



the

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Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

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Mountain
Chickadee



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BIRDS NEED OUR HELP SERIES - HOW WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE LOCALLY

From Flathead Audubon

We continue our series of articles on how we personally can help birds with a look at the problem of window collisions on page 4, and a discussion of recycling below. In addition, you'll find a handy clip-out box on page 4 with details on What and Where to recycle plastics *and glass* in the Flathead. You can cut it out and attach it to your refrigerator or bulletin board for easy later reference.

RECYCLING FOR BIRDS

Plastic that escapes into the environment is simply not good for birds or wildlife (as well as humans). We now know that plastic breaks down to tiny micro-plastics that are transported by water to lakes, rivers, and oceans where they are consumed by animals and enter the food web. Micro-plastics can interfere with animal physiology. Plastic pieces such as lids or plastic bags are often consumed by birds and wildlife causing injuries or death. Recycling and reusing paper, cardboard, metals and plastics reduces our carbon footprint. When it comes to recycling for the Birds and for our environment, the best thing you can do is BUY AS IF NOTHING GETS RECYCLED.

With the recent changes in recycling in the USA, recycling is getting harder. We find ourselves struggling once again to come to terms with our waste and how to live with less, especially plastic - especially in Montana, where it is costly to ship recyclables out of the state. Unfortunately, you occasionally need to buy products packaged in plastic. But you can REDUCE how much plastic you buy by, for example, using canvas bags when shopping. IF YOU CARE ABOUT BIRDS AND THEIR HABITAT, YOU NEED TO CHOOSE CAREFULLY.

When you must buy plastic, REUSE everything you can. Buying in bulk will reduce packaging, and reuse is often possible – think reusable water bottles and shopping bags.

The last resort after REDUCE and REUSE is, of course, RECYCLE.

GOOD NEWS!! Plastic recycling is still available in the Flathead Valley - at least for some #1 and #2 plastics, and this can make a dent, especially when you see the detailed list below.

The places listed below are really making an effort by offering recycling of CLEAN #1 and #2 plastic. Choosing what to accept is not easy because the recycling industry is very complicated. A recycling business is limited by the different criteria of the markets they are shipping to. We need to appreciate the service they are offering, and do our best to follow the criteria they specify. If you have questions about anything not listed, call the numbers listed for the recycling near you.

Clean is very important. It is the one criterion everyone agrees on. Please make sure the containers you recycle are clean. Otherwise everything that is recycled is contaminated, and mice and other pests are attracted to the recycling work area.

We all need to avoid clamshell containers (such as used for lettuce). No one in the Flathead Valley can take them, and that is true generally across the US. Why? The material in a #1 clamshell is not the same as in a #1 bottle. The plastics in the two need to be reheated at different temperatures, and cannot be used for the same industries. So clamshells create a significant contamination problem if they are mixed in with other plastics, even with the same number. Your effort to recycle is wasted if you contaminate loads. This is one reason we lost recycling earlier. Because we currently cannot recycle clamshells, we should stop buying them. Companies depend on consumers to buy their products. If we stop, they stop. This is also true of plastics other than #1 and #2, which we can't recycle either.

FEBRUARY FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

Monday, February 3, 2020. 6 PM. FAS Board of Directors Meeting, Gateway Community Center, US Hwy 2 West, Kalispell. All welcome.

Monday, February 10, 2020. 7 PM. Flathead Audubon General Meeting, Gateway Community Center, US Hwy 2 West, Kalispell. All welcome. See page 3.

Sunday, February 16, 10 AM-1 PM. The Great Backyard Bird Count See page 8.

BIRD OF THE MONTH

Pine Siskins: now we see them, now we don't

by Linda de Kort

Every December, on specific days, members of local Audubon Chapters gather in small groups to observe and record the numbers of birds seen and heard within a defined 15-mile radius circle. This information has been gathered and recorded for over a hundred years nationwide and gives us a good picture of changes that might not be obvious on a small scale, but abundance patterns can be observed over the decades. One of the small birds we enjoy observing on these "Christmas Bird Counts" has an unusually "cute" scientific name: *Spinus pinus*; its common name is Pine Siskin. Pine Siskins are especially interesting because their populations change so dramatically from winter to winter. Sometimes we see them, sometimes we don't.

