



the

Pileated Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

March 2021
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Canada Jay



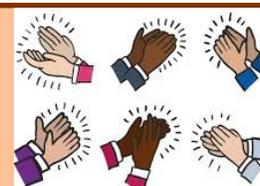
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A Big Thank You!

to

Linda Winnie



Flathead Audubon gratefully recognizes Linda Winnie for all her work on the Pileated Post. For 15 years Linda has been deeply involved in the content, production, and distribution of the Pileated Post. Her roles are many. The following list may not be fully inclusive.

- ◆ Prepares draft contents for the Board to review monthly.
- ◆ Tracks seasonal articles/issues and reminders so they appear in the correct month of the Post.
- ◆ Reminds authors of deadlines for submission.
- ◆ Recruits potential authors for some articles.
- ◆ Provides authors with guidelines for length and format as needed.
- ◆ Writes and submits articles on a variety of issues.
- ◆ Took on the Christmas Bird Count summaries in 2020 to contact all compilers in our area, produce



Photo by John Winnie

a list of contacts and dates for each count, and compile the summaries of each count.

- ◆ Provides editorial services to authors.
 - ◆ Provides editorial consultation during layout.
 - ◆ Fills in when needed to do layout of the Post.
 - ◆ Mails out the electronic version to members and to complimentary recipients.
 - ◆ Maintains the mailing list for the electronic version.
 - ◆ Maintains an archive of past issues.
- Linda invests a tremendous amount of time and effort in her role in the Pileated Post. FAS is so thankful for all her work and wants to make it known how appreciated it is.
- by Lewis Young*

SPEAK UP FOR CONSERVATION

STATE and NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES are in FULL SWING

by FAS Conservation Committee

Stay Informed, Sign Up For Alerts, Send In Your Comments!

The Montana and U.S. legislative bodies are very busy now and wildlife and habitat related decisions are being made very very rapidly. That's a good sign for you to be busy as well! Make sure our representative governments represent your concerns! Con-

tacting Montana legislators and committees has never been easier!

How to Get Started on Statewide Issues:

- ◆ Montana Audubon is closely monitoring and participating in the legislative session. Visit the **Montana Audubon Legislative Participation page** continued on page 8

MARCH FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

Monday, March 1, 2021. 6 PM. FAS Board of Directors Meeting. Will be held digitally. If you're interested in attending contact cory@flatheadaudubon.org

Monday, March 8, 2021. 7 PM. Flathead Audubon General Meeting will be held digitally. See page 3 for how to participate.

Wednesday, March 3, 2021, 11 AM-1 PM. Winter Birding at the Steel Bridge Trails. See page 7.

Saturday March 6, 2021, 1 PM-3 PM. Winter Birding at the Steel Bridge Trails. See page 7.

Spring Waterfowl, Church Slough and Lower Valley Wetlands, Sunday, 21 March, 8:00 AM-noon. See page 7.

Friday and Saturday, March 26-27, 2021. Freezout Lake and the Snow Geese Migration. See page 7.

BIRD OF THE MONTH

Clark's Nutcracker

by Margaret Parodi

A recent sighting of a flock of Clark's Nutcrackers in my neighborhood in Bigfork sparked my renewed interest in this bird; the flash of the white and black tail feathers caught my eye. They were feeding in trees and on the ground in a stand of Ponderosa Pines and were going after the seeds in the cones with raucous enthusiasm. Nutcrackers are distinctive, mostly grey with black and white wings and tail. The tail has a black band in the middle with noticeable outer white feathers. Nutcrackers are about the size of a jay (12 inches) and have a long, pointed bill and are a member of the Corvid family (crows and ravens). Clark's Nutcrackers were named for Captain William Clark of the Lewis and Clark Expedition by the ornithologist Alexander Wilson who analyzed samples brought back from the expedition. Nutcrackers were originally thought to be a variety of woodpecker, probably due to their flight pattern which can be undulating and gliding and also because of feeding habits which can include digging in trees for insects. They are a gregarious bird and typically travel in small flocks and communicate noisily with a long, harsh "shraaaaaaa".

