



# the Pileated Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

Volume 21

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## Public Land Grab Falters

*(The following appeared in the January newsletter of the Montana Wilderness Association.)*

Two years ago, there was good reason to hope that management of our public forests was turning the corner from abusive exploitation to sound, ecosystem-based stewardship. That promise faded as western Republicans in Congress leveraged their power to hand control of our public lands over to industry.

However, events of the last couple months hold out some hope that big industry's renewed assault on environmental values and wilderness protection may simply be a blip that fails to sidetrack necessary reform.

One good sign is President Clinton's veto of the Interior Appropriations Bill in mid-December. In his veto message, he criticized congressional attempts to shackle good science in the upper Columbia Basin regional management plan, which includes western Montana. Clinton blasted Congress for seeking to censor scientific information about fisheries and watersheds from the plan.

The information Congress seeks to censor has been assembled by scientists from Forest Service and BLM research stations and regional offices, impressing many conservationists with their overall devotion to factual accuracy. If carried out as planned by the President, the Scientific Assessment and management plans would help put forest, range and stream management on a far sounder environmental, biodiversity basis than at any time in the two agencies' century-long existence. President Clinton's next test is convincing Congress to submit more responsible legislation that he can sign.

Meanwhile, 80 Democrats and Republicans in the House of Representatives have co-sponsored legislation to repeal the "logging without laws" salvage rider. Conservationists from around the country have flooded Congress and the White House with examples of irresponsible and illegitimate logging projects masquerading as salvage. In fact, many of these sales (including proposed clearcuts in roadless areas near Essex and in the Yaak) are the opposite of salvage, which means "to rescue from destruction, to heal or to save."

However, the best indication that the assault on the environment may be short-lived is public sentiment. Public opinion polls indicate that citizens strongly oppose attempts to trash public land, erode protection for wildlife and weaken clean water laws. Americans throughout the nation have rallied to beat back efforts to gut wilderness protection in Utah. Republican leaders in Congress have publicly acknowledged going overboard in trying to eliminate environmental protection in 1995.

Ultimately, it is public sentiment that moves politicians like President Clinton and Senator Max Baucus. So, please, keep up with the letter-writing, phone calls and everything else you can do to register support for Montana's wildlands and the environment. It's making a difference.

Ross Titus and Steve Thompson

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## The Editor's Spotting Scope

Generally when you think of birds, the great outdoors springs to mind: the wide open spaces plus wetlands, waterways, forests, deserts, etc., etc., etc. Our goal is to see birds in their natural habitat, doing their natural thing. But what about birds in the house or aviary or arboretum?

When my kids were in high school we had a parakeet and when anyone or everyone was home, Henry had the run of the place. He was a member of the family and a pal to Rags, the dog. Years later, in Wisconsin, I gave a parakeet to my friend and neighbor across the hall as a gift. On occasion, we would open our apartment doors and Amigo would fly from one place to the other at will. He had a much wider range than Henry.

Actually, Amigo logged a lot of flying time. My friend's job required that she spend two or three months in a different city each spring and she took Amigo with her when she flew to the new destination. He had a special cage that was put on the seat beside her. Other passengers were frequently surprised, but it was taken for granted by everyone who knew Amigo that it was natural for him to fly the friendly skies by plane.

Even with indoor birds in my background, I still had a prejudicial view of bird watching anywhere but outside. It just didn't seem like birding to walk through an aviary, even though the birds were interesting to watch. They seemed to be cooped up, jailed as it were, and I oftentimes carried a little package of guilt and sense of betrayal to my outdoor feathered friends.

Then I went to an arboretum in the Desert Museum out of Tucson. There were a lot of trees and plants growing within the structure that had chicken wire on all sides and across the top. A walkway meandered along and as you strolled, you could see and photograph Hummingbirds, Orioles, Western Tanagers and many, many others. It seemed as if we had entered their world and were allowed to be with them, rather than cooping them up to be in our world. The delight of my visit was

successfully photographing a Magnificent Hummingbird on her nest, thanks to a zoom lens.