Last year on the Bigfork Christmas Count, we had 358 (most ever) Pine Siskins and this year we had only 33! Even more startling was the difference in numbers on the Kalispell Christmas Count. Last December, 742 individuals were counted on that one winter day; this year we had only 15. Pine Siskins have been seen on the Kalispell Count for 20 of 21 years. The low count was 0 and the high count occurred last December.

When the winter population count is unusually high, it is called an "irruption". We are assuming that these birds are irrupting from their northern and higher elevation homes in search of more abundant food. We seldom regard our Flathead Valley as a banana belt, but these little birds, like a few other bird species that breed in Canada, come here (sometimes) to spend the winter. They come in droves when the seed crop up north is scarce; this year, the conifer crop up north must be plentiful which might be why we have seen so few. The bitter cold of northern Canada and Alaska does not seem to bother them. They have an uncanny way of

increasing their metabolism to withstand sub-zero temperatures all winter long. One study showed that Pine Siskins could increase their metabolic rate up to 40 percent more than a typical songbird to survive temperatures as low as -94 degrees Fahrenheit.

Pine Siskins are not territorial and we usually see them in large flocks while feeding and even nesting. The flocks fill the air with their raspy chatter, which is punctuated with a loud ascending zipper like sound. They have delicate beaks well suited to

"tweezering" out conifer seeds from cones (as their name implies) as well as small seeds from flower heads. Backyard feeders with thistle seed are one of their favorites. The delicate beak of the siskin distinguishes it from other brownish, streaked birds. Siskins are also smaller than most finches and sparrows, only about 4.5 inches from tip of beak to tip of tail. Both male and female have bright yellow markings at the base of the tail and on the wings that are most conspicuous when they are in flight, flitting at the feeder or during courtship. The male and female have very similar markings so it is very difficult to distinguish them from each other.

Pine Siskins generally nest in open coniferous or mixed forests; their breeding range often changes. The exact time for courtship also seems erratic, based mostly on the availability of food. The male feeds the female during courtship, nest building and incubation. The nest is an open cup, well-hidden on a horizontal branch of a conifer. There are up to 5 greenish-blue speckled eggs, which hatch in about 13 days. The young leave the nest when they are only about 15 days old. In researching the literature for this article, I came across a study recorded in 1887. I discovered that over

continued on page 7



Frank de Kort



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February Program

Raptors Up Close and Personal

presented by Nicole Nelson

Nicole Nelson will be the guest speaker at the Flathead Audubon meeting Monday, February 10 from 7-9 PM in the Gateway West Community Meeting Room in Kalispell. The program is free and open to the public.

Nicole is from the Montana Wild Wings Recovery Center of Kalispell, and will be assisted by Flathead Audubon's own Kathy Ross and Barbara Summer. They will be talking to us about the Center, and about birds of prey, and will bring several live raptors for the audience to see "up close and personal."

Montana Wild Wings is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping Montana's wild birds. Their primary mission is to rescue, rehabilitate, and release birds of prey that have been injured, sick, and/or orphaned. Birds they receive that are too badly damaged to return to the wild are kept by the Center and used for educational purposes. The raptors that will be part of the February 10 program are in this category.

Nicole is a volunteer bird handler with the

Center. She has a degree in Exotic Animal Training and Management from America's Teaching Zoo, Moorpark College, California, and is now completing her B.S. degree in Fisheries and Wildlife Science at Oregon State University.

Her assistants, Kathy Ross and Barbara Summer, are also volunteer bird handlers with the Center.

Kathy is a primary observer for Flathead Audubon's Jewel Basin Hawk Watch, and is currently serving on the FAS Board of Directors. Barbara Summer has been a primary observer for the Jewel Basin Hawk Watch for many years, and was previously also a member the FAS Board.



Montana Wild Wings Recovery Center

Natural Events To See This Month:

Dusky Grouse are feeding on high wind-swept mountain ridges.

