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# Pileated Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

May 2021  
VOLUME 45, NUMBER 9

Wilson's  
Warbler

## President's Column By Gael Bissell

### *Dogs and Lemonade...Now Go Out and Plant Those Natives!*

If you were to describe our board's demographic and computer skills last January, it would have been: mostly retired, over 60, slow in adopting new FAS email addresses, and isn't Zoom a board game? We were your typical old dogs, reluctant to learn new tricks. But enter the coronavirus pandemic last February and the world-wide shut down and public restrictions, and we, like so many other organizations, had to quickly adapt. With a huge help from our younger dogs (e.g. Jake Bramante and Cory Davis), we quickly learned how to hold digital board and committee meetings so we could make the necessary decisions about all our upcoming programs, field trips, and, well just about everything!

It was at that moment that we discovered a deep resilience and creativity in our board and com-



mittee members, multi-talent and energy in our conservation educator, and an amazing commitment from volunteers. And as we have tried things and learned things during this pandemic time, we have been reminded once again that we can depend on you, our members, to be understanding, supportive, and faithful to us. As Denny Olson has said publicly a few

times, "we made lemonade from an abundance of lemons". Although challenged with months of public restrictions, volunteers continued trail and habitat maintenance at Owen, and board members continued monthly meetings via Zoom with DNRC, Montana Audubon, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and then Flathead Land Trust to explore and identify options for protecting Owen Sowerwine. Because of

Kay Mitchell's extraordinary efforts, we participated for the first time in the Whitefish Community Foundation's Day of Giving and Unity and Great Fish Challenge  
*continued on page 10*

## What Is Happening This Summer and Next Fall?

Flathead Audubon is so excited to be moving ahead with many new as well as traditional **spring and summer field trips**, although slightly modified for Covid-19 safety, as well as events such as **Warbler Weekend (although during the week on June 8-10) and Birds of Prey Festival on September 18**. We are also planning to return to **in-person public meet-**

**ings at the United Way campus in a much larger venue starting in September**. Finally, we hope to make our public meetings digital in real time for those who may not want to travel; we are also thinking about bringing speakers into our meetings digitally from all over the world. All our events and activities will follow all public health guidelines. Excited to see you soon!

## THIS IS YOUR LAST PILEATED POST UNTIL SEPTEMBER

### MAY FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

**Monday, May 3, 2021. 6 PM. FAS Board of Directors Meeting.** In the Pavilion at Lone Pine State Park, west of Kalispell.

**Monday, May 10, 2021. 7 PM. Flathead Audubon General Meeting** will be held digitally. See page 3 for how to participate.

**Sundays April 25, May 9, May 23 8-10 AM, Sonny Boone Memorial Trail.** See page 6.

**Saturday, May 15. Lower Flathead Valley Bike and Bird.** See page 6.

**Thursday May 20, 8-10 AM. Native Plants and Birds of Wayfarers Park.** See page 6.

**Tuesday June 8-Thursday June 10. Warbler "Weekdays" at Tally Lake.** See page 10.

**Sunday, June 27, 8 AM-noon. Swan River Wildlife Refuge.** See page 6.

# BIRD OF THE MONTH

## Varied Thrush

by Pam Willison

Haunting, quavering, buzzy, isolated and resonant, lacking melody and fluidity, and musical but dissonant. The Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*) provides a challenge for those who seek to describe the song. Possibly the best description is polyphonous: 2 or 3 notes sounded simultaneously resulting in a sound that sometimes seems harmonious, and sometimes not. Like three different sounding whistles blown together for a couple seconds. Some people venture to identify the minor key of the Varied Thrush. But this member of the Turdidae, or thrush, family has a song in “varied” keys!!

The first time I saw a Varied Thrush was in early spring, and it was aggressively scratching and feeding under native evergreens and shrubs in my yard. I thought it was the oddest-looking Robin I’d ever seen – until I looked in a bird book. Varied Thrushes are often mistaken for or compared to the American Robin, a thrush cousin. This familiar reference point helps us picture a similar size, shape, and color for the Varied Thrush. With a slighter build and more bold patterning, Varied Thrushes sport greyish-blue feathers on the back, rump, tail, crown, and nape; a rich burnt-orange face, eyebrow, breast, and pair of wing bars; and a black eye stripe and necklace or breast band. Primary feathers are slate-grey dappled with orange, while secondary feathers are slate-grey tipped with orange. The female has similar markings, which are duller and brownish-olive instead of grey, making her hard to distinguish from a juvenile. The bill is pointed, and mostly black, and the legs and feet are tawny.

