



Pileated Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

October 2021
VOLUME 46, NUMBER 2

Golden Eagle



Wallpapers.gg

THANK YOU to all who donated to Flathead Audubon in the Great Fish Community Challenge! You and the Flathead community donated an amazing \$24,508 by the Sept. 17th deadline; soon the Whitefish Community Foundation will add a considerable match to these contributions. We will post the total Great Fish Challenge results on our website and in the next newsletter. Thank you! *Cory Davis, President*

President's Column By Cory Davis

Happy autumn everyone! I'm your new Flathead Audubon President, Cory Davis. The first thing I would like to do is to thank our outgoing President, Gael Bissell. Her term was hijacked by the pandemic which forced us to rethink how we do everything from meetings and field trips to classroom learning. Gael kept us focused on our mission as we all learned to adapt, and we've come out stronger on the other side (well, almost other side?). Fortunately for me, Gael has agreed to stay on our Executive Committee as I'll be leaning on her knowledge and experience. Thank you, Gael, for your leadership during these strange times!

Also, a big thank you to all of our returning and new board members! I especially want to thank our new Vice President Darcy Thomas for stepping up and filling that important role. Darcy brings such energy and enthusiasm to everything she does. We're also fortunate to have two new Dans (well one of them is returning). Dan Casey and Dan Kotter both bring extensive experience in avian science and management and we are so lucky to have them.

I am also happy to report that FAS has managed to keep our heads above water financially thanks to so many of you that donated during this year's Great Fish Challenge! With matching funds we'll easily meet our goal of \$25,000. Funds will be used to support our outstanding Conservation/Education Program, Jewel Basin Hawk Watch, Owen Sowerwine Natural Area, and next year's Birds of Prey

Festival. It has been so wonderful to make this our only annual fundraiser and not have to pester our members multiple times a year. Thank you to everyone that donated to the many important non-profits in our Valley this year and to the Whitefish Community Foundation for organizing such an inspiring event!

Our Jewel Basin Hawk Watch has gotten off to a very strong start this year. The biggest surprise so far was a kettle of 23 Broad-winged Hawks that came through on September 14. That's more individuals of this mostly eastern species than we usually get all season! If the weather is promising and you're up for a strenuous hike, join our counters up on the ridge just below Mt. Aeneas. If you can't make it up the ridge, you can also follow along with the count from your own computer by using this link: <https://www.dunkadoo.org/explore/flathead-audubon/jewel-basin-2021>. If you would like more information, contact Dan Casey at (406) 270-5941 and see his update on page 6.

Unfortunately, we'll be hosting our October General Meeting virtually again (see page 3). We're going to take it month by month and hopefully by early next year maybe we'll be able to meet in person again.

Late summer and fall are always interesting times to be out birding. You never know what you might find as wayward birds, especially juveniles, can show up anywhere. October 9 is the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's eBird Big Day (page 7). So, get out there and explore!



Provided by Cory Davis

OCTOBER FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

- Monday October 4, 2021. 6 PM. FAS Board of Directors Meeting.** Contact Cory Davis for location.
- Monday, October 11, 2021. 7 PM. Flathead Audubon General Meeting,** will be held digitally with video attendance by Zoom, audio by phone. See page 3 for how to participate.
- Sunday October 3, 9 AM-6 PM (approximately). Jewel Basin Hawk Watch Trip.** See page 7.
- Wednesday October 6, 7:15 AM-9:30 AM. Sandhill Crane viewing at West Valley.** See page 7.
- Saturday October 9, 9 AM - Noon. Owen Sowerwine Work Day.** See page 5.
- Saturday October 23, 8:00 AM-12:00 noon. Owen Sowerwine Natural Area Trip.** See page 7.

BIRD OF THE MONTH

Sandhill Crane

by Margaret Parodi

Sandhill Cranes are truly magnificent birds and are usually seen in large, awe-inspiring flocks. They have a very distinctive loud, rattling bugle-like call that is memorable and are also known for their ritualistic dancing and leaping displays during the courtship and mating season. Sandhill cranes have been around for a long time which is another reason that I find them so fascinating. Fossils from the Macaspahlt Shell pit in Florida have been dated at 2.5 million years. Geologic time!

Flocks of Sandhill Cranes move through the Flathead valley in both spring and fall during their semi-annual migration. The small pothole lakes in the West Valley and Smith Lake area offer ideal places for feeding in adjacent agricultural lands and overnight resting at the ponds. It is the only migration stop in this region and the wetlands are an important rest stop in their journey in the spring to nesting grounds farther north in Canada and Alaska and in their fall return to their winter grounds which include Bosque del Apache in New Mexico and Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge in Texas. Some birds do stay here and nest although the majority go farther north. While the migration through our region is impressive, it does not compare with areas along the Platte River in Nebraska where in March, 500,000 or more cranes eat and rest while migrating to Canada. They typically feed on corn and other grains in surrounding areas and rest on the sandbars along the river at night. This is also a time when the single cranes look for mates.

Sandhill cranes are one of the largest birds and can reach 46 inches tall with a wingspan of 77 inches and weigh 10.5 lbs. They are a tall, heavy grey-bodied bird with a bare crimson forehead and white cheeks, a long pointed black beak, and long, thin legs and neck. They have a very distinctive loud bugling call that can be heard at distance. The loud trumpet-like call is produced by the windpipe that coils into the sternum giving it a lower pitch, extra volume, and reverberations. Spring brings

the courtship and breeding season. They are known for their bowing, wing-flapping and energetic dancing and leaping. This is often accompanied by calling.