From the Board Anyone Can Become A Birder by Will Beyer

How a person becomes interested enough to want to recognize each bird species by sight or sound and then make this a hobby is anybody's guess.

For me this happened years ago while working a summer job irrigating and cutting hay on a ranch in Central Montana. Never having spent so much time in flooded hay bottoms before, my co-workers and I started to compare odd bird sightings, then this soon developed into thumbing through a bird guide with complex nomenclature to see what was what. In time a new language was being spoken at the breakfast table. Words like plumage, phalarope, godwit, curlew, whimbrel, buteo, ferruginous, and scapulars would crop up. Winter and summer range was no longer just where the cows went. Primaries and secondaries weren't only the jets in a carburetor, but feathers on a wing! One of us mentioned seeing a black bird with a yellow head, what could that be? Now, merlin was a

bird of prey and the medieval Welsh wizard. The ranch owner, (also at the breakfast table) seemed to be entertained by all of this. Moving on.

Later, I needed to break out of some difficult times and I signed up for a bird identification class, this led to field trips, Audubon membership and bird counts. Next, better binoculars, better field guides and new acquaintances, many having remarkable birding skills that I could never match, yet they are quite humble about their abilities and freely share their knowledge.

Now, whenever or wherever I travel in strange or familiar land the binoculars and field guide are close at hand. If I see birds and can take a moment then I can hopefully see something new. There are plenty of opportunities by having a well maintained bird feeder too.



clipart-library.com

Gael Bissell Receives Award

Recently the Flathead Land Trust awarded the 2019 Conservation Leadership award to 2 people for their contributions to land and water conservation. Our own Gael Bissell was one of the recipients along with Constanza von der Pahlen from the Flathead Land Trust. Paul Travis, Flathead Land Trust executive director said, "We can't think of two more deserving people to receive the award this year and are



very grateful for their unwavering leadership, service and commitment to conserving our spectacular land and water legacy through community-based conservation."

More information about the basis for the award may be found at: <http://www.flatheadlandtrust.org/gael-bissell-constanza-von-der-pahlen-receive-2019-conservation-leadership-award/>

PROTECT BIRDS FROM COLLIDING WITH YOUR WINDOWS

In daylight, by reflecting foliage or sky, windows look like inviting places to fly into. Birds also sometimes see their reflection in a window and attack it. This happens most frequently in the spring when territoriality is high.

At night, lights divert nocturnal migrants from their original path, especially in low-ceiling or foggy conditions. They can tend to mill around a window and collide with each other.

Because the sheer number of windows is so

great, their toll on birds is huge. It is estimated about 1 billion birds die from window strikes in the US each year. Daytime collisions can be avoided in a variety of ways. The American Bird Conservancy's pamphlet *Stop Birds from Hitting Windows* has great ideas for how to make your windows more bird friendly. It is available at <https://abcbirds.org/get-involved/bird-smart-glass/>.

Closing blinds after dark and turning off lights whenever possible will help birds at night.



PLASTIC RECYCLING IN THE FLATHEAD VALLEY for the birds!!!

These places take #1 & #2 CLEAN plastic as of 1/10/20. Separate #1 & #2. Call if you have questions.

VALLEY RECYCLING (406-257-2574, 1410 Hwy 2 W, Kalispell) - for drop off by anyone in the Flathead,

THE GREEN MACHINE (406-755-8112) - for curb pick-up service

#1 and #2 plastic, clear and opaque milk jugs, other jugs and water bottles

#1 and #2 colored pop bottles that you can see through

#1 and #2 clear or opaque color (no solid color). Hand soap, dish soap, shampoo

#1 and #2 clear plastic jars (like peanut butter or nuts) with screw on lids (but NOT the lids)

#1 and #2 plastic juice containers

CITY OF WHITEFISH (406-862-4281, corner of Columbia Ave and Railway St) - ONLY for Whitefish residents. Call for specific details on #1 and #2. There have been recent changes.

GLASS RECYCLING IN THE FLATHEAD

FLATHEAD RECON Watch for glass recycling events to be announced starting again in May 2020. We will announce this on our website and in the Pileated Post when information becomes available.

