



# the **Pileated** **Post**

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

Volume 21

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April 1996

## Wildlife Program Seeks to Save Migratory Birds

*(The following AP item appeared in the Missoulian newspaper.)*

From the sky, leach ponds around oil wells and mining operations across the West appear to offer peaceful, natural habitats for Bald Eagles, Snow Geese and Herons seeking rest and drinking water.

But the ponds more often than not become death traps for them and other migratory birds as they drink highly contaminated water or flounder on oil-slicked surfaces, federal wildlife officials say.

Recently, U.S. Fish & Wildlife officials announced the 1995 results of a 3-year federal program aimed at getting oil and gas companies and farmers to take voluntary steps to protect migratory birds.

Last year, federal wildlife officials investigated 333 deaths of migratory birds in the eight-state region that includes Montana, Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas, Nebraska and the Dakotas. The probes led to 103 investigations that have resulted in \$347,000 in remedial cleanups by the region's oil and gas industry, including \$200,000 in voluntary cleanup efforts.

Remediation efforts have included the placement of netting over toxic ponds so birds cannot land, or the installation of high-tech radar systems that scare the birds off. Some smaller oil-and-gas and mining companies have pumped out leach ponds no longer in use and have filled them with soil.

Thousands of dollars in fines also have been levied, but wildlife officials wanted to raise awareness more than anything, reported Gary

Mowad, a special agent and pilot for the Wildlife Service.

Mowad said 20 federal wildlife agents last year conducted 856 oil well inspections in the eight states to make sure oil-and-gas companies were in compliance with federal wildlife protection statutes. He added that 77 percent of the oil companies were not in compliance as of last August, but by December, only 10 percent still had not taken necessary measures to ensure their wells did not pose risks to wildlife. "It's been a remarkable change," Mowad said.

Congressman David Skaggs of Colorado, who supported a bill to allocate federal funds for the migratory bird project, said enforcement of federal wildlife laws will ultimately save taxpayers' dollars. "I'm delighted to participate in a success story, of which we have too few," he said, adding that the program will return \$4.70 for every taxpayer dollar spent on the migratory bird project.



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# The Editor's Spotting Scope

As Auduboners, most of us have a passion for nature. More than likely we were bird watchers first and environmentalists second, with one leading naturally to the other. The birds entertain and intrigue us. Our idea of a good time is to sit quietly somewhere and watch whatever birds are in sight.

Most birds are used to us. Even though we have taken over their space they have learned to adjust. It's really a case of adjust or pay the consequences. Those that fail to adjust are no longer with us or are on the Endangered Species List.

Not satisfied with just watching, we want to be ever closer, and we reap the harvest of the offered friendship. What a delight to have a chickadee land on an outstretched hand or a hummingbird hover near the red flannel shirt you're wearing.

That's the little birds! Is it as much fun to have a BIG bird get friendly?

Several years ago, while in Florida, I went on a one-day excursion to a small town on the Gulf of Mexico. Tourism was the main form of livelihood for the local people and fishing was the main attraction. The fishing attracted the tourists and it also attracted a large contingent of Brown Pelicans.

The pelicans were everywhere, but especially near the lines of those who fished from the dock. When a fish was hooked, the fisherman had to use great skill to get to it before a pelican did. Fishing took on an entire new meaning — and so did bird watching.

I sat on a bench to watch the show, my camera at hand and ready. Very intent on watching the dock activity, my attention quickly refocused on the lively action occurring right beside me. A pelican had jumped on the bench and settled in next to me.

I sat in stunned disbelief. Here I am, on the Gulf of Mexico, sitting on a bench beside a Brown Pelican. His (her?) head was above mine and the long beak was very prominent and very near. I quickly became aware of a very fishy odor.

Why me? I wasn't fishing. I had no tidbits to share. Perhaps it was his private bench and I was the interloper. I did not reach out to touch, nor did the pelican. For whatever reason, we shared a moment or two in contemplation and then each went our separate way.

I don't know what it did for the pelican, but for me it made the day quite special. The pelican became one of my favorite birds. "— and his beak can hold more than his belly can," as Ogden Nash wrote in his poem. It's understandable why someone

would write an ode to a pelican. The pelican is a rare bird indeed and writing a poem about it makes perfect sense to me. **Sharon Bergman**



*A group of Brown Pelicans in Florida, on the Gulf of Mexico, waiting for the call to dinner.*

## Take Note

### ✓ April General Meeting

Monday, April 8, 1996

Fish, Wildlife & Parks Bldg.