Their primary range is in the high mountains of the Western United States and preferably forests that are partly open, especially whitebark pine forests. They are omnivores and eat a variety of seeds, berries, insects, bird's eggs, and carrion. The majority of the food they eat is pine nuts, especially of the whitebark pine, which are high in protein and fat. Clark's Nutcrackers have a mutualistic symbiotic relationship with the whitebark pine (beneficial to both). They have a bill that is especially designed to break open the cone, dig inside and remove the seeds and have a sublingual pouch to store seeds, as many as 90 at a time! The majority of the seeds are saved and cached for later use. Seeds are harvested in the late summer and fall and cached in the ground, mainly in open areas near nesting locations. The seeds are thrust into the ground about an inch deep with the pointed bill. Many thousands of seeds are stored for later consumption. As a member of the Corvid family, they are intelligent birds and can remember where they stored seeds. They are reliant on their memory for survival as they



overwinter in the cold mountains. Scientists have discovered that nutcrackers have a larger hippocampus than birds that don't cache. It is thought that one

method nutcrackers use to find caches is by remembering angles between the caches and nearby landmarks (trees, rocks, etc.), that is, by triangulation.

The whitebark pine evolved to take advantage of the nutcracker seed dispersal and have cones with breakaway scales, seed retaining cones, and wingless seeds. Obviously, not all of the cached seeds are retrieved, and some germinate growing into new trees.

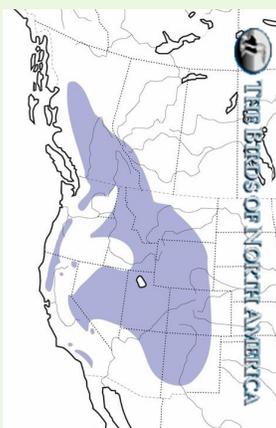
There is some reason for concern about the nutcrackers survival because there has been a loss of whitebark pine trees due to the prevalence of white pine blister rust and mountain pine beetle. Glacier National Park has seen a marked decline in its whitebark pine stands due to these diseases. The US Fish and Wildlife Service recently proposed that whitebark pine be listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act.

However, nutcrackers are resilient and do not completely rely on whitebark pine seeds. Insects can be snatched out of the air imitating flycatchers. A specialized jaw structure developed to pound and break pinecones can also be used to pound and probe dead wood for insects.

Courtship and nesting begin in late winter. Nests are typically on the outer branches of conifers.

The clutch size is 2-6 eggs, incubation is 18 days, and the young remain in the nest for 20 days. The male takes his turn in the incubation and develops a brood patch on his chest. A brood patch is a patch of bare skin that some birds develop during the nesting season allowing more body heat to get to the eggs. The young are fed seeds from the caches by both parents.

According to the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology populations appear to have experienced some declines in the last 50 years. This may be partly due to the prevalence of white pine blister rust. Since nutcrackers live in a fragile subalpine environment, they are especially vulnerable to climate change and loss of habitat as their range is pushed higher in elevation. Both the Clark's Nutcracker and the whitebark pine are species worth saving.



March Program

Trumpeter Swan Ecology and Reintroduction

presented by Franz Ingelfinger

The Trumpeter Swan has made a remarkable recovery throughout Northwest Montana, thanks to a multiple-decade's long re-introductory effort involving several cooperators. Today, swans breeding throughout the Flathead are the direct decedents of those efforts. Franz will discuss Trumpeter Swan ecology, reintroduction, and current efforts to utilize GPS-collar technology to identify migratory pathways and suitable wetland habitats for range expansion.



Photo provided by Franz Ingelfinger

Franz Ingelfinger is a Restoration Ecologist with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks. Originally from Massachusetts, he studied at the University of Wyoming. Like the birds in the Flathead, Franz got his wildlife start in the early days of the swan reintroduction program, where he worked for the Wyoming Wetland Society rearing swans for release. Now in the Flathead, Franz occasionally volunteers with ongoing Trumpeter

Swan recovery efforts.

How to Attend the March 8 FAS General Meeting

Time: March 8, 2021, 7:00 PM Mountain Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87984683083>

Meeting ID: 879 8468 3083

+1 253 215 8782

If you have been hesitant to try Zoom, it is actually quite easy. For a brief tutorial contact

cory@flatheadaudubon.org

Videos of Monthly FAS Programs Available

Video recordings of Flathead Audubon's monthly programs are now becoming available on the FAS website at <https://flatheadaudubon.org/videos>.

Right now you can view three of our recent programs:

1. *Flight of Hummingbirds* by Brad Tobalski (October 2020)
2. *Montana's Amazing Native Fish* by Beth Gardner

(January 2021)

3. *Instrumented Bird Nest Boxes and Wildlife Tracking Technologies* by Doug Bonham (February 2021)

More will be added to this collection as they are completed.



