



# Pileated the Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

Volume 16

Number 9

December, 1991

## 1991 Christmas Bird Count

The annual Flathead Audubon Christmas Bird Count is scheduled for December 14 and 15. On Saturday, the 14th, the **Bigfork area** will be tabulated as eager birders count the birds seen within a 7½ mile radius circle, centered on the little brown church north of Bigfork.

Arrangements will be finalized at the December membership meeting. If you plan to participate, come to the meeting or call Dan Casey at 857-3143 (evenings) or 752-5501 (days).

As in previous years, there will be a compilation potluck supper at the Bigfork Senior Center starting at 5 pm (or half past dark).

The **Ninepipe Count** will be held on Sunday, December 15. Participants are to meet at Ruby's Cafe, just south of Ronan, at 7:30 am. Contact Jim Rogers at 883-3611 (evenings) or 883-6316 (days).

The annual Christmas Bird Count began at the turn of the century when a birder by the name of Frank Chapman initiated the first count on Christmas Day. It is now sponsored by National Audubon and has become a Christmas holiday tradition.

The data generated by the national count is very significant, establishing the movement of wintering birds and providing early warnings of species in decline.

**Call Dan or Jim. Plan to take part in this traditional highlight of the Audubon calendar, regardless of your birding skill level.**



## Mark Your Calendar

### DECEMBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

**\*12/9/91 - Board of Directors Dinner Meeting, 5 pm, at the Bigfork Inn, Bigfork. Open to all.**

**Regular Monthly Meeting: United Methodist Church,**

**Commerce and Electric Avenues, Bigfork. Business Meeting: 7:30 pm. Program: 8 p Everyone welcome.**

**Program:** Field Trip Chairman Dan Casey will outline plans for the annual Christmas Bird Count. His presentation will include slides of species that are likely to be seen during the count.

**\*12/14/91 - Bigfork Bird Count. (See adjoining news item for details.)**

**\*12/15/91 - Ninepipe Wildlife Refuge Bird Count. (See adjoining newsitem for details.)**



HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO ALL!!



### The Editor's Spotting Scope

Have you ever given much thought to bird names? For instance: Clark's Nutcracker. Why was it Clark's? And why a nutcracker, Mr. Clark? Was it a nutcracker before you came along and laid claim to it or did you make it up?

Glancing through AUDUBON'S FIELD GUIDE TO AMERICAN BIRDS (Western Region), you'll find that a lot of birds have been claimed by someone and the claims have been recognized by everyone: McKay's Bunting, Brandt's Cormorant, Barrow's Goldeneye, Cooper's Hawk (Harris also has a hawk) and the list goes on and on. Some naturalists, or biologists or ornithologists or whatever, were really fast on their feet when it came to claiming birds. Steller has a jay, a sea eagle and an eider; Swainson has a hawk and a thrush; and Cassin tops them all with a finch, an auklet, a kingbird and a sparrow.

When you start analyzing the species claimed, you find that some have more claimants than others. With gulls, there are four that are recognized by their claimant's names: Bonaparte's, Heermann's, Sabine's and Thayer's. Hummingbirds also have four claimants: Allen's, Anna's, Costa's and Heloise's. The species with the most claimants are the warblers: Lucy's, Grace's, Kirtland's, Wilson's, Virginia's McGillivray's, Midden-



dorf's and Townsend's. And this raises other questions. When women lay claim, why do they use just their first names? Could it be there are female claimants who have claimed under a first name AND a surname? Do you suppose Cassin, who has already claimed four species, is really Grace Virginia Cassin with a total of six and maybe more?

There is something quite apparent in the claiming of birds: no one ever lays claim to a vulture or any other less exotic bird. Could you or I stake a claim in one of them, just so they wouldn't feel left out? A creature with looks like that obviously doesn't have a lot of friends or supporters.

Perhaps this entire naming thing got started when the bird-namers decided to add common names to the Latin ones. If I told you that a Nucifraga columbiana was in my back yard last week, you might blink and feel a

touch of envy, but if you knew it was Mr. Clark's Nutcracker, you wouldn't be quite so impressed.

The claiming of birds has probably come to a standstill because new species are rarely found now. The average birder like you and me will have to accept that we won't be able to claim one. When the Parus atricapillus come to our feeders this winter, we can enjoy them and in a proprietary manner say, "Those are my chickadees." And that's about as much of a claim as any of us should have over our feathered friends.