490 N. Meridian Rd, Kalispell

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

**Program:** Steve Gniadek, a Wildlife Biologist at Glacier National Park since 1987, will give a presentation on "Birds of Glacier National Park". The program will be extensively illustrated with slides and graphics, summarizing what is known about birds in the park. Gniadek attended the University of Michigan, earning his Bachelor degree in wildlife and forestry and his Masters degree in wildlife biology. He has worked as a biologist for the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Bureau of Land Management before taking his present position.



## The President's Page >>

**B**ack in the Late Pleistocene, when I was a young college student at the University of Montana, I spent a memorable week in April camped on the North Fork of the Flathead River inside Glacier Park.

My colleagues that trip were a ragtag crowd of about 30 students and teachers known as the Round River Experiment. The typical Round River student, like myself, was selected out of the regular college for their keen intellect, visionary thinking and high probability of flunking out. That's right, all of our grade point averages added together might have equalled one pre-law student.

**T**ruthfully though, what we lacked in grade points we made up for with less tangible attributes: energy, curiosity, motivation — the “street smarts” of my generation. What we certainly did not do was take the beaten path to higher learning. Best of all, I remember an attitude we might now regard with some nostalgia; that is, we were more interested in blending our lives with the world than bending the world to suit our lives.

Hence the name. Our guiding light was Aldo Leopold's “land ethic” in which nature and all life is like a Round River — a circle of life which is all one organism flowing through and into itself, with each part of the River dependent on all other parts flowing along with it. Essentially, Aldo Leopold rewrote the science of ecology for application to a rapidly changing modern world.

**S**o, those days and nights camped on the Big Prairie between the pines and the sagebrush and beside the blue-green North Fork I remember as a tableau of group discussions, guided field explorations and moments of personal discovery. Our teachers were mentors, students of nature and self-discovery themselves. But our spiritual leader was Gary Snyder, who joined Round River by

invitation of the University. I shall remain forever grateful.

**I**t's easier, probably, to describe what Gary Snyder is not: a business man. Yet his personal motto, offered during our first meeting: “I am nothing if not practical”, implied too that he would be all business. He assumed there would be nothing superfluous about our “Round River Experiment”. It was to be the information around which the values of our lives would be woven.

Beyond that, Gary Snyder introduced us to Zen Buddhism and meditation; he thought, taught, spoke and wrote in poetry; he understood ecology as deeply as the scientist of Aldo Leopold with the down-to-earth flavor and humanist perspective of Chief Joseph. In fact, I remember Gary Snyder to be as observant of the natural world as I ever imagined any American Indian to be. He taught me the junco's song and silhouette at 100 yards, and where to look for shed elk antlers. At a time when I was searching for what I would become, I absorbed his words and ways.

Remembering now our last night on the North Fork, I see the campfire flickering in the faces of my friends and fellow students. We're telling stories, shooting the breeze really, when somebody pipes up with, “Hey, Gary, what's your greatest fear?”. Perfect question, I thought, bring our hero down to human terms. Is it rattlesnakes or grizzly bears, caught in an avalanche or zapped by lightning?

His answer, at first surprising, then puzzling and now, 23 years later, superbly appropriate and far-reaching: “Loss of the gene pool”.

**Leo Keane**



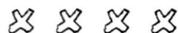
## FIELD TRIPS

### Coming Up —

The Second Lower Valley Waterfowl Tour, led by Dan Casey, is scheduled for Sunday, April 14. The four-hour tour of wetland sites in the Somers area should feature large numbers of ducks, as well as spring arrivals.

Interested birders should meet at the Ramada Inn parking lot at the intersection of Highways 93 and 82 at 8:30 a.m.

Members and nonmembers alike are encouraged and welcome to participate. In addition to binoculars and/or scopes, they should bring along snacks or a sack lunch, along with their enthusiasm for the outdoors and birding.



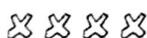
### Been there — Done that!

Last month's field trip to the Ninepipe Wildlife Refuge was deemed to be a great success. The group of 24 adults and youngsters met leader Chad Olson at Allentown and embarked in eight cars for the planned stops in the refuge.

Although it was a cold and windy day, the birds turned out for the watchers and the following were among those sighted: Rough-legged hawks (performing their hovering maneuvers), Northern Harriers, Red-tailed Hawks, a Great Horned Owl, Golden Eagle and Bald Eagle. Also seen were Pintail Ducks, Gadwalls, Common and Barrows Goldeneyes, Mallards, Redheads, Ring-necked, Buffle heads, Hooded Mergansers, Wigeons and Killdeer. Spotted in addition were Ravens, Flickers, Kingfishers and Red-winged Blackbirds.

Susannah Casey commented, "The biggest thrill of the day was when we flushed about 25 Great Blue Herons. What a sight that was when they all rose in the air."

Those participating in the field trip were from Bigfork, Kalispell, Kila, Missoula, Polson, Ronan and Whitefish.