The behavior of Varied Thrushes might also lead to mistaken identity as a Robin, as you see it hopping across the ground and foraging in leafy debris for insects and invertebrates, eating berries, or harvesting seeds or fruit in the fall. However, for breeding they seek high elevation, dense, moist, forests, with a dark understory, so it’s unlikely you will observe much of their feeding behavior. Additionally, Varied Thrushes tend to be elusive, secretive, and mysterious – how fitting considering their haunting, minor-key song. Most often, we hear them, but aren’t successful at locating them. Springtime hiking to mountain lakes (Stanton, Avalanche, Strawberry), walking or bicycling Going-To-The-Sun Road, or wan-

dering on Trail of the Cedars will likely provide an opportunity to hear the polyphonous call. Decide for yourself how it is best described.

The geographic range of the Varied Thrush is western North America with breeding from the forests of northern California to the boreal forests in Alaska and the Yukon, and east into Idaho, western Montana, and Alberta. Because of this limited range, they are short-distance migrators, wintering in central-Oregon and northern California. In mild Pacific forests, they can be altitudinal migrants – not leaving, just changing elevation for breeding. The male arrives in Montana very early in the spring to his preferred habitat of wet, dense or old-growth forest to begin singing to defend



his territory, and aggressively chase away competitors. The female builds her cup-like nest in low bushes or near the trunk of a conifer tree, possibly near a stream. The nest contains an inner layer of soft grasses, dead leaves and moss; a dense middle layer of wet grass, moss, or mud; and a coarse outer layer of bark, twigs, lichen and leaves. She lays 3-4 eggs – pale blue with pale brown spots -

which hatch in about 2 weeks. Both parents contribute to feeding the young and, if conditions are favorable, raise two broods. Outside of breeding season, Varied Thrushes can be wanderers, having been sighted in all 48 lower states.

Varied Thrushes are still common within their range, although from 1966-2015, they declined 2.5% per year for a cumulative decline of 73%. They are vulnerable to loss of habitat through logging of north-west forests, and to forest fragmentation as they seldom live in forest patches less than 40 acres. According to the climate vulnerability tool at Audubon.org, a temperature increase of +3 degrees Celsius will cause the loss of 68% of their habitat. Climatic changes will not only make them susceptible to decline but will reshape their range and shift them northward.

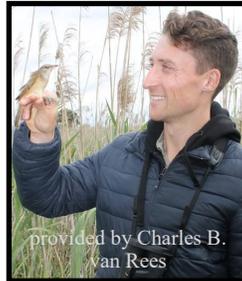
The Varied Thrush, so named because of the varied plumage, has a number of traditional or regional names: Canadian Thrush, Winter Thrush, Mountain Thrush, Alaska Thrush, and Oregon Thrush. Regardless of the moniker it bears, it’s a good bet that the haunting song of the Varied Thrush is memorable to those fortunate enough to hear it.

# May Program

## Un Año Andalúz : Research Insights and Outdoor Experiences from a Fulbright Year in Europe's Birding Mecca

presented by Charles B. van Rees

The talk will be divided into two parts: first, Charles will present research on migratory gull behavior from his Fulbright fellowship at Doñana biological station in Seville, Spain, and then review some of the species and places that make Spain one of Europe's ultimate birdwatching destinations. The presentation focuses on Doñana National Park, Europe's largest protected area, and the first place ever protected by the World Wildlife Fund. This incredible landscape is a World Heritage Site, with evidence of human use and habitation as far back as the Phoenicians, and which supports a vibrant array of ecosystems from aeolian dune systems to massive Mediterranean wetland complexes. More than 300 bird species move through or breed in the park, and it sports dozens of endemic, and often endangered reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates, and plants.



Charles with Reed Warbler

Charles B. van Rees is a conservation scientist, naturalist, and nature communicator with a professional background in ornithology, animal behaviour, and wetland ecology. From 2019-2021 he worked as a postdoctoral research scientist at Flathead Lake Biological Station and recently accepted a position at the Odum School of Ecology and River Basin Center at the University of Georgia in Athens. His past research has focused on the ecology and conservation of endangered Hawaiian waterbirds, the habitat use of migratory gulls in southern Spain, and technological innovations to manage aquatic invasive species in Northwest Montana. Outside of his scientific career, Charles provides interpretation and guiding in natural history, and is a co-host/co-producer for the popular American natural history podcast, The Nature Guys.

### How to Attend the May 10 FAS General Meeting

Time: May 10, 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](mailto:cory@flatheadaudubon.org)

Videos of earlier FAS meeting presentations are available at <https://flatheadaudubon.org/videos>.

## Attention Native Plant Gardeners and Bird Lovers At Home with Native Plants and Birds- Gardening Successes from our Flathead Community

The Montana Native Plant Society Flathead Chapter and Flathead Audubon are planning a program for spring of 2022, but **we need your help**. This season, take pictures of the native plants you are growing in your gardens and landscapes. What native plants and techniques are working in your specific growing conditions and the varied ecosystems of the Flathead Valley? We will gather the photos, your stories and come together to share what works in Spring 2022.