Sharon Bergman

### Wilderness Speaker Scheduled

Mike Bader, Executive Director of the Alliance for the Wild Rockies, will give a special presentation at 7L30 pm on Friday, December 13, at the Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks on Meridian Road in Kalispell. Sponsored by the Flathead Green Alliance, Mr. Bader will speak on the wilderness bills which will be under consideration by Congress. The public is welcome and there is no admission charge. For further information, contact the Flathead Green Alliance program director, Robin Wagner at 755-7870 (work) or 755-1396 (home).

### NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Enjoy full National Audubon Society benefits—and AUDUBON magazine—at a special new-member rate of \$20.

Mail to:  
Flathead Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 715  
Bigfork, Montana 59911

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_  
State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Payment enclosed  Bill Me   
Allow 4-6 weeks for first issue of AUDUBON  
Membership dues include \$20 for AUDUBON magazine.

Join today and receive:  
A YEAR—6 BI-MONTHLY ISSUES of the stunning photography and absorbing articles in AUDUBON magazine.  
MEMBERSHIP in one of the 500 local Audubon chapters nationwide (if there is one in your area) with access to field-trips and other activities.  
FREE OR REDUCED ADMISSION to Audubon nature centers and sanctuaries.  
INVITATIONS to Audubon's ecology camps and workshops.  
ELIGIBILITY for wide-ranging Audubon tours.  
DISCOUNTS on nature books, collectibles and gifts. And with your membership you're supporting the National Audubon Society's vital efforts at protecting wildlife and environment.

NEW MEMBERS ONLY!



## President's Corner

Northwest Airlines Flight 587. From my perspective, at 29,000 feet, Florida has at least 25% of its land mass in water - warm water. Even the ocean is 76° F, and the surfers and sharks are going at it like hikers and grizzly bears in Glacier.

One gets a bigger picture from this altitude - the problems seem small from here. You have to get down low in the scrub of the coastal strand and the sand pine scrub to begin to realize what's happening in the vacation (snowbird) land.

As more people move in, the demand for space, houses, motels and condos increases. Prices go up and up. The developers, realtors and builders ask for more \$\$ and get it ... and this allows them to pay higher prices for the remaining wild parts of Florida. The wild areas, beaches, scrub forests and the swamp lands start becoming scarce. As habitat decreases, so does the wildlife dependent on it decrease: the Dusky Seaside Sparrow, alligator, manatee and the sea turtle.

Much to their credit, some Florida counties have passed a tax, at the insistence of their people, that goes into a land acquisition fund (C.A.R.L.). The state competes with the developers for the last wild places, but they have the funds to do it - due in part to Florida's higher population levels. All along the beach front are access areas; some large, some small, but all public. Florida realized, almost too late, that the places which help make Florida unique were being lost. They took action. They acted locally and they are succeeding.

If you get a chance to go to Florida, look for the marshes - wow, are they special! Marshes everywhere are diverse in plants and wildlife, but in Florida, they must hold a record for species diversity and abundance. Listen to the "locals" - not just the environmental types and crazy bird watchers. These folks are interested, concerned and supportive of the efforts to save Florida's wild places for Floridians, and that's refreshing. This is only one state's effort and action to protect its special places; other states are taking similar steps.

What can we in Montana learn from Florida? Perhaps we can start now to save our wild places before our population is in the 10's of millions and land costs are ridiculous, and before the best swamps and old growth forests and wildernesses are wiped out to make room for more people.

We must start our plans now for orderly development - before we have to play catchup like Florida. **Brent Mitchell**

## About The Earth

Re: Earth Day. A National Earth Day Organizers Conference is scheduled to take place in Boston, Mass, in January, 1992. Because the message of the environment is so important, Earth Day USA is hosting the first annual National Organizers Conference for all organizers and volunteers throughout the country who are developing Earth Day events and programs. From event management, long-term planning and press relations to fund raising, this conference will provide momentum and hands-on skills to positively impact us and our communities.

If you are interested in attending this conference and sharing your experience with the environmental community, contact Ferne Cohen, Flathead Valley Earth Day Coordinator: 862-2028.

Smart Shopping/Precycling. Precycling is eliminating trash by not creating it in the first place. Before you buy, think whether a product's packaging is made from "recycled" material, is "recyclable" or is "minimal".



Products with **least waste packaging** are those without excess packaging. Buying the least packaging saves energy and resources and creates less trash when you're done with the product. **Recyclable** packages are made of glass, metal, some plastics or cardboard. You can recycle them at dropoff sites. Recycling also saves resources and helps cut waste. **Recycled** packages are made from post-consumer materials (materials that are recycled). Most boxes used for packaging cereals, crackers and pasta are included in this category.