END OF YEAR CHALLENGE

YOU MADE THE DIFFERENCE! THANK YOU FLATHEAD AUDUBON MEMBERS!

This last December, our wonderful solid and committed Membership raised \$6,545 in total End Of Year Donations with the Board Members (both past and present) outpacing contributions of General Members about 2.6 to 1. Last year, General Members outpaced the Board Members donating nearly twice as much as Board raising nearly \$7,000. Regardless of who "wins" the Challenge, Flathead Audubon Society is clearly the benefactor of your help and support. We

are so impressed by your generosity; 1/3 of you generously donated to our chapter with contributions ranging from \$5 to \$500. These funds will go a long way to support our 2020 Conservation/Education program, Owen Sowerwine Management, Jewel Basin Hawk Watch and many more of our ongoing projects. Pat yourselves on the back! And, THANK YOU! THANK YOU! *by Gael Bissell, President*

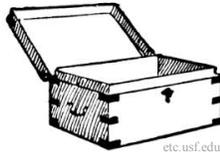


Conservation Educator's Niche

By Denny Olson

I decided not to wax philosophical this month, and instead, give you a report on the day-to-day of my Conservation Educator's life, and what is planned for the near future. After the December Bigfork (with Bridger Donaldson) and Kalispell (with Tom and Cindy Roberts and Mary Auxier) Christmas Bird Counts, and a "Professor Avian Guano" presentation for the Flathead Wildlife Youth Banquet, it was back to projects, in various stages of completion.

I'm re-tooling the oldest educational trunk we have in our set of eleven trunks and five supplemental materials boxes, "Common Birds of the Flathead", and will finish it with help from Jennifer Doolan, one of our Ambassador volunteers. Board member Pam Willison has added another line to her resume', videographer, by operating the camera for an upcoming website and Facebook/YouTube video called "Birds Rock!" while Prof. Guano narrates and does his usual antics in a fast-moving piece about the incredible value of birds in our environment. BJ Worth and Josh Covill will be supplying gorgeous high-definition video clips for this film from their extensive collection at Birds in Motion. I'm in the middle of editing-in the special effects, texts, bird footage and upbeat music. Right on the heels of those projects is finishing a brand new "Sandhill Cranes" trunk, also already in progress, again with the help of Pam who is making enough crane costume parts for a class jigsaw puzzle activity, and I have finished two powerpoints on crane natural history and crane dance moves – which will be used for a "Dancing with the Cranes" activity. Cranes in art, crane calls and songs, and an autumn field trip to the West Valley crane stop-over area will be included.



etc.usf.edu

An Osprey trunk with activities leading to an

Owen Sowerwine Natural Area (OSNA) field trip is just over those horizons. Graphic artist Susie Waldron will be working (remotely from California) with me (supplying the educational content) to produce a new FAS exhibit for all of our events. Hopefully it will be ready for the Flathead County Science Fair February 27, where Cory Davis and I will judge projects and present a "best wildlife project" award to two students.

By the time you read this, I will have led a 3-hour Flathead Audubon OSNA field trip for adults January 18th. On Valentine's Day I'll start the first of six successive Friday afternoon classes on "Birds of the Flathead" for Flathead Valley Community College's Senior Institute. Kathy Ross, Kari Gabriel and her birds of prey, Jake Bramante on Bird apps and bird feeding, will be instructors as well.

FAS has also teamed with the Laura Katzman of Flathead Land Trust to do a series of bird education presentations and field trips – fall West Valley cranes, winter birds of prey, and spring waterfowl in Lower Valley – for seventh-graders in the Valley. Evergreen Middle School is our test group this year, but we hope to expand to other schools and include a spring Ospreys/OSNA field trip next year.

We (many volunteers and myself) will also be at Arbor Day, Earth Day, and International Bird Migration Day celebrations this spring, and I'll be teaching a river-bottom birds field trip for a group of place-based education teacher/leaders in a long-term series about our Flathead area.

