



# the Flatheaded Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

Volume 24

Number 1

January, 1999

## Field Trip to the Mission Valley with Chad Olson. In Search of Raptors, Especially Rough-Legged Hawks

Ready for some winter bird watching? On January 16, 1999 Chad Olson and Flathead Audubon will host a winter outing in the Mission Valley. Chad Olson is a graduate student at the University of Montana who has been studying raptors. In particular he has been studying Rough-legged Hawks in the Mission Valley. Flathead Audubon Society has helped with the funding of his research for several years.

The trip is scheduled for 9:30AM on January 16. The group will meet at the Ninepipes Lodge (formerly Allentown) on US Hwy 93 south of Ronan. The Lodge has graciously offered to open the restaurant early at 8:30AM for those who would like to have a hearty breakfast before the field trip. The trip is expected to last until 1:30 PM. There will be a small fee of \$3 per person and \$5 per family. Please bring a lunch, spotting scope, binoculars, warm clothes and warm boots.

This is Chad Olson's fifth year studying Rough-legged Hawks in the Mission Valley. He has watched them forage; recording what they eat and how successful they are at hunting, he has watched their social interactions and studied their roosting behavior. He has identified one of the largest communal roosting sites in the United States for Rough-legged Hawks. This year there are record numbers of Rough-legs in the Valley,

During one count at the communal roost 326 birds were counted. In prior years the largest number of birds counted was 225.

This should be a very interesting trip, not only will you be able to see large numbers of Rough-legged Hawks but there are many raptors in the area such as Bald and Golden Eagles, several Gyrfalcons have been seen and a Ferruginous Hawk. There are Red-tailed Hawks, several of the Harlan's subspecies, a Merlin, American Kestrels, and Prairie Falcons. We may also see Northern Shrikes, Great Horned Owls, Short-eared Owls and Red-winged Blackbirds. The Common Ravens have been seen in various interactions with the Hawks such as trying to steal the prey from the Hawks. We may see Snow Buntings, Horned Larks, Tree and Song Sparrows, Bohemian Waxwings, Dippers, and Great Blue Herons in the fields with Hawks dining on voles.



## Recycling: A Resolution for the New Year

The New Year is here and we need to renew our resolution to recycle. Remember when you recycle at Valley Recycling they will pay Flathead Audubon for what you have brought in. Tell them you would like to donate the proceeds to Flathead Audubon. They will pay for aluminum cans, newspapers, magazines, cardboard of all  
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## Chickadee Chatter

The New Year is here, I hope all of you had a wonderful holiday, and have started the New Year on a positive note. How many New Years resolutions did you make? I don't usually make resolutions, they seem like futile ventures and are often doomed to fail, it is simply human nature. Instead I think about the year to come and make little wishes for the things I would wish could be.

For myself this year I would like to a better job of recycling, in a busy life it is hard sometimes to do all we can do. I recycle my cans and newspapers and I take magazines in once or twice a year (you should see the stack of old magazines in my dining room, right now there are several small magazine mountains). I, also, pay attention to what I buy and how it is packaged. I do some composting but I have to admit that when it is 10F outside it is easier to put that banana peel in the garbage can than it is to walk up to the compost pile. This is an easy little thing to wish for, one must simply be more perseverant.

I wish for a little less stress in my life and a little more bird watching might be just the thing. There is nothing more enjoyable than to be outside, regardless of the weather, surrounded by nature's beauty and bounty. Life's stresses just tend to be forgotten or at the very least pushed into the back of ones mind when out in the wonderful world of nature. I'm wishing for more chances to listen to: the calls of the birds and the chatter of squirrels, the quiet hiss of the wind in the wildflowers and grasses of the prairie in the spring, the tap, tap, tap of a woodpecker in the woods on the side of a mountain and the hoots of owls late at night when the stars are shining.