## There Is Still Time to Write a Letter for Wetlands

The deadline has been extended for responding to proposed changes in the Federal Wetlands Delineation Manual, and President Bush's controversial wetlands definition. **THIS ISSUE IS CRITICALLY IMPORTANT, AND COMMENT LETTERS ARE NEEDED. Comments are due by December 14, 1991.**

Wetlands provide some of the most productive - and most threatened - wildlife habitat in Montana. From great blue herons and tiger salamanders to pintails, beaver and bog orchids, a staggering number of creatures depend on our wet meadows, prairie potholes, bogs and other wetlands. More than 50% of Montana's bird species depend upon or frequent wetlands - 30% of the migratory songbirds that breed in Montana **require** wetlands for their nesting habitat.

An ecologist from the Montana Riparian Association has stated that Montana will lose 50% of its wetlands under the new definition - and maybe as much as 75%! Prairie potholes are the duck factories of North America. Under the new definition, we will lose protection for approximately 35% of these critical prairie wetlands.

Your letter can be short. Feel free to use the following points in your comments:

- 1) The proposed wetlands delineation manual needs to be changed because it inadequately protects Montana wetlands. Under the proposed definition, 50% of our state wetlands would probably lose their protection.
- 2) There is no scientific basis for the requirement that wetlands be saturated with water for 21 days. The number is arbitrary and difficult or impossible to prove. Scientific experiments and field work show that only 7 days of saturation should be required.
- 3) The water saturation requirements are also unscientific. Wetland plants require their roots to be wet - not the surface of the ground to be wet. Proving 21 days of saturation at the surface will be difficult and expensive.
- 4) The growing season for wetland plants has been narrowed to coincide with agricultural crop seasons. Wetland plants often grow for longer seasons than agricultural crops. As a result, many of the wettest weeks of the year would be eliminated from consideration - eliminating many wetlands from protection.
- 5) Wetlands are precious (tell them why you think so). They make up less than 1% of Montana - and Montana has already lost 27% of its wetlands. We can't lose any more.

Send your letters to:

Mr. Gregory Peck  
Wetlands & Aquatic Resources Regulatory  
Branch, Mail Code A-104F  
Environmental Protection Agency  
401 "M" Street SW  
Washington, D.C. 20460.

Send a copy to our Senators and your Congressman.

If you want more information, contact the Montana Audubon Council office, Box 595, Helena, MT 59624 - we can send you a wetlands packet.

- Janet Ellis

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## Elly's Big, Big Day

Oct. 26. I should have known something BIG was about to happen. Two days before, the chickadees were buzzing the feeder like hummers and one day before the snow storm raged and the feeders emptied.

That morning I looked out the window. Was that 60? ... no, 80 juncoes feeding like a moving carpet on the ground. Look again - tree sparrows are with them and two siskins (one, a baby, all fluffed out). Here come the Stellar jays, chickadees (black-capped, mountain and chestnutbacked), red-breasted nuthatches, downy and hairy woodpeckers and a flicker. A darling starling moves in. Hey, there's our first "grospsigs" (evening grosbeaks). I'd better go out with more seed. What was that flash of orange by the window?

I scattered seeds around. My goodness! An anxious robin chirped; then cedar and Bohemian waxwings flew over. A butterbutt (yellow-rumped warbler) landed in the neighbor's birch tree. This is so neat!

Overhead bunches of Canada geese and tundra swans were calling high in the sky. They were coming out from 6-Mile and Hall Peaks. Some join more on the lake. And there's a dipper swimming in the shallow water out from shore! A loon appears and further away are horned grebes, mergansers, goldeneyes, coots and gulls.



## Big Day—

Back in the house a voice is heard to say, "I can see we're not getting much done around here today." Who cares! Let's check out the window again.

"Dad, it's a Brambling!" "There's no such thing." "That was the flash of orange I saw and it's eating the canola seed!" The bird went in the banding trap, but the darn door didn't drop. Oh, well, it's not meant to be banded, I said to myself. But banding greed sets in. I'll fix the trap and put some delicious seeds inside. BLAM! I got him!

What a beauty ... orange, black and white. He blended right in with the cottonwood leaves on the ground. What a thrill! He must have come a long way. Was I ever lucky!

Soon after, here comes a nasty cat and a shriek. Holy cow! Well, the shriek caught a mouse and maybe the cat did too. He left. Phew!

By then it was getting late. We sat down to have dinner. "Dad, there's a bird sitting on the boat." Grabbing the glasses, we found it to be a mountain bluebird. There were several. What color!

After supper, I went out to collect the suet, to hide it from the raccoons. It was very still now except for the sound of swan conversation on the lake. What a day, I mused; what a super day.