The highlight of the day, however, was a shot I missed. Standing in a small group of people, we were transfixed when a Hummer flew over and landed on a woman's purse. No one dared to breath, hoping it would stay with us longer. I wanted a closeup picture, but couldn't get prepared for it. Suddenly the small bird flew from the woman's purse, landed briefly on my zoom lens and then was gone.

When you get right down to basics, it doesn't matter where the birds are - indoors or out, watched in a caged area or with binoculars. Just go where they are and make your day special.

**Sharon Bergman**



*Nesting time for a Magnificent Hummingbird at Tucson's Desert Museum.*

### Take Note

#### ✓ February General Meeting

Monday, February 12, 1996

Fish, Wildlife & Parks Bldg.

490 N. Meridian Rd, Kalispell

Mtg: 7:30 pm - Program: 8:15 pm

**Program:** Kent Miller, Flathead Audubon secretary, will give a slide presentation on "Snags — Under-valued Forest Resource." Miller, who is a USFS Wildlife Technician in the Swan Lake Ranger District, was born and raised in Nebraska and has been with the Forest Service since 1987. He earned his Bachelor's degree in Wildlife at Colorado State University and obtained his Master's degree in Forestry at the University of Minnesota.



## Killing With Kindness

### The Grizzly Bear-Human Interface

The year 1995 saw the loss of 15 Grizzly Bears within the area reaching from the Bob Marshall's to the Canadian border. Twelve of the 15 were lost because the bears came into conflict with humans. Two were lost to unknown reasons and one is thought to have died of natural causes.

Some of the 12 were shot by mistake, in self defense or for the safety of humans and their possessions. Some were killed by trains. Others were removed from the ecosystem by placing them in zoos.

As it turns out, we who feed birds play a role in the loss of grizzlies. Those of us who live in the increasingly suburbanized foothill regions of the Flathead watershed are having increased interactions with both black and grizzly bears. A poor huckleberry crop in 1995 brought more bears than normal into the backyards of the valleys. Being omnivores, bears eat most anything including bird seed of all types, grain used for domestic stock and poorly composted garden and orchard waste. When bears have ready access to these foods they soon make them a staple of their diet. A human/bear conflict will soon follow.

It is important to remember that when there is a conflict between bears and people, in the end, the bears always lose! If a bear is shot to protect horsefeed or a gut pile or a fruit tree or human life, the resultant loss is the same to the ecosystem. The same holds true for bears that are removed to a zoo or wild animal park. To the ecosystem those bears count as mortalities also.

What Auduboners can do —

- Don't leave feed, including doogfood, and trash outside.
- Bring in the hummingbird feeders at the end of August.
- Pick all your fruit in the fall.
- Thoroughly compost garden waste.
- If you feed birds, do so only in the winter.
- Take the suet down and quit feeding the turkeys in March.
- If you absolutely have to feed the birds all year, put out a small amount of seed that will

be consumed quickly by birds.

➤ Use ONLY birdseed; no crumbs, peanut butter or other human food.

➤ Please pass this information on to others.

*Remember — a bear removed to a zoo is a mortality too!*

**Neal Brown**



## About the Population -

Most Audubon folks are quite familiar with the concept of carrying capacity. We know that within any given habitat there is a limit to the number of creatures it can support indefinitely. Many of us have been treated to the example of the farmer's pasture. It can sustain just so many cattle on the average. Put more than that number in that pasture for long and you can bet something bad will happen: the pasture will deteriorate and the number of cattle it can support will decline, the cattle will lose weight and/or they will start dying. Same thing for robins, ducks or voles.

Game managers have been applying the carrying capacity concept, especially in the West. That is why we have doe seasons on deer and cow permits for elk. Before this fundamental principle caught on in the East and Midwest, sportsmen fought the proposals for doe seasons and there were huge winter die-offs.

Carrying capacity also applies to people. Many demographers and economists define it this way: "the number of individuals who can be supported without degrading the natural, social and cultural environment, i.e., without reducing the ability of the environment to sustain the desired quality of life." Increasingly, experts believe we have massively exceeded that number here in the United States, as well as around the globe. Worth thinking about? **Bob Ballou,**  
**Montana Audubon Quality of Life Committee**



## The President's Page >>

The eagle tree. It stands at the head of a phalanx of ponderosa pines, like a lieutenant and his soldiers, where Columbia Mountain gives way to the valley floor. The grove of pines look as though they've just marched off the mountain and await further orders. The wind driven grass that swirled around the soldiers feet in November is quieted today by winter's deep snow. A powdery whirlwind lifts up and whips through the troops. The trees seem resolute, leaning westward into the wind.