I wish for a bit more time to write letters to my legislators at both the State and National level. The 106<sup>th</sup> Congress and the Montana State Legislature convene this month. We will need to keep a sharp eye out for ecologically unsound legislation. At the national level both the Endangered Species Act and the Clean Water Act are up for renewal. I could hope to make a small difference as we all can, just one more letter by one more concerned citizen could make

the difference. I am optimistic that my legislators will pay attention to what we have to say this year. Our environment is much to important and all of us must do what we can to protect and improve it.

I have other wishes as well, my garden and yard need a bit of work, I could wish for some black dirt in my fingernails and some green beans in the garden. I have a rock wall or two that needs some work. I have one more room or maybe two to paint in my house. I'd like to have a hummingbird feeder out this summer. There is a long list of other wishes, this list is less important than the others but we all have lists and given the time and the fortitude we will accomplish things little by little.

My last wish is for everyone who has made New Years resolutions and wishes: I wish for you the time and the fortitude to make many of those resolutions come true. Good luck to you one and all in 1999!



**JANUARY MEETING**  
**MONDAY, JANUARY 11, 1999**  
Fish, Wildlife and Parks Building  
490 N. Meridian Rd., Kalispell  
Business Meeting starts at 5:15 PM  
Meeting starts at 7:30PM

**PROGRAM:** Tom Ulrich will present "Red Necked Grebes and Other Birds," a 2-part slide show. Part 1 is a photo-essay on the natural history, behavior and nesting habits of Red Necked Grebes. Part 2 is a collection of Ulrich's pictures of birds of North America.

The public is always welcome at the business meeting which starts at 5:15PM.





## Recycling...

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kinds, office paper and computer paper. They will also accept junk mail, steel cans and #1 and #2 plastics but they do not pay for them. Valley Recycling has two locations at 1410 Hwy 2 West and at 56 3<sup>rd</sup> St NW (the old Flathead Industries recycling site).

If you don't have the time to get to the recycling facility you can take aluminum and tin cans, newspaper and corrugated cardboard that has been flattened to several recycling containers at Green Bin Sites located near Creston, Bigfork, Kila, and at the Landfill Site.

Have you been going through your closets and attics? If you have a box of old clothes and household items that are reusable consider taking that box to Flathead Industries for the Handicapped, the Salvation Army or one of the Thrift store in many Flathead Valley communities. Many of them will also take used furniture.

There are a number of local grocery stores that will accept returns of plastic and paper grocery bags and egg cartons. Check with your favorite store.

If you are interested in more information on recycling, enviro-shopping or household hazardous waste you may contact Citizens For a Better Flathead at 756-8993. They have all the information on who, what and where you can recycle.

This is one New Year's resolution that is worth keeping!



## Report from the Board of Directors

Secretary Gail Sullivan will be developing a web page for Flathead Audubon in early 1999. It will probably appear as a link to the Montana Audubon web page, still in the planning stage.

Brett Thuma has donated a print of the southern end of Flathead Lake to be the prize in a raffle that will raise money to fund Flathead Audubon's expenses for the Owen Sowerine Natural Area. The board

authorized a payment of \$125 for matting and framing of the print. Frame of Reference in Bigfork has agreed to do the matting and framing, donating the costs of materials and time that exceed this amount. Neal Brown will organize and carry out the raffle.

The Board continues to encourage Flathead Audubon members to talk to Kalispell City Council members and to testify against Bill Lincoln's request for an amendment of the Master Plan. An open hearing before the Kalispell City Council on the request is now scheduled for January 4.

Neal Brown will serve as Flathead Audubon's representative to the Flathead Conservation Roundtable while Sonja Hartman is out of town. The Board voted to donate \$50 to help defray the expenses of the Roundtable's Flathead Ecosystem Analysis Workshop, scheduled for February 27, 1999.

The Board has reaffirmed its interest in helping to develop a Nature Center at Lone Pine. The Center would be an appropriate place to house Flathead Audubon's bird materials collection, and the group's developing library of nature books.

The fall sale of sunflower seeds went extremely well. The chapter still has 117 sacks of bird seed left to sell this winter and spring.