Call for Clark's Nutcracker Nest Sightings

by Vlad Kovalenko, Glacier National Park

Nest finding is a fun and elusive activity. It is often difficult enough to spot a bird singing in a tree or shrub, let alone to discover

where it rears its young. Nesting is a fundamentally critical and fragile part of the life histories of most birds, so it is no accident that nests are hard to find. One species of particular interest in our neck of the woods is this month's Bird of the Month: the Clark's nutcracker (*Nucifraga columbiana*).

This seed hoarder and



Taza Schaming

white pine mutualist is a crucial part of our subalpine and tree line ecosystems, yet little is known about our

local nutcracker population. Researchers in Glacier National Park are actively investigating the nutcrackers in our area to answer important questions related to the sustainability of the nutcracker-whitebark mutualism. Due to the loss of so many of our region's whitebark, we are unsure of whether the mutualism has broken down. One sure

continued on page 8



Conservation Educator's Niche

By Denny Olson

In what now seems like a geologic epoch ago, I was going to graduate school on a teaching assistantship, working summers at my first interpretive naturalist job in a Minnesota state park. The park's main attraction was a beautiful gorge with rapids and waterfalls, but there was also an 8,000 acre wild area with very few trails on the west side of the river. At the lower end of the gorge was a tall, sinuous esker, a fossil mid-glacier river bottom of rounded rocks and gravel, left behind as a sinuous hill. Next to it there was a long abandoned river channel from glacial times, now a half-mile long slough because of a large beaver dam on the south end. At the north end of the beaver pond was a small cabin, where I was allowed to live for free, as long as I patrolled the far end of the park and completed a natural history survey of the park's flora and fauna.

It was a very sweet deal, and I managed to squeak in some beaver social behavior research for my animal behavior classes at the University of Minnesota in Duluth. The ornithology bug had bitten me fairly hard by that time, and I had great fun with a variety of warblers and a Green Heron rookery at the far end of the pond.

Every day, fall, winter and spring, I would drive the gravel two-track three quarters of a mile along my pond and off to the University to teach zoology labs and take classes. One pretty autumn day I was driving the gravel road back home late afternoon. Where the road was closest to the pond, about half-way in, a raucous gang of about 50 Ring-billed Gulls were yelling and milling around in the pond. It was normally quiet back there, but not today. Directly in from the crowd of gulls was another adult gull sitting in the middle of the road, as if on a nest. I drove my car right up to it and it didn't move. I stepped out, to shoo it away (I was hungry, and home was a few hundred yards ahead). It looked at me but didn't move.

After some scare tactics that turned out to be useless. Talking quietly to it, I gently picked up the gull, who didn't protest, and launched it out over the pond toward the screaming gull gang. Other than "that was weird" I didn't think about the experience much that evening. Lots of studying to do ...

Next morning, on my way back to school, the gulls were still there, and the lone gull was back, sitting in the same spot as the previous afternoon. The exact same spot. I picked it up again, and this time set it down at the edge of the road, with the gull-gang screaming their disapproval. I drove off for the day.

When I returned that afternoon, the flotilla of gulls was gone, and the pond was quiet. But in the middle of my driveway road, again in the exact same spot, was the lone gull. This time it sat slightly canted to one side. It was dead. My neck hairs began to stand at attention.

My science-trained brain wanted answers, a reductionist explanation about "survival advantages" to what I had witnessed. I came up with exactly nothing. I can conjure images of a respected elder, a colony leader with perhaps 60 years of offspring, with the family and friends there in hospice. But really, there were only questions. Why this exact spot as a place to pass from this life -- of all places in the middle of a driveway? I know that crows and ravens sometimes have a wake, a gathering for a dead bird. What did the colony of gulls know? Or more importantly, what do I not know, and probably never will?

There is perfectly reasonable magic in this world. A sense of wonder, as Rachel Carson named it, continued from there, especially about birds. The creativity and logic in a raven's brain, the speed in a hummingbird's existence, the completely unbelievable feats of migration and navigation, "seeing" magnetic lines of force -- birds will always be at the outer edges of our imagination. And their other gift, if we wish accept it, is humility, the tempering of our illusions of dominance and control. They have been here for 130 million years. We should be so lucky ...