There's a theme here. With all the volunteer names I have listed, and many more not listed here, we can accomplish a lot! I'm so grateful for them! We are always recruiting more to join the fun, and I'll be setting up some Ambassador Volunteers training sessions through this winter and spring, to assist teachers with all of our trunks. Help us! Join the fun!

CHIRPS & SQUAWKS

Highlights from the January 6, 2020 Board meeting

- ⇒ Bob Lopp has retired from the Board of Directors. Thank you for your many years of service to FAS. You will be missed.
- ⇒ Jan Metzmaker has developed a policy with steps to ensure efficient acknowledgement of donations.
- ⇒ Payments were approved for Liability and Director and Officer insurance, and for an upgrade of the Quick Books program used to keep our financial records.
- ⇒ Denny Olson plans to focus on school programs that promote use of the educational trunks and our education ambassadors, and will work closely with Derrick Rathe from Lone Pine SP. The education program can always use new volunteers.
- ⇒ Bob Lee and Cory Davis will proceed with the field trip to the Malta/Bowdoin area (there would be a charge for this trip). Bob is also planning the Freeze Out Lake trip in March.

Flathead Valley Bird Report

by Joshua Covill

Rare and Notables – January 2020

12/24 - **the NORTHERN CARDINAL** in Marion was seen again at the same private residence that it was initially reported from, meaning it was been around for 1.5 months (Criag H. & Raylene W.)

12/29 - **Prairie Falcon** along Fairview Cemetery Rd south of Columbia Falls (Joshua C.)

12/29 - **Iceland Gull** at the Flathead county landfill on the morning of the Christmas Bird Count (Pete F.)

01/01 - A single **Cackling Goose** among 100's of Canadas in the fields off of Four Mile Dr (Joshua C.)

01/01 - **2 Glaucous Gulls** roosting on the ice in the West Valley Ponds area (Joshua C.)

01/06 - **Great Gray Owl** was spotted along a side road in Ferndale (Leslie K.)

01/12 - a flock of **100 Horned Larks** seen on Lower Valley Road (Cory D.)

01/12 - the **Northern Hawk Owl** in the Swan Lake NWR has been seen periodically since its first sighting through the 12th.

01/12 - **Prairie Falcon** was seen off of Jaquette

Road (Leslie K.)

01/13 - **Brown-headed Cowbird** visiting the feeders of Craig H. along with a **Yellow-headed Blackbird** and **Common Grackle** have been overwintering rarities this year.

What to Expect – February 2020

February can be the slowest month in Montana when it comes to birds. Most of the winter birds are settled in, and the excitement from the new year has worn off. Bohemian Waxwings feed vigorously on berry trees in towns, and mixed flocks of Horned Larks and Snow Buntings feed on exposed seeds along roads. Great Horned Owl breeding season is in full swing and you can hear pairs hooting nearly all night. February can also bring really unexpected rarities like the 2013 Yellow-billed Loon in Somers Bay! Just goes to show you that you never know what might show up. The only way to find out is to get out there and look!

FINANCIAL REPORTS AVAILABLE ON OUR WEBSITE

Each year, Flathead Audubon completes and discloses to our membership our Chapter's financial reports for the previous fiscal year (July 1-June 30). This is not only an IRS requirement for non-profit 501 (c) 3 organizations, but also a good thing to do. We ask our membership to give a significant amount of money to FAS each year through End of Year donations, spring auctions, and events like Birdathon. We also obtain a number of specific grants. We want you

to know how much we raise, where the funds come from, how they are used each year, and if we are on budget. This year, we will not only post our Annual Income/Expenditure vs Budget Report, but also a Balance Sheet. You can find these reports under "Reports & Financials" under "About Us" on the FAS website www.FlatheadAudubon.org. If you have any comments or questions, please direct them to Gael Bissell (gbissell535@gmail.com).

Glacier National Park Christmas Bird Count 2019

Glacier National Park (GNP) held its annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) on Sunday, December 15, 2019. Twenty-nine participants contributed to this event by covering 10 different routes in Glacier, and 1 bird feeder in West Glacier. Participants spent the day counting all bird species and individuals detected. The weather was unusually mild for a winter bird count in Glacier with temperatures hovering around freezing, with little to no wind, and such little snow that observers walked, rather than skied, most routes. Nearly all water was open (not frozen).