It can be one species, a specific method, a whole garden or an established



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www.turnerphotographics.com

native area you have incorporated into your landscape.

What has worked for you? Is it attracting birds and pollinators? If you can capture photos of the birds or pollinators utilizing the native species even better! It is a delightful way to enjoy the diversity of your own garden. Past years' photos are great also. This is not a photo contest, but a way to learn from each other's experiences. We are focusing on local native plant species only, please.

Native plants local to a specific area have *continued on page 4*

**Gardening Successes continued from page 3**

evolved over hundreds and thousands of years to support healthy diverse ecosystems. They are especially important to native insects and the birds that depend on those insects to raise healthy chicks. Sharing your experiences builds on our knowledge base of how our local ecosystems are supporting our pollinators that we depend on for much of our food and the birds that bring a world of joy.

Please include any of the following details you are comfortable sharing. Send up to 2 pictures, plant



names, your name, address or the part of the valley where you live, along with a short description of the growing conditions (sun or shade, prairie, forest, riparian, or wetlands, amended soil or sandy) - whatever you think is benefiting the success of the native plants. Email your information and pictures (as a jpeg please) and any questions to Kathy,

[mtkat67@gmail.com](mailto:mtkat67@gmail.com), May 2021 through October 2021. We look forward to your participation.

by Kathy Ross

**Recycle Your Left Over Plastic Nursery Pots**

What can you do with those plastic pots hanging around after you get those nursery-bought plants into the ground? You can RECYCLE them! Drop them

off at the Center for Native Plants – they will reuse them. 5605 Hwy 93 South, Whitefish. Open 9AM-5PM every day.

**Learn More About Using Native Plants for Your Landscape and Garden**

“Growing Native Plants for Birds” a presentation by Kathy Ross, will be hosted by the Center for Native Plants on Thursday, August. 5, 7 PM You are welcome to arrive early or stay afterwards to look over the variety of native plants available at the Center. The Center for Native Plants is located at 5605 Hwy 93 South, Whitefish.

“Kathy Ross’ Recommendations for Native Home Gardens in the Flathead Area” is now available at

<https://flatheadaudubon.org/birds/helping-birds>.

This resource provides lists of recommended native species, and non-natives that have worked well in a

native setting for gardens in the Bigfork area, and also a list of ornamental plants *that she has found can become invasive especially in a native setting*. The lists are based on Kathy’s work for over 30 years landscaping and gardening on Flathead Lake properties and other areas around Bigfork.

For an on-the-ground lesson about our local native plants and their relationship with our local birds, you can join Kathy on her May 20 field trip to Wayfarer’s State Park. See details under Field Trips, page 6. The trip will focus on the beautiful thriving native landscape and the birds that call it home.

**Flathead Valley Bird Report**

by Dan Casey

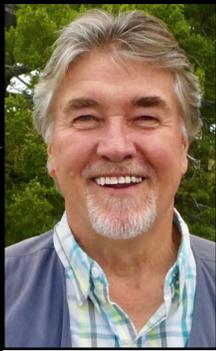
**Rare and Notables, Arrivals – March/April 2021**

- 3/18 - **White-throated Sparrow** – Big Mountain (Shannon and Bridger D.)
- 3/20 - **Ross’s Goose** – Egan Slough Rd. (Craig H.)
- 3/20 - **Mew Gull** – (*present two weeks*) Somers Bay (Danny T.)
- 3/31 - **Red-necked Grebe** (6) – (*first of year*) Smith Lake (Derrick R.)
- 4/1 - **Barred Owl** – West Glacier (Dan D.)
- 4/1 - **Cinnamon Teal** (2) – (*first of year*) Whitefish Lake (Kit P.)
- 4/5 - **Eurasian Wigeon** – (*new location*) Echo Lake (Dan C.)
- 4/6 - **Franklin’s Gull** – (*first of year*) N. Shore Flathead L. (Shawn R.)
- 4/8 - **Say’s Phoebe** – (*first of year*) McWenneger Slough (Pete F.)
- 4/8 - **Sora** – (*first of year*) Creston Wetland (Craig H.)
- 4/10 - **Peregrine Falcon** – Montford Rd. (Tony L.)
- 4/11 - **American White Pelican** (8) – McWenneger Slough (Pete F.)

**What to Expect – April/May 2021**

As the unseasonably warm days of late April continue, hummingbirds will be visiting feeders across the valley, and Vaux’s Swifts will join the swallow flocks. And spring brings a flood of migrants, as warblers (led by Yellow-rumped, Nashville, Yellow and Common Yellowthroat), Vireos (Cassin’s, Warbling), Flycatchers (Hammond’s, Eastern and Western Kingbirds), Western Tanagers, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Lazuli Buntings, Gray Catbirds, and more begin to settle into suitable habitats. Given our dry spring, mudflats on local wetlands may host a variety of shorebirds, many of which are on their way to arctic breeding grounds. Our latest migrants do not arrive until the very end of May (Red-eyed Vireo, Willow Flycatcher, Common Nighthawk). To learn more about the timing and abundance of Flathead County birds throughout the year visit eBird at

<https://ebird.org/region/US-MT-029?yr=all>.