Jim Rogers is developing plans for a Flathead Bird Festival to be held in the spring of 2000. It will be co-sponsored by several wildlife management agencies in the Flathead.

Linda Winnie

## Fine Art Raffle: Don't Forget to Purchase a Ticket or Two!

Flathead Audubon Society has been given a wonderful framed, limited edition print of Brett Thuma's "*Evening on Flathead Lake*" donated by the Brett Thuma Gallery and the beautiful custom framing was donated by Derek and Christine Vandeberg owners of Frame of Reference (both businesses may be found in downtown Bigfork). There are only 150 tickets left to purchase with the proceeds to be used to fund the Owen Sowerine Natural Area lease and activities. Tickets are \$5 each and may be purchased at the Flathead Audubon monthly meetings. The raffle will be held when all of the tickets have been sold.





## From the Board of Directors: John Ashley



At our house, one of my jobs is supervising how the snowflakes fall around the Flathead Valley. Autumn always catches me off guard -- buried in some unimportant task -- when woolly clouds unveil the first, startling white peaks. Little reminders. Postcard backgrounds for noisy geese and swans flying down valley.

The first snows disappear within a day or two. Patient and persistent, the clouds will return to massage the mountains with softly curved fingers of gray and white virga. Tickling the valley floor. A white line moving up and down the mountain shows me where snow gives way to rain. Deeper into fall, the snows will linger in the steep draws and across north faces. The valley finally joins in the fray during the first good storm, and the clouds rise to unveil a clean slate. Unfinished yard work -- and other short comings -- are turned into sledding hills and snow angels.

Winter in the valley paces our lives in ways that I sometimes forget to appreciate, especially while shoveling the driveway. Supervising snow is a job that reminds me to put my priorities in order. At the bottom of my list: laundry, bills, burned-out bureaucrats. At the top: family, friends, the great outdoors. But there's always another species to protect, another chunk of ground to defend. Sometimes, I need a change of scenery to remind me of the gifts that we inherited from a century of work by conservation-minded folks. The kind of folks who belong to organizations like Audubon.

I realized this recently during a starry night in the Chihuahuan Desert -- a long way from the Flathead Valley. My wife, myself, and a couple of friendly tourists were enjoying the great outdoors in the form of a modest hot spring that bubbles up from the banks of the Rio Grande. Just about a snowball's throw from Mexico. We drove to this isolated spot to supervise a meteor shower, and we slipped into the water in time to enjoy a handful of bats foraging overhead in the fading light.

Somewhere between bats and meteors, the conversation reached the point of naming our mailbox location. Then we sat back and listened as yet another stranger proceeded to tell us how beautiful wild Montana is. A soaker from Colorado tried to describe the color of Kintla Lake, but couldn't. So he told of a week-long boat trip where his was the only boat on the river, and recalled how many bears he saw (12) while hiking to Iceberg Lake. The day before the meteor shower, a young couple from Georgia gave us a ride into town (when we ran out of gas on the interstate) and told us about their hunting trips to Montana. A restaurant manager from Texas drove us back to our vehicle (with our new gas can) while describing his family camping trips up to the mountains of Montana.

Clean water, solitude, and uncaged predators. Wild lands for elk and antelope. Forests to explore, and undeveloped vistas. As the hot water started working its magic on me, the strangers' words started sinking in. Here were our victories. These people were seeking out wild Montana. Searching for the very things that surround us here in the Flathead Valley. Our priceless wildlife and wild lands. Sometimes it takes a hot soak -- or one good snowstorm -- to remind me of how fortunate we are to take our turn as guardians of this place.

Happy New Year, my friends, and keep up the good work!