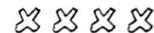


### An Eagle Adventure

When Jerry Kurzenbaum of Polson looked out the window of his home on Flathead Lake, to see what kind of day was in store, he was astonished to see a huge bird spread-eagled in the yard. The bird, a Bald Eagle, wasn't moving and its wings were fully extended, making it seem even larger. It was obviously injured.

Talking it over with his wife, Caroline, they decided to call the Tribal Wildlife Office to see what should be done. In very short order, Jerry caught and carried the eagle to the car, putting it on Caroline's lap. She held it under the precarious circumstances for the ride into town and help for the eagle.

They report that the eagle is now doing well. It is in Kalispell with a steel pin on its leg, and Jerry and Caroline have an Eagle story to tell to anyone and everyone who will listen.



### This 'N That

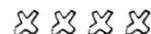
#### From Montana Audubon Council —

At last month's meeting of the Council, Flathead Audubon's own Rod Ash was elected to serve again as president of the state chapter.

In other business before the board, it was agreed to change the Council's name to simply *Montana Audubon*. This decision will be ratified by the local Montana Audubon chapters.

**Election Coming Up!** At the May meeting of Flathead Audubon, there will be an election to fill the four officer positions and two directorships. If you are interested in running for office or nominating someone, contact a member of the Nominating Committee.

Those on the committee are Neal Brown (837-5018), Susannah Casey (857-3143) and Robin Magaddino (837-4294).





## Montana Audubon Convention Dates Set

The Montana Audubon Council will hold its 1996 convention on April 26-28 at Fairmont Hot Springs near Butte. The theme for this year's conference is *Riparian Blues ... and Greens - Exploring Montana's Clean Rivers and Cottonwood Communities*.

The conference will focus on the ecology of Montana's cottonwoods and the threats they are facing. Events begin on Friday with an informative session focused on Cottonwood ecology starting at 1 p.m.

John Flicker, President of the National Audubon Society, will deliver the keynote address on Saturday night and will be available throughout the weekend to speak with Audubon members.

All Audubon members and friends are invited to join in the weekend's sessions and festivities. The convention is sponsored by the Pintlar Audubon Chapter.

## Volunteers Needed for Snipe Survey in May

Kevin Downs, a graduate student at the University of Wyoming, is asking for volunteers to help him conduct a survey of common snipe at the Red Rocks Lake National Wildlife Refuge. The purpose of Kevin's research is to find a survey technique that can be used as an index of abundance to monitor common snipe populations in Montana.

His plan is to conduct a flush count, and he is requesting that volunteers join him at the refuge on Sunday, May 19, to walk through his study sight to flush snipe. Any interested individuals or groups should call the refuge at (406) 276-3536 so Kevin can get an idea of the number of people willing to volunteer.

The survey is planned for early Sunday morning so camping at the refuge on Saturday might be advised. The terrain will be rough and wet, but fairly flat, so waterproof boots or hip waders are recommended.

## The Clean Water Initiative of 1996

A broad based effort is currently underway which draws attention to disturbing changes in Montana's water quality protection policy. Recent legislative sessions have seriously reduced Montana's water quality standards so that they are now among the lowest in the west.

Montanans for Clean Water is kicking off a petition campaign to place the "Clean Water and Public Health Protection Act of 1996" on the November, 1996 ballot. This initiative requires that all new mines, expansions of existing mines that use cyanide and new precious metal exploration activities remove pollution such as carcinogens, toxins, metals and nutrients from their wastewater before discharging into state waters. New mining operations will no longer be able to simply dilute their polluted effluent.

Montanans for Clean Water is a non-profit citizens organization which is joining with many conservation groups, such as the Montana Audubon Council, to gather the 21,000 signatures necessary to get the initiative on the ballot.

If you are interested in assisting with the campaign, contact the Flathead organizer, Andrea Scott at 862-7388 or write Montanans for Clean Water, P.O. Box 3374, Billings, MT 59103-3374. Petitions became available on March 22 and must be turned in by the June 21 deadline.

**Jan Metzmaker (862-7960)**

## Eye the Eagle on Your Montana Tax Forms

Again this year, you will find our national symbol among the lines and boxes on your 1995 Montana state income tax form. By checking one particular box, you can personally help all of Montana's wildlife species through a tax-deductible contribution to the state's Watchable Wildlife Program. The nongame checkoff is box 48 of this year's long form and box 29 on the short form. The fish and wildlife programs receive no state tax dollars, and the Watchable Wildlife Program relies heavily on the Wildlife Checkoff. Here's your chance to help.





### 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.

### 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	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Life	\$1500	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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N54 7XCHA

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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