Flathead Audubon Education Update

In the works! The Flathead Audubon Conservation Educator, Denny Olson, is in the process of converting a number of power point presentations that he has shared with local students to stand-alone, audio-narrated presentations that teachers can share with students. These video/audio presentations will include:

- * Cranes
- * Bird Intelligence
- * Learning Bird Song
- * My Favorite Oddball Bird Stories

- * Migration Magic
- * Natural History Tidbits on Feeder Birds
- * Winter Birds of Prey ID
- * Spring Waterfowl ID
- * Hummingbirds

When this work is finished, the presentations will be made available on the Flathead Audubon Society website.

Submitted by Cindy and Tom Roberts, Flathead Audubon Education Committee Co-Chairs

Conservation Corner

by Lewis Young

Artificial Light at Night Impacts Wildlife or Starving for Darkness

Artificial outdoor lighting at night can cause light pollution. What is light pollution? It is generally defined as unwanted consequences of outdoor lighting and includes such effects as sky glow (brightening of the sky), light trespass (light reaching areas where it's not needed or wanted), glare (excessive brightness causing visual discomfort and decreasing visibility), and visual clutter (bright, confusing and excessive grouping of light sources). While humans may experience the impacts of light pollution, the interruption of the natural daylight cycle impacts wildlife far more. For wildlife, the cycle of darkness and a connection to the stars is necessary for survival.

All animals depend on a regular interval of daylight and darkness for proper functioning of behavioral, reproductive, and immune systems. This regular interval of daylight and darkness is known as the circadian system and it is impacted by artificial outdoor lighting. The effects of strong outdoor lighting can persist for up to 120 miles. It has been estimated that upwards of 1/3 of the world's population cannot see the Milky Way due to light pollution around populated areas. The extent of strongly lighted areas in the U.S. are shown in Figure 1.

Some direct effects are that it disorients and distracts, triggers reproductive behaviors at the wrong periods, frustrates behavior around feeding and pollination, and alters migration.

Pollinators are impacted by light pollution. Bees, moths, and various other insects do most of our pollination. The importance of pollinators is hard to overstate. Albert Einstein, considered a smart guy by most people, is quoted as saying "No more bees, no more pollination, no more plants, no more animals, no more man." Bees need sleep just like humans and excessive artificial light at night can lead to sleep deprivation for them.

One study compared nocturnal pollinators in lit vs unlit meadows. The lit meadow showed 62% less visits by pollinators, 29% fewer species of pollinators, and 13% less fruits in the plant species studied.

Another effect of artificial outdoor lighting is that many pollinators are attracted to these sources at night where they may starve due to lack of plants and they are also much more likely to be eaten by bats that have learned to forage at these lighted sites.

Aquatic organisms are also impacted by light pollution. Zooplankton migrate upwards in the dark to eat algae then retreat to darker depths during daylight. Without these normal zooplankton movements due to excessive light, algae blooms can occur.

Birds are one of the most impacted groups. Effects on birds include altering their reproductive cycle, changing the timing of moult, and interfering with migration. Birds can be "trapped" in the glare of excessive lighting and can't find their way out. One notable example is the huge twin towers of light at the 9-11 memorial in New York City. Audubon worked out a deal with the facility operators to periodically turn the lights off to allow birds to escape.

Light pollution is the easiest type of pollution to reduce or eliminate. There are many ways to do this. Use window coverings on buildings at night, don't overlight, and make sure all outdoor lighting is oriented downward and Dark-Sky compliant. Maintain as much overnight dark as possible. Turn outdoor lights off especially during peak bird migration periods and when it's cloudy or inclement weather. Switches and timers can be used to control timing of lighting at night. Since birds use green and blue wavelengths, avoid when possible white and red wavelengths; these interfere with bird migration. The design of outdoor lighting can go a long way toward reducing impacts to wildlife. In our area, both Glacier and Watertown National Parks have been designated as Dark-Sky parks by the International Dark Sky Association due to their efforts to reduce light pollution.

Light pollution is likely a contributor to the documented loss of 3 billion birds over the last few decades. By being aware of the problem and using carefully designed artificial outdoor lighting we can start reducing the impacts to wildlife.

This article based on information from a presentation by Jane Slade at the 2020 The Wildlife Society Annual Conference.



Figure 1. Strongly lighted areas in the U.S.