John Ashley



*My runes have come from the wilderness, for in its solitude, silence, and freedom, I see more clearly those values and influences that over the long centuries have molded us as a race. I know there are moments of insight when ancient truths do stand out more vividly, and one senses anew his relationship to the earth and to all life. Such moments are worth waiting for, and when they come in some unheralded instant of knowing, they are of purest gold.*

By Sigurd Olson





## Bird-watching and Watchable Wildlife: A Hunter's Perspective

Bird-watching? Maybe it's cross-training or some feeble way to pass the time on a hunt when the quarry is too elusive, or perhaps it's an integral part of the hunt itself. Being immersed completely in natural surroundings and becoming a part of the wild world is what I enjoy most when I hunt. I need to be a participant, not just an observer.

People need to eat. Some hunt, some gather, some grow, others search for food at the grocery store. Humans are omnivores, physiologically speaking, and can adapt to a wide range of food-consuming techniques: They can eat rice, wheat, grasses and berries like waterfowl, cows and bears; they can eat fish, frogs and snails like osprey, herons, mink, raccoons and bears; they can eat carrion like the turkey vulture, coyote, magpie and bear; or they can become a basic predator by capturing and eating deer, pheasants and rabbits like mountain lions, foxes, red-tailed hawks (and did mention bears?) do.

In my role as predator (hunter), I have enjoyed my most unique moments outdoors. My first Short-eared Owls and the sight and sound of thousands of Sandhill cranes were seen and heard on an antelope hunt. My first Black-backed Woodpecker and the first time I heard the call of a Barred Owl occurred on an elk hunt. I spotted my first grizzly while hunting black bear and Grouse. And I took my first elk when I was watching birds and caught the movement of what first looked like a Red-breasted Nuthatch on a tree branch (it was the twitching of the elk's ear). In pursuit of game animals, hunters see more watchable wildlife than the game they seek: red squirrels, Hairy Woodpeckers, Chickadees, moose, bears, mountain lions, nutcrackers, rubber boas, spotted frogs, voles, shrews, ruffed grouse, spiders and aquatic insects – the list goes on and on.

All wildlife is watchable. Elk, deer and antelope are watchable wildlife for 11 out of 12 months of the year. Pheasants are watchable wildlife for 10 months. In fact, it was hunters who noted the declines in shorebirds, egrets, herons and the like in the 1800's that sparked what is now the National Audubon Society. John James

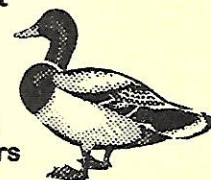
Audubon was a hunter. There were no "wildlife biologists" in the early days. The art and science of wildlife management was fathered by Aldo Leopold (a hunter and forester) in the late 1920's and early 30's.

Hunters connect intimately with nature. It's tougher to make that same connection from a car with a 20X spotting scope, so we go into the natural world. I often wonder how the non-hunting birdwatcher would view my last duck hunt of the season. It took me 1½ hours of prep time, 30 minutes of driving time and one hour to canoe to a spot on the Flathead River, set out decoys and conceal myself... before the waiting started. It was late December last year. It was very cold and overcast, and some what foggy. No ducks were flying; I hadn't even shot at a duck for 4 weeks and my season total was 0. The season was about over. I sat and shivered quietly with my hunting partner (Hershey, a chocolate lab), snowflakes occasionally falling, boredom and cold setting in. We watched whitetailed deer walk by us – one a small, 3-point buck – we watched a muskrat, we waited...two more hours. We could hear chickadees and woodpeckers nearby.

Then... Splash! A mallard drake set down about 15 yards from the decoys – completely surprising us. Hershey quivered, her eyes glued to the drake. I waited – why, I don't know – the duck was well withing range. As I watched the drake slowly swim toward the deeks, I started to laugh inside. The duck could see several decoys, some decoys were moving, everything peaceful, almost perfect. Then the duck craned its neck as it swam back and forth toward the decoys, as if to get a better view of the crowd. The closer it swam, the more stretched its neck became and, I sensed, the bigger its eyes got. We were incredibly close. Then, like a rocket exploding on the water, the drake made a hasty exit. I let Hershey run to the waters edge to watch the departing mallard, and I rolled on the frozen ground laughing until tears came to my eyes – wondering the thoughts that drake had when it realized it had been fooled.

