concern. Its populations and range have been increasing for the last 30 years. In the 1960s through the mid 1980s populations were low due to habitat destruction and drought. Between 1986 and 1996 populations are reported to have increased by 129% due to improved wetland conditions. This has enabled Gadwalls to expand their breeding range into formerly unoccupied areas in northwestern U.S. and eastern Canada. While this species is doing well, it should not be lost on anyone that the increase in their population was due to conservation efforts to set aside and improve wetland conditions. With an uncertainty in future climatic conditions, it is very important to continue to protect and improve our wetland habitats.

What's that gray duck with a black rump? Why, it's a Gadwall of course. Enjoy picking them out at great distances with just those characteristics. And if anyone knows the etymology of the word Gadwall, please let me know.

Education Committee News

We have had a productive September. Two meetings were held during which we outlined ways to bring educational programs to students and the community. We are considering several grants; funds would help us incorporate climate, conservation, ecology, the value of birds and to add thumb drives of the trunks' contents. We are exploring ways to involve high school students from Community School and the Creativity Action Service programs in making these additions too. Audubon members will have the opportunity to view our new trunk, "Chickadee Who's Who: Bird Identification Basics" during an upcoming general meeting where it will be on display.

Flathead Audubon's educational trunks are stored at Lone Pine State Park and are available all year. All community members are welcome to check

out a trunk for use with students or adults. Visit the FAS website and follow the link to 'Lifetime Learning' to check one out. We have Audubon ambassadors who will deliver and return a trunk to you.

Our committee is pleased to share that our October 16 committee meeting will be held at Whitefish School District's Center for Sustainability and Entrepreneurship (CSE). The Center provides applied learning experiences for K-12 students in Whitefish and throughout the Flathead Valley. Randy Hofm from the Center will speak with us and then lead a tour of the facility. To learn more about this Whitefish School District's valuable community asset go to : <https://wsd44.org/ourpages/auto/2018/4/9/41004661/CSE%20Executive%20Summary.pdf>

by Gail Shay Linne, Education Chair

Policy Regarding Access to Flathead Audubon Adopted

At its October meeting, the Flathead Audubon board passed the following operational policy:

Requests for Access to Flathead Audubon Board and General Meetings

Upon receiving a request for access to Flathead Audubon, the following shall provide guidance. This operational policy includes proposals from any source outside of Flathead Audubon requesting access through an in-person address to members, visual displays, or distribution of printed materials.

- ◇ No for-profit or commercial access shall be allowed.
- ◇ Flathead Audubon continues to share membership data only with Montana Audubon.
- ◇ Requests from individuals or nonprofit organizations shall be first presented in writing to
 - Program Chair, if request is for access to general meetings
 - Conservation Co-chair, if request is for Flathead Audubon to support or oppose an issue
 - President, if request is for access to Flathead Audubon Board of Directors
- ◇ Decisions by the Program Chair, Conservation Co-Chair or President will be made after receiving written request. Topics must pertain to birds, conservation or education and should be consistent with the mission of Flathead Audubon.
- ◇ If the Program Chair, Conservation Co-chair or President are uncertain about a request, final decision will lie with Flathead Audubon Board of Directors.
- ◇ Flexibility will be allowed for program speakers and recipients of Flathead Audubon recognitions and honors at the time they give a program or receive an honor.

Montana Audubon Fall Conservation Update

With fall skies and intermittent snow starting to fall on the peaks around Helena, we at Montana Audubon know that fall is passing quickly, propelling us towards yet another year at the Montana Legislature. We are already starting to gear up for the session ahead, and are excited to bring a legislative assistant on-board starting in January. That means, **we're hiring!** Please let the conservation minded folks out there know!

For more information on that position, please visit: <https://mtaudubon.org/2018/10/legislative-assistant-needed/>

As in past years, we will be working closely with other conservation organizations and Montana Conservation Voters to establish policy priorities and

stay organized. We began by ramping up our work with this group in September and also by ramping up our outreach in support of Ballot Initiative I-186 – “Yes for responsible mining”. For more on that initiative, please visit: <https://www.yeson186.org/>.

Beyond preparing for the tough policy work ahead, as in the past, October has been a month full of raptor surveys and raptor ID training. We had a great time presenting at the Annual Bridger Raptor Fest and have spent a lot of time counting raptors at the Big Belts migration site south of Helena (See the GEMS update). Surveys there will wrap up in early November, leaving us plenty of time to switch gears towards the legislative session. *by Amy Seamon*

West Valley Naturalists

Six years ago FAS partnered with USFS for a “more kids in the woods” grant. Thanks especially to the genius and perseverance of Teresa Wenum at USFS three rural schools were able to educate students and staff about the value of native plants. Moreover grant money was provided so that students could research and then plant native flowering herbaceous and woody plants on the school grounds. The gardens at west valley school continue to thrive, attracting native birds and other pollinators, providing a kaleidoscope of color from spring through fall, allowing teachers to have a convenient outdoor classroom.