## Conservation Educator's Niche

By Denny Olson

An enterprising climatologist once calculated the rate of spring's advance to the north. It averages a half-mile per hour, or twelve miles per day -- not supersonic, but not glacial either. In fact, it's an easy walking speed. The roller-coaster fits and starts of that long transition can be frustrating after a 65-degree day or two. Snow and howling wind? Yup. Spring in the Flathead.

The long cabin-fever winter of the pandemic has started its "spring breakup", with vaccinations, economic help and a renewed sense of optimism. The timing is still up in the air, with fits and starts in pandemic politics and histrionics blared at us almost hourly. But like spring, it is proving to be inevitable. Our transitions at FAS are happening in the same way -- we don't know exactly when, but we do know "what".

The next fiscal year for Flathead Audubon Education appears to be transitional from remote-learning emphasis to in-person teaching and learning. As luck would have it, many of the remote tools we produced in the age of COVID promise to be very helpful in the transitional efforts.

In the three months prior to FY 21-22 we plan to complete narrated videos of what were previously PowerPoint presentations. Those will include "Bird Brains" on bird intelligence, "Migration Magic", "Flathead Spring Waterfowl", "Best Flathead (strange but true) Bird Stories" and "Flathead Feeder Birds Natural History".

Thereafter, we will produce a video about the complex interrelationships between native plants, native insects and native birds, with specific information on re-converting to natives on private yards and public lands. It will be lighthearted and co-narrated by Prof. Avian Guano (Denny Olson) and local expert Kathy Ross.

Then, in the coming school year, we will be (finally!) promoting and implementing our 7th-grade Life Science Bird Education Sequence (co-sponsored by Flathead Land Trust and co-taught by Laura Katzman from the Trust). We piloted an abbreviated



version of the program with Evergreen Middle School the last two years, and now we are recruiting other Flathead Valley schools, offering many useful tools we have produced during the pandemic, and since the pilot.

Teachers will be able to choose from the following list of options.

1. An early autumn sequence on Sandhill Cranes, with optional classroom presentations, a "Sandhill Cranes; Voices from the Eocene" introductory video, a loaned Crane Educational Trunk with many activities across disciplines, culminating with a guided field trip to view migrating cranes.

2. A winter sequence on Winter Birds of Prey, with classroom presentations, Jeop-birdy games, a PowerPoint/video, and a winter bus trip to the West or Lower Valley to view the many wintering raptors.

3. An early spring sequence on Migrating Waterfowl, with classroom presentations, a narrated PowerPoint/video, a Ducks Unlimited educational trunk, and a swans and ducks field trip to view various migration stopover rivers and sloughs in the Lower Valley area.

4. A late spring sequence on Breeding Birds, with forest and river-bottom birds classroom presentations, an Osprey educational trunk, A Learning Bird Songs video and workshop, a field trip to the Flathead Audubon Owen Sowerwine Natural Area Education Trail, and possible breeding bird surveys with the older students.

The program fits perfectly with Montana 7th-grade Life Science Standards, and options for formative and summative assessments will also be available for the above sequences.

Because we can now be much less concerned about "contaminated surfaces", we will continue to offer free loan of 15 Educational Trunks with assistance by Flathead Audubon Ambassadors, classroom presentations and field trips by request, public field trips, the September Birds of Prey Festival at Lone Pine State Park, and an array of traditional FAS programming and publications.

2021 and 2022 promise to be the "back in business" years, for FAS as well!

## International Day of Giving and Flathead Audubon

Good news, Audubon supporters! Flathead Audubon has been accepted to participate in the International Day of Giving, May 4 at 8 AM until May 5 at noon. During that day, we encourage you to make a donation to FAS, in support of our world-class Conservation Education Program. You may donate online at <https://whitefishcommunityfoundation.org>, drop off

your donation on May 4 and 5 at the Foundation office, or drop off at any First Interstate, Glacier Bank or Park Side Credit Union office or drive-up window located throughout Flathead County or Eureka, on May 4 and 5. If you can help us make \$2,000 or more in donations, the Whitefish Community Foundation will add \$1000 to our grand total!

## MAY AND SUMMER 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 <https://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 <https://flatheadaudubon.org>. Check the FAS webpage at <https://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.

### SONNY BOONE MEMORIAL TRAIL, Sundays, 8-10 AM; April 25, May 9, and May 23.

Dan Casey will be leading three Sunday morning bird walks along the Sonny Boone Memorial Trail in Somers during the spring migration season. This paved trail follows a portion of the old railroad bed along Somers Slough and offers excellent views of waterfowl as well as a wide variety of landbirds reliant on the diverse riparian habitat. Indeed, 151 species have been reported at this eBird hotspot.