No shot had been attempted. No duck died. Two stealthy hunters were entertained, levity prevailed and we went home with a memory that few birdwatchers will experience, but many hunters will.

Brent Mitchell





**Flathead Audubon Society Directory****OFFICERS**

|                |   |          |
|----------------|---|----------|
| President      | Jim Rogers, P.O. Box 984, Polson, MT 59860            | 883-3611 |
| Vice-President | Neal Brown, 560 Wolf Creek Dr., Bigfork, MT 59911     | 837-5018 |
| Secretary      | Gail Sullivan, 932 Columbia Ave., Whitefish, MT 59937 | 862-5775 |
| Treasurer      | Bruce Tannehill, 239 Deer Trail, Whitefish, MT 59937  | 862-4548 |
| Past President | Leo Keane, 514 Pine Place, Whitefish, MT 59937        | 862-5807 |

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|-----------|---|----------|
| 1997-2000 | William Breen, 335 Mountain Meadow Rd., Kalispell, MT 59901 | 755-2142 |
| 1997-2000 | Sharon DeLong, 2495 Grave Creek Rd., Eureka, MT 59917       | 882-4501 |
| 1998-1999 | John Ashley, P.O. Box 154, West Glacier, MT 59936           | 892-3825 |
| 1998-1999 | Robin Magaddino, 2100 Swan Hwy., Bigfork, MT 59911          | 837-4294 |
| 1998-1999 | Sonja Hartman, P.O. Box 1388, Columbia Falls 59912          | 758-8516 |
| 1998-1999 | Pattie Brown, 560 Wolf Creek Rd., Bigfork, MT 59911         | 837-5018 |
| 1998-2000 | Pat McLaughlin, 223 Goat Trail, Whitefish, MT, 59937        | 862-4559 |
| 1998-2001 | Linda Winnie, P.O. Box 220, Kila, MT59920                   | 755-1406 |

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| Audubon Adventures | Kim Davis, 1230 Rhodes Draw, Kalispell, MT 59901        | 755-1311 |
| Conservation       | Brent Mitchell, 960 Kienas Rd., Kalispell, MT 59901     | 756-8130 |
| Field Trips        | John Ashley, P.O. Box 154, West Glacier, MT 59936       | 892-3825 |
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|                    | Tracy Schiess, P.O. Box 154, West Glacier, MT 59936     | 892-3825 |
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|                    | Gail Leonard, 514 Pine Place, Whitefish, MT 59937       | 862-5807 |
| Librarian          | June Ash, P.O. Box 1129, Condon, MT 59826               | 754-2289 |
| Membership         | Leslie Kehoe, 1020 Holt Dr., Bigfork, MT 59911          | 837-4467 |
| Newsletter         | Jim Rogers, P.O. Box 984, Polson, MT 59860              | 883-3611 |
| Program            | Linda Winnie, P.O. Box 220, Kila, MT 59920              | 755-1406 |
| Publicity          | Ferne Cohen, P.O. Box 1782, Whitefish, MT 59937         | 862-2028 |
| Quality of Life    | Lynn Kelly, 6525 Rocky Point Road, Polson, MT 59860     | 883-5797 |
| Refuge Projects    | Neal Brown, 560 Wolf Creek Drive, Bigfork, MT 59911     | 837-5018 |
| Wetlands/Waterfowl |   |          |

**Montana Audubon****OFFICE  
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|   |          |
|---|----------|
| Janet Ellis, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624             | 443-3949 |
| Howard Strause, 1917 W. Hill Pl., Great Falls, MT 59404 | 727-7516 |

**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. The regular meeting starts at 7:30 p.m. and includes a featured guest who will present a conservation or nature program. 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. Newsletter e-mail [ljkehoe@digisys.net](mailto:ljkehoe@digisys.net)

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

Check your category rate from the following:

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Flathead Audubon Society

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