The gardens are however invaded by tenacious and aggressive non native witch grass which requires equally aggressive and tenacious vigilance! Thanks to FAS Members, West Valley Naturalists, and the West Valley Girl Scout troop for dedication and deep digging to help control this threat to our native plant gardens. On your way to the new West Valley bird viewing area please feel free to stop by and visit the school native plant garden and please feel free to pluck out any non natives you spy within its borders!

by Linda de Kort

Owen Sowerwine Long-term Vegetation Plots

On a beautiful sunny day recently, the long-term vegetation monitoring plots at Owen Sowerwine Natural Area were read for the third time. The plots were established in 2008 to monitor large-scale changes in the vegetation over the long-term and are read every 5 years. The 12 randomly located plots are permanently marked with steel fence posts and measure presence of water and water channels, number and size of live and dead trees, down woody material,

and abundance of grasses, forbs, shrubs, and weeds. Plot photos in each of the 4 cardinal directions visually document the current vegetation.

The data from this year has not been analyzed yet but will be in the coming months. Findings will be reported in the Pileated Post.

Plot readers this year were Kay and Brent Mitchell and Lynda and Lewis Young.

By Lewis Young

Check Out Montana eBird!

Montana Audubon launched its *Montana eBird portal* during our 19th annual Wings Across the



Big Sky bird festival in Kalispell this past summer. On the website you can access a great deal of Montana-specific bird information on species, hotspots, recent checklists and links to data collected

by other eBirders across the state. In addition, photos from local birders, sightings of uncommon birds and Montana Audubon's news feed can easily be found there.

Make Montana eBird your homepage today:

www.ebird.org/mt

by David Cronenwett, Montana Audubon

by David Cronenwett, Montana Audubon

The Gray Jay Will Officially Be Called the Canada Jay Again

And as it turns out, the bird's name should have been switched back more than 50 years ago. Recently, the American Ornithological Society, a scientific body that's responsible for the classification and naming of birds in North America, agreed to officially change the name of the Gray Jay to Canada Jay. The history of the name "Canada Jay" runs deep: It was the name *Perisoreus canadensis* had gone by from at least 1831 to 1948, and it was the name John J. Audubon used on his original, hand-engraved plates. A scientist studying the birds searched the American Ornithological Society's archives and found

there was little reason the AOS shouldn't change the name back to Canada Jay. In fact, the bird's name should have already been changed in 1954 due to changes in the AOU naming convention. For some reason, however, Gray Jay stuck. In 1957, when the AOU published the Fifth Edition of its "Checklist of North and Middle American Birds," *Perisoreus canadensis* was listed as "Gray Jay."

Beginning in July 2018 the bird is once again officially the "Canada Jay." *adapted from National Audubon Society, news release*

Calendars

We have just a few of the 2019 Workman Audubon calendars for sale this year: Songbirds in the Garden, Little Owls, and one each Songbird Calendar (the big one) and Engagement Calendar. Various prices apply. They will be at the next monthly meeting.



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.

New Checklist of Montana Birds

The 2018 Checklist of Montana Birds is now available. This new checklist follows the official state bird list reviewed by the Montana Bird Records Committee annually, as well as recent taxonomic changes by the American Ornithological Society (June 2018). It boasts 433 bird species, with 283 documented breeders, and 233 overwintering residents. Species are identified as breeding (B, b) or wintering (W, w) or 't' (no evidence of breeding).

The 2018 Checklist was a collaborative production by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks; Montana Audubon; Montana

Natural Heritage Program; Montana Bird Advocacy; and the Montana Bird Records Committee, .

Funding for the printing costs was provided by the Montana Nongame Wildlife Checkoff. We all owe a special thanks to Janet Ellis, Jeff Marks, and Bryce Maxell, who worked to get the update completed. The 2018 Checklist of Montana Birds can be downloaded at <https://www.montanabirdadvocacy.org/state-list/> and will be available in printed form by November at local FWP offices.



Canada Jay by Garth McElroy

A Message From Montana Audubon

This past summer, Montana Audubon officially signed on to a statewide effort in support of Initiative 186, which is now on the November election ballot. If passed, I-186 would require the state to issue permits for **new** hard rock mines only if such facilities can prove they would not generate waste that must be treated in perpetuity.