<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L1390990>. These round-trip walks will be one mile each way, and will last approximately 2 hours, starting at 8 AM. Attendance per walk is limited to 10 people and spacing expected. Please call Dan at 406-270-5941 to reserve spots.

**25 April:** Waterfowl, early migrants (e.g., swallows, Nashville Warbler, Spotted Towhee)

**9 May:** Increasing numbers of new arrivals (e.g., Western Tanager, Yellow Warbler)

**23 May:** Most breeding species back on territories (e.g., Gray Catbird, Black-headed Grosbeak)

**LOWER FLATHEAD VALLEY BIKE and BIRD, Saturday, May 15.** A bird expert from Flathead Audubon and a land conservation specialist from Flathead Land Trust will co-lead the event which is also sponsored by the Flathead River to Lake Initiative. We will bike and bird for about 10 miles along mostly paved roads in the lower Flathead Valley viewing existing conservation easements including those at Church and Wiley sloughs, the new conservation easement protecting Reed's Slough, and the Somers Beach property that has been proposed to be a future state park. Following the tour participants can picnic at Somers Beach or have lunch at Somers Bay Café. After lunch, participants can ride at their leisure about five miles on the bike path along Hwy. 93 back to the parking location. Group sizes for the tours will be *limited to 15*, so we will offer three tours with staggered start times (8:30 AM to 11:30 AM, 9:00 AM to noon, and 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM). If you are interested in participating, please register with Laura Katzman at Flathead Land Trust [lkatzman@flatheadlandtrust.org](mailto:lkatzman@flatheadlandtrust.org) or 752-8293.

**NATIVE PLANTS AND BIRDS OF WAYFARERS PARK, Thursday May 20, 8-10 AM.** Join Kathy Ross for a short walk in the beautiful spring bloom of native shrubs and forbs at Wayfarers' State Park, Bigfork. Spotted Towhees flit around the waves of lupine understory, warbler species call high above in the trees, and catbirds search for insects amidst the spring blossoms of Ninebark and Serviceberry. Biodiversity abounds. Learn about the native plants and birds that thrive in this lovely east shore landscape. This walk is limited to 6 participants but if enough interest, a second walk may be added. For meeting place and to sign up contact [mtkat67@gmail.com](mailto:mtkat67@gmail.com).

**SWAN RIVER WILDLIFE REFUGE, Sunday June 27, 8 AM-12 PM.** This is a joint field trip between Flathead Audubon Society and the Flathead Chapter of the Montana Native Plant Society. Join Maria Mantas and Cory Davis as we explore the emergent marshes, wet meadows, and riparian forests of the SRNWR. We'll learn about conservation projects in the Swan Valley and see some great birds (maybe bitterns, snipe, and redstarts). On our last excursion we sited 61 bird species! Knee-high boots highly recommended! For safety reasons, this trip is limited to 4 FAS and 4 MNPS participants. To sign-up contact Cory Davis (406) 257-3166 or [cory@flatheadaudubon.org](mailto:cory@flatheadaudubon.org).

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### Natural Events To See This Month:

*White-tailed Ptarmigan molt from white to drab brown.*

## Conservation GOOD NEWS!

by Carole Jorgensen

The Biden administration has withdrawn the "M" solicitor's opinion that suggested the incidental take provision of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) was inappropriate, which will ensure that incidental take provisions will remain in the MBTA. The state of Virginia has also passed a state bird incidental take regulation, the first of its kind. Perhaps other states will follow there example.

New York has implemented a regulation to reduce bird collisions with buildings, partially in response to Project Safe Flight, NY Audubon's volunteer citizen science monitoring project, which found that

*the majority of birds that strike windows die from brain hemorrhaging (Veltri & Klem 2005). Between 600 million and 1 billion birds die from window strikes each year, 90,000- to 230,000 in NYC alone.*

([https://academicworks.cuny.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1173&context=gc\\_pubs](https://academicworks.cuny.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1173&context=gc_pubs))

And the Bird Safe Buildings Bill has been reintroduced in the US Congress to incorporate bird-friendly building practices in federal buildings. (<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/919?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22h.r.+919%22%5D%7D&s=1&r=1.b>)

## FAS Regional Field trip to Conserved Lower Valley Wetlands

Lower Flathead Valley Private and Other Conserved Wetlands & Riparian Areas, a field trip hosted by Flathead Audubon and Flathead Land Trust, will be offered June 5 as part of Montana Audubon's Wings Across Big Sky - Regional Field Trips 2021 scheduled in lieu of the annual meeting.