Routes in 2019 were all very, very quiet compared to other years. We only detected 453 birds of 29 different species. This was a fifth the number of birds detected in 2018 when we had all the waxwings. Black-capped Chickadees and Common Goldeneyes were the most abundant species (n = 59 each). This was

followed by Common Mergansers and Canada Geese.

Our most notable species were two Red-necked Grebes on Lake McDonald and three Black-backed Woodpeckers and one Merlin on the McGee Meadow Loop. Two additional species were detected during count week (3 days before and 3 days after count day): Ruffed Grouse and Blue Jay. The most memorable photo of the year was not even of a bird, but of mountain lion tracks perfectly preserved in snow nearly the entire length of John's Lake Loop.

Glacier's CBC started in 1962, and contributed to the 120th year of the National Audubon Society's CBC. Thanks to all participants for contributing their expertise, time, and energy for this annual event. Your efforts are invaluable in tracking long-term changes in species abundance, diversity, and range changes, in Glacier and throughout North America. *by Lisa Bate*

Troy Christmas Bird Count 2019

We had to move Troy's count from Saturday to Sunday (21st) due to the onslaught of rain. Although we lost some counters, we gained a couple more and the weather was much improved which made for better birding. I believe we had 12 people in the field and 5 feeder watchers. Temps were balmy in the 40's and only a slight drizzle early in the morning. Species were on the low side of our average with a total of 44 species for count day and 3 for count week (White-breasted Nuthatch, Black-billed Magpie and N.

Pygmy Owl). Overall bird numbers were down again this year.

Grosbeaks were nowhere to be found and finches in general were down. Highlight of the count was an over-wintering Gray Catbird which has been at my feeder area outside my office window for about 2 months now. It is now January 4 and snow is still absent from our count area except for the Mountain peaks, very strange winter. *by Don Jones*

Kalispell Christmas Bird Count 2019

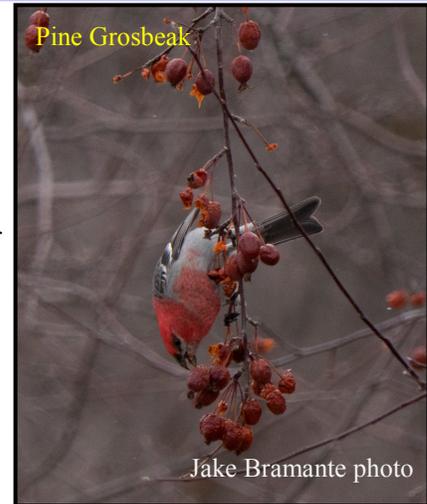
The 21st Kalispell Christmas Bird Count was held on Sunday, December 29, 2019. Milder than usual weather (28-32 degrees F) and minimal snow cover (1 inch) made for an interesting count.

The "Flathead Gull Sanctuary" (The Dump) was fruitful this year, providing five gull species. These included the count's first ever Lesser Black-backed Gull. Also tallied were a single Glaucous Gull and an Iceland Gull (Thayer's subspecies). Meanwhile, the "Bramante Finch Sanctuary" (Jake's feeding station) held the count's 3rd ever Purple Finch.

A total of 74 species was recorded, a number which is about average for this count. Several species were found in record numbers. These included Ring-necked Duck (45), Northern Goshawk (4), Wild Turkey (444), Rock Pigeon (887), Great Horned Owl (12), Blue Jay (65), White-breasted Nuthatch (19) and American Goldfinch (231). Birds conspicuous by their

absences were Gray Partridge (count week only), Red Crossbill and Ruffed Grouse.