CHIRPS & SQUAWKS

Highlights from the February 1, 2021 Board of Directors Meeting

- ⇒ Rod Walette reported that the Finance Committee met, and will be working on writing a Financial Plan, which will include information such as the responsibilities of the committee, and guidelines for investments and/or endowments.
- ⇒ Margaret Parodi reported that the Field Trip team is proceeding with planning to create offerings that are diverse, and conducted in a safe manner.
- ⇒ Gael Bissell initiated a discussion about the ways we could provide information to assist and encourage members to track proposed bills, and become engaged in the legislative process. Several actions were selected and will be activated in the next few weeks.
- ⇒ Bob Lee is looking for nominations for people who have an interest in seeking to join the Board of Directors in the upcoming election.

New Species at Owen Sowerwine Natural Area

New birds have recently been added to the bird list for Owen Sowerwine Natural Area (OSNA). Derrick Rathe spotted two new birds during an outing on Nov. 17, 2020, which adds the Cassin's Finch and White-winged Crossbill to the OSNA bird list. On Dec.

4, 2020, Tony Lloyd saw four Pine Grosbeak which were added to the list. The Pine Grosbeak had previously been observed only adjacent to Owen Sowerwine. This brings the total number of birds seen in this



Pine Grosbeak

beloved birding Hotspot to 157 species.

The latest version of the OSNA Bird List can be found at <https://flatheadaudubon.org/osnabirds>. The list is updated as new birds are reported. If you see a species during a trip to OSNA that is not on this list please let Darcy Thomas (darcy@flatheadaudubon.org) know and she will add your sighting. You may also send any pictures you take and a note if you give permission for their use in the *Pileated Post* newsletter or on the FAS website.
by Darcy Thomas

Feathers in Flight

Bird Genoscape Project by National Geographic

Be sure to check out a YouTube video from National Geographic about the use of bird feather genetics to figure out where they migrate and winter. The southwestern Willow Flycatcher is used an exam-

ple. The footage is excellent and it's very interesting. Find it at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p43ksRgllk> [youtube.com]

Montana Audubon News

LBCU Citizen Science Announcement

Are you ready to hear the 'currleeee' of the Long-billed Curlew? Well, grab your binoculars and get ready, because it's almost curlew season! These charismatic shorebirds will be trickling back into the state in less than two months and we need your help finding as many as possible in and around the Mission, Blackfoot and Helena Valley!

Since 2013 volunteers have recorded curlews sightings in these two Montana valleys and these data are helping inform statewide habitat models as well as highlighting important tracts of intact grassland that are in need of conservation.

The Long-Billed Curlew Citizen Science survey will take place from April 8 - May 7 and May 8 - May 31. Please email Peter Dudley at pete@mtaudubon.org or Carmen Borchelt at carmen@mtaudubon.org for more information and to sign up!

GBHE Citizen Science Announcement

The Great Blue Heron is one of Montana's avian species of concern. While herons nest in colonies, or rookeries, along major waterways, Breeding Bird Survey data indicates that populations have declined every year from 1966 to 2015. To better track this iconic species, Montana Audubon has partnered with the Montana Natural Heritage Program to improve and support greater statewide inventory and monitoring.

The Great Blue Heron Survey will take place from May 1st - June 15th with an online training April 22nd at 6 pm, please email Peter Dudley at pete@mtaudubon.org or Carmen Borchelt at carmen@mtaudubon.org for the training information.

by Carmen Borchelt, MT Audubon



pbase.com

WINTER 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 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 at <https://www.flatheadaudubon.org/activities-and-field-trips/> for updated information on upcoming field trips.



Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic we are taking precautions to ensure safety for all participants. Masks and respect for others' personal space will be required, and we ask you to not share binoculars or spotting scopes. The number of participants allowed on trips will be limited as will carpooling.

WINTER BIRDING AT STEEL BRIDGE TRAILS, Wednesday March 3, 11:00 AM-1:00 PM and Saturday March 6, 2021, 1:00PM – 3:00PM. We will take a winter trek along the Flathead River near the Steel Bridge and are likely to see Bald Eagle, Canada Goose, Ring-billed Gull, woodpeckers, flickers, Blue Jays, wax-wings, and other small passerines. We might see Belted Kingfisher, Merlin, Mergansers and a Townsend's Solitaire. Dress warmly for this walk of up to 2.25 miles. Wear winter boots and be prepared to snowshoe if the snow is deep. Remember to bring your binoculars. Trip leader: Darcy Thomas. Call 406-407-8263 or email darcy@flatheadaudubon.org to sign up. Space is limited to five birders for each day. MASKS AND SPACING ARE REQUIRED.