Jake Bramante (FAS) and Laura Katzman (FLT) will lead participants on visits to a variety of valley bottom habitats including some of the Flathead Valley's most unique and inaccessible wetlands and riparian areas on private lands conserved through efforts of the River to Lake Initiative. We hope to see many species of resident warblers, flycatchers, waterfowl, and water birds including a view of Great Blue Heron/Double-Crested Cormorant rookery, as well as various raptors, sparrows, cavity nesters, and other species.

The River to Lake Initiative includes a variety of governmental, tribal, and NGO partners including the Flathead Land Trust (co-host), Montana Land Reli-

ance, Flathead Lakers, and Flathead Audubon Society (co-host) who have been working together for over 15 years to conserve important habitats throughout the Flathead Valley.

The trip will be June 5, 7:00 AM to 1:00 PM. Meet at Somers Park N Ride. Bring snacks. To register go to <https://mtaudubon.org>. The number of participants is limited so sign up early.

All participants in one of Montana Audubon's Regional Field Trips will get an all-access pass to educational and instructional workshop videos led by Montana Audubon scientists and experts, and will receive a copy of the Montana Audubon Bird Guide to Familiar Species, and other goodies.

The Regional Field Trips being sponsored by Montana Audubon will be taking place throughout Montana on the same day - June 5. For information and registration for all these trips visit <https://mtaudubon.org>.

## CHIRPS & SQUAWKS

### Highlights from the April 5, 2021 Board of Directors Meeting

- Treasurer Rod Walette has completed a draft version of the Financial Policy. The Finance Committee will meet to fine tune it, then the BOD will finalize it.
- FAS has submitted the paperwork to United Way to rent large meeting spaces for our monthly public meetings and BOD meetings, beginning this fall.
- We are proceeding with the applications to participate in both the Whitefish Community Foundations events: Day of Giving and Great Fish.
- The final report for Hawk Watch 2020 is finished (thank you Dan Casey!) and will be posted to the website soon.
- Cindy Roberts reported that during the first week of April, the Education Committee is distributing promotional materials for the new video series to middle- and high-school teachers across the valley.

## Awesome Authors

One of the great joys of the *Pileated Post* is reading the Bird of the Month column. I'm sure everyone would like to offer a heartfelt thank you to the authors who put paper to pen for our newsletter this year. Several new authors joined the crew of seasoned authors so a special show of appreciation goes to Taryn Bushey who wrote about the California Condor, Kat Peterson for her article on the Wood Duck, Anthony Nelson for his article on the African Penguin, Pam Willison who wrote about the Varied Thrush, and Darcy Thomas for her article on the Lesser Scaup. Three seasoned authors provided articles as well. An ardent thank you is due to Linda de Kort for writing

about the Mallard, Margaret Parodi for her article on the Clark's Nutcracker and Lewis Young for his article on the Townsend's Big-eared Bat.

You don't have to have a special talent or English degree to write a Bird of the Month article. You just need to possess a desire to research birds and write something you think will be enjoyable to others. If any of you reading this are interested in writing and seeing your article published in the *Pileated Post* next year please contact Darcy Thomas at [darcy@flatheadaudubon.org](mailto:darcy@flatheadaudubon.org).

*by Darcy Thomas*

## New Species at Owen Sowerwine Natural Area

While walking out of OSNA after a morning of hacking Buckthorn out of the natural area on March 20<sup>th</sup> with a great crew of Auduboners



Denny Olson spotted a Pacific Wren hopping around an old fallen log. Upon checking the OSNA bird list I found this species has only been viewed in an area adjacent

to OSNA but not within the boundaries of the natural area itself. So, the bird list has been edited to reflect this and the asterisk beside its name removed.

The latest version of the OSNA Bird List can be found on the Flathead Audubon website 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 the bird list, please let Darcy Thomas know and she will add your sighting. You may also send any pictures you take and note if you give permission for their use in the *Pileated Post* newsletter or on the website. Send to [darcy@flatheadaudubon.org](mailto:darcy@flatheadaudubon.org).

*by Darcy Thomas*

## Thank You to OSNA Work Crews



Denny Olson

From mid-March to mid-April, we held numerous work days in Owen Sowerwine Natural Area to identify, mark, and cut mature seed-producing trees of Common Buckthorn, in an effort to slow down the progress of this invasive species. Twenty-four individuals volunteered nearly 250 hours, contributing their time, enthusiasm, and back strength to this effort. We are so very

grateful for you!! Thank you to:

Denny Olson, Pat Jaquith, Will Beyer, Rod Walette, Pam Willison, Jane Adams, Mary Jo Gardner, Dee Manning, Brian Manning, Rick Mace, Gael Bissell, Dan Casey, Darcy Thomas, Sally Cameron

Russell, Mike Russell, Karen Nichols, Ben Long, Carole Jorgensen, Cindy Roberts, Tom Roberts, Barbara Schroeder, Rosemary McKinnon, Lynda Saul, and Chris Holdhuzen.