Elly Jones

## Sunflower Seed Still Available

Sunflower seeds are still available in the Whitefish area. Those interested should contact Vi Starks at 862-5560. A 50-pound sack is \$16.

## Bird Sightings

Driving through the Bison Range in mid-November, Sherry Jones of Polson spotted two gyrfalcons, one of which was a gray-phase bird. These were seen in the same location as those seen on the Ninepipe Bird Count last winter and it is hoped they will appear for this year's count.

## Member Of The Month

"Yes, I'm concerned about the environment. I personally don't like hunting, but I recognize its need -- especially in control of the deer and elk populations. I just don't like them shooting up the ducks. Barbara Baxter of Somers has always been interested in wildlife and she's not hesitant in offering her comments, pro or con, on the subject.

Born and raised in northern California, an only child, she was outdoors a great deal of time. "I loved horseback riding," she said. "and spent as much time as I could on the trails." The San Francisco area claimed her working years, where she was involved with probation and parole after college.

In 1972, she discovered the Flathead area and the following year her home was built and she made the move to Montana "to enjoy life." When the Bigfork Bird Club was formed, Barbara was one of the early members and was quite active. "Those were the days," she commented. "And eventually we joined National Audubon, setting out to protect the environment and to do things as they should be done."

In 1980, Barbara Baxter was elected secretary of the Flathead Audubon Society and was totally immersed as a dedicated volunteer. "We got into the bird seed business," she recalled, "and I've done the Christmas Bird Count every year -- still do it." She served through 1985, then sat out for a few months, returning in September, 1986. She retired from the position in September, 1989.

Barbara Baxter, Flathead Audubon's Member of the Month. Looking back with warm remembrances of friendships formed and wildlife enjoyed, she reflected, "I'm not as birdy as I could be. There are many bird feeders hanging around my place, but I just enjoy the birds and don't always look them up. I watch with interest the environmental activity going on all around, and maybe there is a chance for man and beast to live side by side."





# Flathead Audubon Society Directory

### OFFICERS

President	Brent Mitchell, 960 Kienas Rd, Kalispell, MT 59901	756-8130
Vice president	Leo Keane, 514 Pine Place, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-5807
Secretary	Gail Leonard, 514 Pine Place, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-5807
Treasurer	Tommie Clark, 231 Pine Needle Ln, Bigfork, MT 59911	837-6615

### DIRECTORS

**MONTANA  
BIRD HOTLINE  
721-2935**

Ferne Cohen, P. O. Box 1782, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-2028
Sam Culotta, P. O. Box 642, Bigfork, MT 59911	837-4298
Robin Magaddino, 2100 Swan Hwy, Bigfork, MT 59911	837-4294
Lynn Kelly, 6525 Rocky Point Rd, Polson, MT 59860	883-5797
Ed Prach, 110 Goat Trail, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-1350
Malcolm Thompson, 775 Berne Rd, Coles Falls, MT 59912	892-4208

### CHAIRS

Audubon Adventures Conservation	Kim Davis, 4870 Hwy 93S, #62, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-7350
Field Trips	Rod Ash, P.O. Box 1129, Condon, MT 59826	754-2289
Hospitality/Sales	Dan Casey, P. O. Box 2922, Kalispell, MT 59901	857-3143
Hostess	Patti Brown, 560 Wolf Creek Dr, Bigfork, MT 59911	837-5018
Librarian	Evelyn Kile, 20 Hoffman Draw, Kila, MT 59920	755-4422
Membership	Marie Shirley, 1016A Park Ave, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-0790
Newsletter	June Ash, P.O. Box 1129, Condon, MT 59826	754-2289
Program	Sharon Bergman, 354 LaBella Ln, Big Arm, MT 59910	849-5286
	Ferne Cohen, P.O. Box 1782, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-2028
	Ed Prach, 110 Goat Trail, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-1350
Refuge Projects	Bob Ballou, Rt 1, Box 11881, Charlo, MT 59825	644-2365
	Linda Vassallo, 683 Somers Rd, Somers, MT 59932	857-3166
Schools, Clubs	Jean Robocker, 1655 Montford Rd, Kalispell, MT 59901	756-6344
Wetlands/Waterfowl	Linda Vassallo, 683 Somers Rd, Somers, MT 59932	857-3166

### MONTANA AUDUBON COUNCIL

Office - Janet Ellis, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624 443-3949

The FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY is affiliated with the National Audubon Society and meets on the second Monday of each month from September through May. The business meeting is held at 7:30 pm, followed by a special program at 8 pm. The regular monthly meetings are preceded by an Executive Board meeting. Both meetings are open to all interested people.

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