On the far edge of the pines there is an abandoned homestead, log buildings with wooden roofs tucked up against the trees. My mind forms a picture. It is the turn of the century. A farmer, strapped to horse and plow turns the grass for the first time. Grizzly bears roam nonchalant through the belly deep uncut. A band of elk graze under the sheltering pines. I see the eagle tree standing watch, then as ever, at the leading edge of his troops.

I've been stopping here for two months now, on my way to work. Today the great pine I've dubbed "the eagle tree" earns the name. Nearly every time I drive up this road, looking north to admire the homestead and the pines, I can spot the brilliant head and hulking shadow of a bald eagle stationed on the eagle tree. Today there are two. They look huge, surprisingly so against the massive girth and muscular arms of their pine. Certainly they watch me watching them as I wonder what they and their kind and the eagle tree have seen through the centuries.

These are compelling thoughts, given the changing landscape occurring behind me out in the Flathead Valley, but today I'm drawn more toward feelings of gratefulness and appreciation. For as surely as this homestead in the pines is a beautiful anomaly, it remains so by virtue of a land owner, someone who has refused to sell it off. Someone who has an eye for more than their bank account. Consider how many

landowners would simply shrug and say, "Well, who wouldn't sell it off?" with hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of old growth pine lumber and five-acre ranchettes to be made. Of course, most already have.

That was the message well-illustrated in the local paper just the other day: a photograph of three big pine logs, each 32 feet long, all one tree, a load for one logging truck. What they didn't say was how many more like it were being logged off the same ranch. My hunch is, all of them. A ponderosa like the one photographed (4200 board feet) is worth about \$6,000 retail in select grade clear pine boards. At that price, who wouldn't log it off!

Apparently "who wouldn't" is an increasingly rare land owner. One in a hundred maybe, who values a sweep of grass, a turn of the century barn and a living stand of pines — one in particular forever graced by eagles — as priceless.

**Leo Keane**





## Flathead Audubon Society 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.
- Awareness and appreciation of the natural world is promoted through educational activities and advocacy programs.
- We work with diverse groups and agencies to achieve sound decisions on natural resource issues.
- Our community outreach includes school programs, work projects and field trips.
- While focusing our efforts in northwest Montana, we believe in the protection of the earth and all its inhabitants.

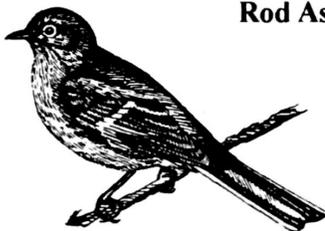
## Upper Swan Valley Bird Count Report

The third annual Upper Swan Valley Christmas Bird Count reported a record number of species for the 3-year old count.

Thirty-eight species and 1058 individuals were observed by field parties and feeder watchers in a count circle centered on the USFS Condon Work Station. The total number of 48 species have been observed during the three annual counts.

Twenty-four Swan Valley residents took part in the count as field observers or feeder watchers. Thirty-two party hours and 98 miles were covered by the field parties. Species identified for the first time in the three-year count included a flock of American Goldfinches, a Red-napped Sapsucker, a Northern Goshawk and Great Horned Owl. The most numerous species noted was the Blackcapped Chickadee with 245.

**Rod Ash**



## Learn More About Birds!

Have you ever attended a monthly meeting of Flathead Audubon? If not, you may not be aware of two of the most popular items on the agenda.

Each meeting opens with members reporting on bird sightings and sharing unusual experiences they've had with birds. This is followed with a brief, but informative, presentation on Beginning Birding by Jean Robocker, a well-versed and knowledgeable member of the chapter.

Don't continue to miss out. Come to a meeting, learn more about birds, meet the board and fellow members and enjoy the special program.

## Nominating Committee Appointed

The terms of office for the Flathead Audubon officers and some of the directors will expire this spring and an election will be held to fill the positions at the May meeting.