Rod Walette



Darcy Thomas

Photos by  
Pam Willison

## Jewel Basin Hawk Watch 2020 Annual Report Available

The 2020 fall migration monitoring season at the Jewel Basin Hawk Watch was cut short by early season snows in October. But a strong early flight rewarded the more than 50 volunteers who participated in the surveys, with 3,088 raptors counted over 41

survey days. An annual report summarizing our results, including analyses of the past 13 years of surveys at the site, will be available soon on the FAS website at (<https://flatheadaudubon.org/protect/jewel-basin-hawk-watch>).

## Volunteer Riparian Planting Opportunity – May 8

You are invited to a planting day Saturday May 8 sponsored by Flathead Land Trust to help restore a riparian area along Goodrich Bayou. Volunteers will plant trees and shrubs along this beautiful back channel of the Flathead River where it flows past a 37-acre



farm with a conservation easement held by Flathead Land Trust.

Work will start at 8:30 AM, but you can arrive any time in the morning to help out. Please RSVP with the landowner, Chrysta Bourne, and get directions to the property by sending an email to [chrystalbourne13@gmail.com](mailto:chrystalbourne13@gmail.com).

## Migration Miracles Sing, Fly, Soar—Like a bird!

Feathers, hollow bones, no more than air cloaked in brilliant hues. Our neotropical birds migrate at speeds up 100 mph, at elevations as high as 15,000 feet, for up to 8 hours at a stretch or some never stopping for thousands of miles. To top off this feat, they know their way to Mexico or South American in the fall and back to North America and Canada in the spring to breed. Migratory birds hatch with a road map in



their brain. They orient via the sun, or the stars, or on a cloudy day some actually read the magnetic field of the earth to find their way. World Migratory Bird Day is celebrated this year on May 8. To learn more checkout <https://migratorybirdday.org>. Sing, fly, soar--Like a Bird! Celebrate our feathered friends! Make every day Migratory Bird Day!

by Kathy Ross

## Recent Changes in Recycling Cardboard and Paper in the Flathead

The rules for sorting corrugated cardboard, paperboard, brown paper bags, and paper egg cartons in the Flathead have changed.

At all county recycling sites, only clean, unwaxed corrugated cardboard should be placed in the Cardboard recycling bin. Corrugated cardboard is three layers of heavy paper, two flat with a wavy one in the middle. All paperboard (single-layer cereal box type cardboard), brown paper bags, and paper egg cartons, should be placed in the Mixed Paper recycling bins. As usual, waxed corrugated cardboard,

pizza boxes and other food-soiled corrugated cardboard, and other waxed items like juice and beverage boxes, all go in the trash because there is no market for them.

The Waste Not Project offers informational brochures about the “what and where” of recycling in the Flathead. They have just been updated to reflect these changes. To download these brochures and access other information about recycling in the Flathead, go to <https://wastenotproject.org>. Information provided by Citizens for a Better Flathead.

*Land health is the capacity for self-renewal in the soils, waters, plants, and animals that collectively comprise the land.* Aldo Leopold

## Elections Postponed Until Fall

Rather than hold elections during our May 10 Zoom public meeting, we have postponed them to September 13, when we hope to have our first in-person public meeting in more than a year. If you are

interested in joining our Board or a Committee, please contact Bob Lee at [bob@flatheadaudubon.org](mailto:bob@flatheadaudubon.org). Thanks and have a great safe summer!

by Gael Bissell

**President's Column continued from page 1**

with huge successes that enabled us to continue our Conservation/Education and OSNA work. We packed our monthly newsletters and our new digital "Fly By" with news, updates, and lists of activities that folks can do on their own, such as where to bird in the Flathead Valley, how to identify raptors through 27 new silhouettes hanging at Lone Pine State Park, and how to begin your own native gardens for native insects and birds. We completed our 13<sup>th</sup> year at the Jewel Basin Hawk Watch with records of total raptors/day and high numbers of outstanding volunteers.

A clear demonstration of our resilience was Denny Olson's creation a trilogy of entertaining videos for schools and the public, created with help of Pam Willison and bj Worth/Wings in Nature, videos that capture why birds are important (BIRDS ROCK!), why we have lost over 3 billion in 50 years (BIRD TROUBLE), and what we can each do on our own to help birds recover (BIRD HELP). Denny and the Education Committee digitized many of his bird presentations, from sandhill cranes to bird songs, as well as most of our educational trunk materials, which make them easier for teachers to use. And, we just sent out a flier promoting all our new educational information to every teacher in the Flathead Valley.

Kathy Ross continued to educate our board and members on the many things we can do on our own to help birds from recycling to planting native shrubs, trees, and other flowers in our back yards. Carole Jorgensen reminded us about the value of dead and down wood for many species as cover and food, and asked us to write letters to our representa-

tives in government.