SPRING WATERFOWL, CHURCH SLOUGH and LOWER VALLEY WETLANDS, Sunday, March 21, 8:00 AM until noon. Dan Casey will lead a socially-distanced small group to visit Church Slough and other Somers area wetlands. Mid- to late March is the prime time to see large flocks of incoming migrants, including such seasonal specialties as Greater Scaup and Eurasian Wigeon. If the conditions are right, we may see thousands of waterfowl of 15-20 species. Limited to 10 participants, with carpooling only by those within existing family "bubbles". Contact Dan at 406-270-5941 to reserve spots.

FREEZOUT LAKE AND THE SNOW GEESE MIGRATION, Friday and Saturday, March 26-27. The Snow Geese are moving north from their California wintering grounds to their arctic nesting areas along with thousands of other waterfowl. They stop over at Freezout Lake WMA near Choteau to rest and feed. We should go visit them! We will meet on Friday morning at 10 AM at the old K-Mart parking lot in Evergreen; from there, we will caravan to Choteau and arrive in time for the afternoon "fly-out." After spending a night in Choteau, we will head back out to Freezout WMA just before daybreak to watch the "mass ascension" of geese from the ponds. After the morning's birding, we, too, will head north to Kalispell in the early afternoon and arrive home around 5 PM on Saturday. Bob Lee will provide a suggested schedule and route, and will be in the front of the group. With the COVID pandemic and any relief unknown at this time, we will be taking precautions like masking and social distancing and no gathering for dinner. Participants may 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 Lake 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, contact Bob at RML3@centurytel.net or 406-270-0371.



Nongame Wildlife Tax Check-off

When filling out your Montana tax form this year, think "wildlife" by donating to the Nongame Wildlife Program, found on Form 2, page 11, under Contributions.



If your taxes are prepared, tell your accountant that you want to donate to wildlife! Your contributions are tax

deductible on next year's return. Montana has more than 500 species of "nongame" animals that benefit from public support each year at tax time. Since 1983, the check-off has contributed over \$27,000 annually to this important wildlife program.



Clark's Nutcracker nests continued from page 3
sign that it continues to thrive is the presence of breeding birds.

Evidence from a study of the Greater Yellowstone population suggests that Clark's nutcrackers do not breed in years following low whitebark cone production. This may be attributed to the birds' knowledge that they did not cache enough seeds to nourish themselves and their young. This translates not only to fewer whitebark seeds being planted, but also to fewer birds available to disperse seeds down the road.

Dr. Taza Schaming, an ecologist and Clark's nutcracker researcher, is seeking help in locating nutcracker nests for her Nutcracker Ecosystem Project and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology Clark's Nutcracker/Whitebark Pine Ecosystem initiative. Nest sightings will assist studies of the role of nutcrackers in conifer ecosystems, the effects of climate change on the birds and coniferous forests, and educational efforts to elevate awareness. Additionally, the discovery of nests in our area will give insights as to whether our dwindling whitebark populations are still viable. These results carry important implications as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service considers listing the species as "Threatened."



Jake Braman

Very few nutcracker nests have ever been documented, so any new nest information is wonderfully helpful. Nests are made of twigs or sticks and are round, approximately eight to 12 inches wide, four to nine inches deep, and found eight to 60 feet off the ground, primarily in conifers. Nests can be found in live or dead trees, and dense or open stands of trees. Nest building tends to begin in late-February/early-March (but may be earlier or later depending on the location and year) and is the most easily observable sign of nesting/breeding. Nestlings should all have fledged by mid-June.

The best way to find a nest is to follow birds carrying sticks and twigs to their intended nesting sites. Additionally, the presence of fledglings (no white on face, shorter tail) is an indicator of a nearby nest. Fledglings are usually found with adults nearby, and can be heard begging for food with whiny, repeating vocalizations.

If you spot Clark's nutcrackers nesting, please send GPS point and/or other location information, such as tree species and height of nest in the tree, as well as nest status (building, eggs, nestlings), date located, and any other details to tazascham-ing@gmail.com.