Lastly, it was great to see the enthusiasm for this count continue. An impressive 50 field observers and 9 feeder watchers took part. Thanks to all that volunteered their time and energy. It made for a great count. *by Pete Fisher*



Pine Grosbeak

Jake Bramante photo

Upper Swan Valley Christmas Bird Count 2019

Swan Valley Connections held the Upper Swan Valley Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, December 21. Early morning fog burned off for a clear day of birding, with temperatures in the mid-30s and patchy snow on the ground that had not melted in the mild week leading up to the count. Sixteen birders participated in the count, and together they tallied 24 different species and 267 individual birds. Most people

counted birds while walking on foot, but there was some driving and feeder-watching too. A deer killed on the road the night before contributed to the record number of Bald Eagles (18) and Common Ravens (89), but other highlights included a Sharp-shinned Hawk, American Dipper, and Clark's Nutcracker. Thanks to all who supported the success of this event!

by Rob Rich

Pine Siskin continued from page 2

a century ago, Pine Siskins were commonly known as Pine Finches; the most glaring discovery however between then and now was the manner of study. The researcher of 1887 was so thrilled to observe the nest building of a pair of "pine finches" that he sent his young nephew up to the nest to retrieve it along with the eggs. He then shot the frantic parents who were perched close to the nest they were trying to protect; he needed them to complete his "collection!"

Now evidence is warning us that these precocious birds are on the decline worldwide not because

we are making "collections" but because we are warming the planet. These small creatures, who are adapted to withstanding temperatures as low as -94° F, are not tolerant of high temperatures. Audubon's new, ground-breaking report, Survival by Degrees: 389 Bird Species on the Brink, shows that two-thirds of North American bird species are at risk of extinction from climate change. But if we act quickly to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, we can help improve the chances for the overwhelming majority of species at risk, including the capricious Pine Siskin.

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. 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, Margaret Parodi at 837-1371, or Cory Davis at 471-3314 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. Check the FAS webpage (<https://www.flatheadaudubon.org/activities-and-field-trips/>) for updated information on field trips.



THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT: A field trip for kids and kids at heart of all ages. Sunday, February 16, 2020, 10AM-1PM. Join us for a morning of birding and learning about our local birds, especially those that visit our feeders during the winter months. If water is open we will also be watching for ducks and Swans where possible, and raptors overhead. Excellent outing for families with kids, as well as those who want to get acquainted with our winter, resilient, resident birds. Learn identifying characteristics of our three different chickadees, numerous woodpeckers, nuthatches, along with many other feeder surprises. Dress warmly, bring binoculars. Minimal walking to some viewing areas and short periods of standing. Contact Kathy Ross for information and to sign up: 837-3837 or mtkat67@gmail.com.

FREEZOUT LAKE AND THE SNOW GEESE MIGRATION, Thursday and Friday, March 26-27, 2020. The Snow Geese are moving from their California wintering grounds to their arctic nesting areas along with thousands of other waterfowl and they stop at Freezout Lake near Choteau. We will meet on Thursday morning at 10 AM, caravan/carpool to Choteau and arrive in time for the afternoon "fly-out." After spending a night in Choteau, we will head back out just before daybreak to watch the "mass ascension" of geese 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 Friday. Bob Lee will provide a suggested schedule and route, and will be in the front of the group. Participants may choose to pursue the geese on their own as much or as little as they, the weather and the birds allow. Please make your own arrangements for lodging; primitive camping is available at Freezout WMA. Motel options include the Stage Stop (406-466-5900), Gunther (406-466-5444), and Big Sky (406-466-5318). Make your reservations early as these hotels will likely fill up. For more information, including the meeting location, contact Bob Lee at 270-0371 or RML3@centurytel.net.

Great Backyard Bird Count

Mark your calendars because February 14th is coming right up, and we all know what that means. It's time for the Great Backyard Bird Count and, okay, Valentine's Day. The GBBC is conducted over a four-day period in mid-February (14th – 17th) to get a snap-shot of winter bird populations prior to spring migration. It is not often that you get a chance for a twofer – help the birds and send someone a special Valentine message. Just follow the following three-step directions to get started.

1. **Create a free GBBC account** if you have never participated in the Great Backyard Bird Count or any other Cornell Lab citizen-science project, or have not participated in the GBBC since 2013. If you already created an account for the GBBC in the past, or if you're already registered with eBird or another Cornell Lab citizen-science project, you can use your existing user name and password.