Susannah Casey and Neal Brown are serving on the nominating committee. Those interested in running for office or nominating someone should contact either Susannah or Neal. Their phone numbers and addresses are included in the directory on the last page of the newsletter.

## Sponsors Needed —

One of the community projects sponsored by Flathead Audubon is to further the nature education of youngsters through the use of Audubon Adventures. This activity and information packet is provided to subscribing schools for use in grades 3 through 6. Participating schools include those in Bigfork, Kalispell, Marion, Olney, Polson, Somers, West Glacier and Whitefish.

More schools and youngsters could be reached through FAS members who are willing to become sponsors by donating the \$34 subscription rate. Those interested should contact any member of the board or Kim Davis (755-1311). The children will thank you.



### Flathead Audubon Society Directory

#### OFFICERS

President	Leo Keane, 514 Pine Place, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-5807
Vice President	Susannah Casey, P.O. Box 7922, Kalispell, MT 59904	857-3143
Secretary	Kent Miller, 781 1st Ave. EN, Kalispell, MT 59901	257-4100
Treasurer	Susan Hitchcox, 510 S. 5th W., Missoula, MT 59801	549-5692
Past President	Brent Mitchell, 960 Kienas Rd, Kalispell, MT 59901	756-8130

#### DIRECTORS

1993-96	Elaine Corrigan, 7405 Valley View Rd, Polson, MT 59860	883-6895
1993-96	Carol Purchase, 781 1st Ave. EN, Kalispell, MT 59901	257-4100
1994-97	Sharon Bergman, 354 LaBella Ln, Big Arm, MT 59910	849-5286
1994-97	Neal Brown, 560 Wolf Creek, Dr, Bigfork, MT 59911	837-5018
1994-97	Dan Casey, P.O. Box 7922, Kalispell, MT 59904	857-3143
1994-97	Ferne Cohen, P.O. Box 1782, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-2028

#### CHAIRS

Audubon Adventures	Kim Davis, 1230 Rhodes Draw, Kalispell, MT 59901	755-1311
Field Trips	Dan Casey, P.O. Box 7922, Kalispell, MT 59904	857-3143
Hostess	Carla Prach, 110 Goat Trail, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-1350
Librarian	Gail Leonard, 514 Pine Place, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-5807
Membership	June Ash, P.O. Box 1129, Condon, MT 59826	754-2289
Newsletter	Sharon Bergman, 354 LaBella Lane, Big Arm, MT 59910	849-5286
Program	Ed Prach, 110 Goat Trail, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-1350
Publicity	Linda Winnie, P.O. Box 220, Kila, MT 59920	755-1406
Refuge Projects	Lynn Kelly, 6525 Rocky Point Road, Polson, MT 59860	883-5797
Wetlands/Waterfowl	Neal Brown, 560 Wolf Creek Drive, Bigfork, MT 59911	837-5018

### Montana Audubon Council

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

**BIRDING HOTLINE: 756-5595**

The Flathead Audubon Society is affiliated with the National Audubon Society and meets on the second Monday of each month from September through May. A business meeting is held at 7:30 p.m. followed by a special program at 8:15 p.m. The regular monthly meeting is preceded by the Executive Board meeting. Both meetings are open to all those interested.

THE PILEATED POST is published September through May and is sent to members of the Flathead Audubon Society as a membership benefit. Subscriptions for non-members are \$10.00 per year.

Deadline for newsletter copy: the 20th of each month.



P.O. Box 1129  
Condon, MT 59826

Address Correction Requested

### National Audubon Society Membership Application



Enjoy full National Audubon Society benefits and AUDUBON magazine, as well as PILEATED POST newsletter.

Check your category rate from the following:

- First-time Applicant \$20
- Student \$20
- Individual Renewal \$35
- Family \$38
- Senior Individual \$21
- Senior Family \$23
- Sustaining \$50
- Supporting \$100
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- Dual Life \$2000

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Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

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Send this application and your check to:

National Audubon Society  
Chapter Membership Data Center  
P.O. Box 51001  
Boulder, CO 80322-1001

For Newsletter Only Send \$10

to: Flathead Audubon Society Membership;

P.O. Box 1129  
Condon, Montana 59826

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