Speak Up for Conservation continued from page 1

- ◆ <https://mtaudubon.org/conservation-policy/legislative-participation/> for what they are doing, what they are tracking and how you can participate.
- ◆ Sign up for **Montana Audubon Action Alerts**, at <https://mtaudubon.org/join-our-online-network/>. These Helena Alerts address the most urgent state bills and will give you bill number, overview, who to contact by when, and links to the Montana legislative comment page. This comment page is simple to use: fill out (autofill) your contact info, bill number, select legislator or committee, select For or Against, and make your comment in box. Hit Send! Right now there are bills streamlining subdivision review, adding another layer of government approval for conservation easements, and phasing out various types of styrofoams.
- ◆ Go to our new **"Take Action"** section on the **Flathead Audubon website** for more information on Montana legislative issues: choose Take Action in the Conservation menu, or go directly there using flatheadaudubon.org/conservation/speak-up-for-conservation. We will post updates there as we go through the legislative session.
- ◆ Sign up for **Flathead Audubon's monthly Flyby** where we provide updates on critical issues. Go to <https://flatheadaudubon.org> and scroll down to the sign up box.
- ◆ Sign up for **National Audubon Society Alerts** at <https://act.audubon.org/onlineactions/6F7AOVc8UKM6Rqsqf1fbw2>
- ◆ To take action on specific issues go to the **Nation-**

al Audubon Action Center at <https://audubon.org/takeaction>

* * * * *

ACTION NEEDED on MIGRATORY BIRD TREATY ACT

Of particular national concern remains the **National Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)**. Changes were made in these regulations at the last minute by the previous administration (<https://wildlife.org/usfws-releases-migratory-bird-treaty-act-rule/>) involving a new interpretation of "incidental take". On January 19, 2021, the National Audubon Society joined with many other conservation organizations to sue the USFWS and the US Department of Interior over these changes. (<https://www.audubon.org/sites/default/files/mbtaregschallengecomplaint.pdf>). The next day, January 20, Biden took office and immediately directed the Department of Interior to review these changes. In early February, the USFWS announced it would delay the implementation of these changes, and is now considering **rolling back** the Trump Administration's harmful interpretation of MBTA "incidental take" (<https://www.audubon.org/news/biden-halts-trump-rule-gutted-landmark-bird-protection-law>). USFWS has called for public comment on the issue.

We have only until March 1 to show the USFWS support for their roll back the harmful MBTA interpretation. Send in your comments by going to this National Audubon link: https://act.audubon.org/a/reinstate-mbta-1?ms=policy-adv-web-website_nas-engagementcard-20210211_mbta. Thank You!



Thank You!

...to those below who have made donations to Flathead Audubon.

This is where you would have found a list of last month's donations in past issues of The Pileated Post. Our new approach is to list all donors for the previous year in the January issue. So, look for the 2021 donors in January 2022.

Finding Joy Outdoors

The recent Special Edition of *Time*, *The Power of Joy*, page 55 contains a side panel with the following tip for finding joy outdoors:

BEFRIEND A BIRD

Birds are everywhere, says Becky Cushing, the director of Mass Audubon's Berkshire Sanctuaries, where she leads mindfulness workshops. She recommends focusing your attention on a single bird: observe it in detail as if you have never seen a bird before...

How does it eat?

Does it crack open a seed with its beak?

How does it interact with the birds around it?

How does its behavior change when a dog strolls by?

How many different colors can you count in its feathers?

Natural Events To See This Month:

The first Tree Swallows arrive.

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+
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Flathead Audubon Society is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Our federal tax ID number is 81-0447830.

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The Flathead Audubon Society is affiliated with the National Audubon Society and Montana Audubon (www.MTAudubon.org). We meet on the second Monday of each month September through May. Meetings start at 7 PM and include a featured guest who presents a conservation or nature program. The Board of Directors meets the Monday preceding the general meeting, at 6 PM. See page 1 for locations. 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. To become a member or to renew your membership, go to the FAS website or use the membership form below. **Deadline for newsletter copy is the 18th of each month. Contact newsletter editor at 755-1406; or [lin-](#)**

Check our website www.FlatheadAudubon.org for
Late breaking FAS news & announcements
Online FAS membership sign up or renewal
Newly scheduled field trips & events



THE PILEATED POST is delivered BY EMAIL!

So be sure to include your email address when joining or renewing.

You may renew or join using the form below or online on our website: <http://www.flatheadaudubon.org/>

To report a change of address - postal or email - contact Mike at shrdu@centurytel.net

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You will receive occasional short emails with last minute updates, reminders, and breaking FAS news.



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Membership Individual or Family

- Basic Membership ————— \$25
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New member? Renewal?

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