2. **Count birds for at least**

15 minutes on one or more days of the GBBC. You can count for longer than that if you wish! Count birds in as many places and on as many days as you like—one day, two days, or all four days. Submit a separate checklist for each new day, for each new location, or for the same location if you counted at a different time of day. Estimate the number of individuals of each species you saw during your count period.

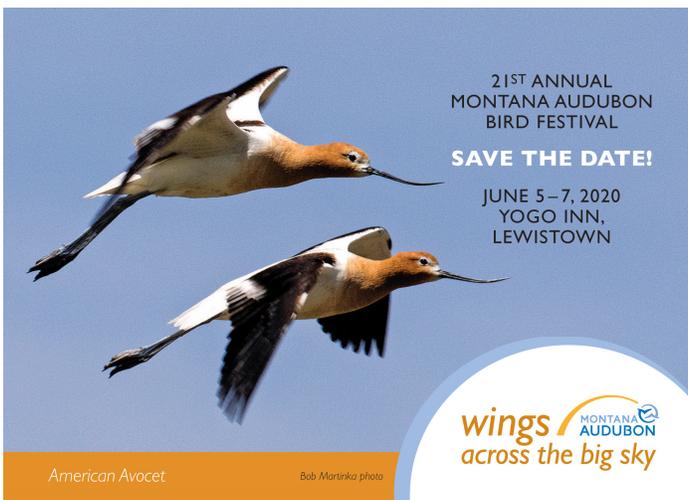
3. **Enter your results on the GBBC website by clicking the "Submit Observations" tab on the home page.** You may also download the free [eBird Mobile app](#) to enter data on a mobile device. If you already participate in the eBird citizen-science project, please use eBird to submit your sightings during the GBBC. Your checklists will count toward the GBBC.

Use the following link to learn more about this important citizen science project. <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/about-great-backyard-bird-count>



Winter Classes Available at FVCC

- ◆ *Beginner Gardening in the Flathead* at FVCC taught by Pat McGlynn, MSU Agriculture Extension Agent. It's a four week class beginning February 4, 2020. For more information and to register please contact FVCC <https://www.fvcc.edu/what-we-offer/continuing-education/>
- ◆ *Land Stewardship Class* is a 7 week course beginning February 6, 2020. For more information and to register contact Patricia McGlynn, Ph.D., MSU Agriculture Extension Agent, 406-758-5554 pmc-glynn@flathead.mt.gov



Montana Audubon will host its 21st annual Wings Across the Big Sky bird festival at the Yogo Inn, in Lewistown on June 5th – 7th, 2020! Front and center will be two days of field trips to destinations in stunning Central Montana, along with traditional festival on-site activities such as our Friday keynote speaker, interactive Saturday afternoon presentations, Montana Audubon Conservation Awards,

Cakes for Conservation auction and more. **NEW THIS YEAR!** We are excited to announce we are planning an optional, pre-festival grassland science conference Thursday and Friday, June 4th and 5th. More information will be available on the "Outreach" section of Montana Audubon's website: www.mtaudubon.org or call 406.443.3949.

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+
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The FAS activity which most interests me is:

- Education Programs
- Owen Sowerwine Natural Area
- Scholarships and Grants
- Field Trips and Outdoor Events

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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.

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: lindawin626@gmail.com.** Deadline for newsletter copy is the 18th of each month. Contact newsletter editor at 755-1406; email submissions to: lindawin626@gmail.com

Website: www.FlatheadAudubon.org

Conservation Educator - Denny Olson: auduboneducator@gmail.com

FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY DIRECTORY

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Executive Director: Larry Berrin lberrin@mtaudubon.org
Board Member representing FAS, Bob Lee rml3@centurytel.net 270-0371

FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY

Membership Individual or Family

Basic Membership ————— \$25

Pays for newsletter and operating costs

Supporting Membership ————— \$40

Extra \$15 funds local projects such as

Conservation Education and

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<http://www.flatheadaudubon.org/>

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