Yes, Flathead Audubon learned new tricks and made great lemonade during this year. Now moving forward we will face the challenge of retaining and strengthening our support for natural landscapes, of promoting better understanding of the important role that birds play in our culture and ecosystems, and encouraging continued action to reduce our impacts on birds and preserve their habitats.

One result of the pandemic is that folks have turned to gardening, birding, exploring more than ever! Audubon organizations across the country found that interest and participation grew and as did members' hunger for birding opportunities, bird identification, and back yard habitat information. As we return to the "new normal" we will be trying to find ways to encourage these new-found interests and get these people involved also in learning more about birds and our natural environment, and in supporting conservation.

We are offering a variety of spring and summer field trips to meet this need, and hope that by fall we can return to in-person public meetings in a larger venue at the United Way campus. But we also plan to retain remote learning and participation opportunities. We are looking for new ideas and opportunities to keep this momentum going. Perhaps you have an interest in serving on one of the committees or as a board member?

Many many thanks to our outstanding board members, committee members, and other friends and partners of Flathead Audubon. You made this one of Flathead Audubon's most productive years. Now, go out and plant your favorite native shrub!

**Field trips continued from page 6****WARBLER "WEEKDAYS" at TALLY LAKE, Tuesday June 8- Thursday June 10.**

This year's Tally Lake campout is scheduled for Tuesday, June 8 (arrive after 12 PM) to Thursday, June 10 (Checkout by 11:00 AM). There is space for RV's and tents for those who want to spend the nights. This is an ideal time of year to find a wide variety of migrant and resident birds; most notable is that virtually all of the warbler species which can be found in NW Montana are found here. Several of our expert birders will be available to lead us around the campground. Plenty of other activities can be enjoyed as well. There is a covered pavilion for rainy weather and a fire ring for warmth and grates for cooking. We will have an optional potluck meal Wednesday evening around 6 PM. Please bring something to share if

you want to join in. All other meals are up to you. Someone will show up Tuesday afternoon to get a fire going, scout the area, and start creating a bird list. Please bring firewood if you have it and camp chairs to sit around the fire. We need to know roughly how many people will attend so that, if there are enough, we can get a speaker on Wednesday afternoon to tell us about current research being done at the lake. So please call Jill or Mike Fanning at 862-8070 or [shrdlu@centurytel.net](mailto:shrdlu@centurytel.net) if you plan to come or if you have any questions. Masks are optional and social distancing is requested. Cost of camping is FREE, courtesy of FAS. Just tell them at the gate that you are with Flathead Audubon at the pavilion.

**Natural Events To See This Month:**

*Vaux's Swifts roost in large hollow trees. See them at Owen Sowerwine Natural Area and Avalanche Creek in Glacier National Park.*



## Thank You!

...to all those that have made donations to Flathead Audubon.

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.

## Amazon Smile

Sign up for AmazonSmile for your online shopping and benefit FAS. A portion of each purchase goes to FAS when you select them as your recipient. Also, AmazonSmile is now available in a shopping app for Android users.

1. Visit <https://smile.amazon.com>.
2. Sign in with your Amazon.com credentials.
3. Choose a charitable organization to receive donations, or search for the charity of your choice.
4. Select your charity.

## Two Save the Date Announcements for Fall 2021

- ◆ Birds of Prey Festival—Saturday, September 18
- ◆ OSNA Workday—watch for the date in the September Piliated Post or check the website <https://flatheadaudubon.org>.



## 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+
- Osprey Donation, \$500+
- Snowy Owl Donation, \$250+
- Merlin Donation, \$100+
- Kestrel Donation, \$50+
- My Own Vision, amount my choice

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## FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY DIRECTORY

### OFFICERS

President	Gael Bissell	<a href="mailto:gael@flatheadaudubon.org">gael@flatheadaudubon.org</a> 406-261-2255
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Past President	Kay Mitchell	<a href="mailto:kay@flatheadaudubon.org">kay@flatheadaudubon.org</a>
Secretary	Pam Willison	<a href="mailto:pam@flatheadaudubon.org">pam@flatheadaudubon.org</a>
Treasurer	Rod Walette	<a href="mailto:rod@flatheadaudubon.org">rod@flatheadaudubon.org</a>

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Bob Lee [bob@flatheadudubon.org](mailto:bob@flatheadudubon.org)

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the

# Pileated Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

P.O. Box 9173, Kalispell, MT 59904-9173

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The Flathead Audubon Society is affiliated with the National Audubon Society and Montana Audubon <https://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 [linda@flatheadaudubon.org](mailto:linda@flatheadaudubon.org).**

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



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Membership Individual or Family

- Basic Membership ————— \$25  
Pays for newsletter and operating costs
- Supporting Membership ————— \$40  
Extra \$15 funds local projects such as  
Conservation Education and  
Owen Sowerwine Natural Area
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New member?     Renewal?

If you wish to receive a paper copy by  
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