Montana has 3,500 abandoned mines, more than 200 of which are known to be discharging contaminants and polluting our clean water. Our state has

nearly 2,500 miles of streams polluted by acid mine drainage, lead, arsenic, and mercury from abandoned mines. Montana Audubon is keenly interested in protecting our state's water quality and riparian habitat. I-186 would be a positive step toward conservation of our precious water and wildlife resources. For more information, visit www.yeson186.org and don't forget to VOTE YES on I-186 this November!

by David Cronenwett, Montana Audubon

Additional Photos from Owen Sowerwine Workday



Rick Mace checking on bear



New weed sign with boot brush



Rod Walette and Pete Metzmaker installing sign

Photos by Linda Winnie

Thanks To Those Who Have Renewed Their Membership

Thanks to all our loyal members who have renewed for this year! Flathead Audubon could not accomplish the important things we do without you. Most important, our education program would not exist without your support.

Note to those who have not yet renewed: Normally you would not be receiving The Pileated

Post this month without renewing but this year we are allowing an extra month because the Pileated Post notice did not make it clear that October was the last month. However, if you do not renew by November 15 you will not receive December (and succeeding) issues. Thanks again.

Mike Fanning, Membership Chair

A Tiny Tag That Tracks Little Birds

David Winkler, a professor at Cornell University working with Tree Swallows, has developed a tag to track their movements. Since the birds only weigh 20 grams (0.7 ounces) he wanted a tag that weighed less than 0.7 grams (0.025 ounces) that would allow monitoring their movement for a long time. Working with a team of engineers they figured out how to use parts from remote-access car keys and tiny pieces of leftover solar panels to create a tag that transmits a digital identification code every few seconds when the

sun shines. Because it lacks a battery it can function for many years. The tags are attached to harnesses specifically designed for the birds and allow it to “float” around their chest without hindering movement or causing discomfort. The only downside of the small tags is a limited range of a mile or two. These tags have been successfully used to track Tree Swallows from upstate New York to wintering grounds in Florida. *adapted from an article in The Wildlife Professional by David Frey*

LEAD BULLETS AND WILDLIFE

The big game hunting season is here and if you are a big game hunter you can contribute to the conservation of birds by switching to non-lead bullets. Why switch? Lead bullets, even copper jacketed lead bullets, fired from high velocity guns fragment on impact losing 20-40% of their mass when they hit an object. As many as 200 fragments disperse throughout the carcass and are often too small to see. The fragments may permeate the meat you bring home and often riddle the gut piles and carcasses left in the field.

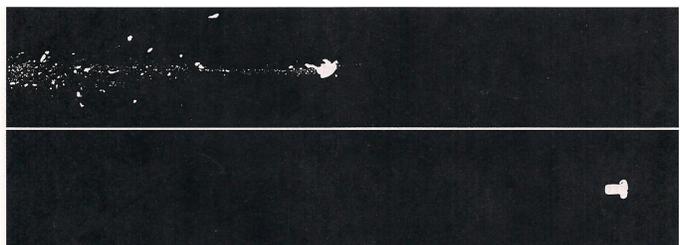


Found near Hamilton MT, 2014, this Bald Eagle died from lead poisoning. It exhibited clinical signs of lead poisoning such as head and wing droop, muscle tremors, and anorexia. Photo courtesy Brooke Tanner, Wild Skies Raptor Center.

Why are lead fragments a problem? Avian and mammalian scavengers feed on the gut piles and carcasses and ingest the lead fragments. Overwintering eagles in many parts of Montana test positive for elevated lead levels and several die each year from acute lead poisoning. Raptor View Research Institute tested 32 Golden Eagles and 11 Bald Eagles from the Bitterroot Valley from 2011-2014 and found that 86% had elevated blood lead concentrations. Evidence from multiple studies points to lead fragments as the culprit behind elevated lead levels in eagles and other scavengers.

Does switching to non-lead bullets make a difference? A voluntary program in the Jackson Hole area of Wyoming in 2009-2010 to get hunters to switch to non-lead bullets resulted in a corresponding decrease in the blood-lead levels of eagles in the sample area.

Over the last few years non-lead bullets have become available in factory loaded ammunition and multiple choices are available to those who handload their own ammunition. Non-lead bullets are normally all copper or copper alloys and retain virtually 100% of their weight upon impact. It's true that the non-lead ammunition costs more than traditional jacketed-lead bullets but the cost of ammunition is typically a very small portion of the total spent on the entire hunting experience. I personally switched to non-lead bullets several years ago and have been entirely happy with their performance in every way. Give our eagles and other wildlife a break and consider switching to non-lead bullets. *By Lewis Young, Conservation Co-Chair*



X-ray images of lead (top) and non-lead (bottom) bullets shot into a ballistics gel. Photo courtesy Jeremy Roberts/Conservation Media.



Thank You!

...to those below who have made donations to Flathead Audubon, August to September, 2018.

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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 Gateway Community Center, US Hwy 2 West, Kalispell. Both meetings are open to all.

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