Sandhill cranes form bonds that last for life. However, if one dies, the other will find a new mate.

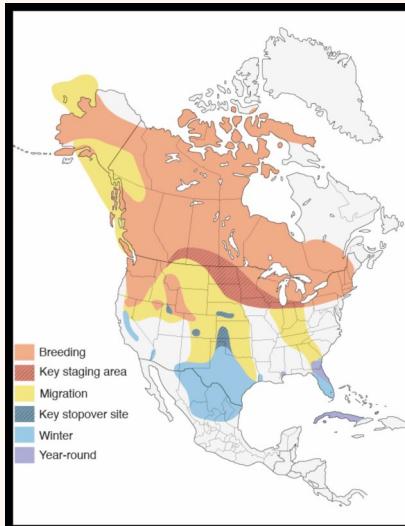
Nests are made in small wetlands, often in the water, using a variety of local plant material such as cattails, grasses, and reeds. Nests are quite large and are 4 feet or more in diameter. Normally two eggs are laid and the incubation period is about a month. The young are called colts, probably because they can walk almost immediately. They

are covered in a rusty brown downy fuzz and because of this the parents preen themselves by rubbing mud on their feathers so that they, too, take on a rusty brown-grey color. Sadly, usually only one colt survives to adulthood. Sandhill cranes eat a large variety of food and are considered omnivores. They feed on land or in shallow marshes and eat a large quantity of seeds and grains, but also berries, tubers, small vertebrates and invertebrates, insects, snails and even small mammals.

Sandhill cranes live and breed in wetlands often surrounded by upland areas of bushes and trees. While the birds tend to be territorial and defensive during the nesting and breeding season, they typically become more social afterward and it is common to see large groups feeding together in grain fields or roosting together at night near wetlands in the late summer and early fall. Colts accompany their parents to winter grounds and stay with their parents for 9-10 months. The colts reach sexual maturity in about two years and then begin to search for a mate.

Breeding can start at 2 years, but is often later. The life-span of cranes is 20 or more years, although one remarkable crane that was banded in Wyoming lived to be 36!

Sandhill crane populations are numerous, even increasing in number and are not currently threatened. However, it is extremely important that
continued on page 6



October Program

Two Out of Three Ain't Bad: Forest Carnivore Monitoring in the Swan, Clearwater, and Blackfoot Valleys presented by Mark Ruby

As part of the Collaborated Forest Landscape Restoration Program, the USFS engaged in multi-party forest carnivore inventory and monitoring across the Swan, Clearwater and Blackfoot Valleys between 2013 and 2016. The target species for detection were wolverine, fisher and Canada lynx. The methods utilized non-invasive winter survey methods across the 1.5 million acres and revealed some insightful results regarding the detection methods and the distribution of target species across the landscape. The monitoring and detection methodology has contributed to additional forest carnivore monitoring approaches in western Montana and some exciting new techniques for detection of

otherwise elusive forest carnivores.

A Kalispell Native, Mark Ruby has maintained a small home range in western Montana. Mark completed his undergraduate degree in Wildlife Biology from the University of Montana and received his Master's Degree from there as well. Mark has worked for the past 12 years as wildlife biologist for the Flathead Forest on the Swan Lake Ranger District. His work has included habitat management on National Forest Lands, collaboration amongst public, agency and partners, plus environmental analysis for multiple resource management. Mark lives in Kalispell with his wife and two sons.



How to Attend the October 11 FAS General Meeting

Time: October 11, 2021, 7:00 PM Mountain Time (US and Canada)

You can attend this meeting by Zoom or telephone.
For information on how to do this contact cory@flatheadaudubon.org

A video of Dave Manuwal's presentation at our September 13, 2021 meeting, as well as videos of presentations from earlier meetings 2020-21, are available at <https://flatheadaudubon.org/videos>.

Flathead Audubon General Meeting Election Results

As a result of the election conducted via Zoom during the General Meeting on September 13, we are pleased to report that Flathead Audubon has some new officers and Board members. Cory Davis was elected to the office of President, and Darcy Thomas was elected to the office of Vice-President. Both will serve for two years. Jake Bramante and Derrick Rathe were re-elected to serve another 3-year term as direc-

tors. Kay Mitchell and Dan Casey will rejoin the Board and serve 3-year terms. A special welcome goes out to Dan Kotter who was elected to the Board of Directors for the first time, and will serve a 3-year term. Jan Metzmaker decided not run for re-election to the Board, and we want to offer a "thank-you" for her many years of service and great public relations work.

by Pam Willison, Secretary

Dan Kotter—Newly Elected to Board of Directors

I have lived in the Flathead / Glacier area for roughly 10 years while working for the NPS, USGS, Glacier Park Boat Co, and Univ. of Montana. Most of my work is related to Ecology, especially the abiotic role in ecosystem processes. I value avian ecology through the lens of the migratory and niche-use hard science as well as the educational and community conservation framework. Connecting bird occupancy and diversity to NW Montana conservation planning is just as important to connect the storytelling of migrato-

ry birds and ecological connections to both older and younger generations. I have bird lists throughout the Flathead and will usually change my plans for rare bird sightings (but still haven't viewed a Snowy Owl...). I have been in Ecuador for a little under a year while visiting, volunteering, and interacting with researchers on several bird reserves and motivated to contribute new ideas for conservation and education.

by Dan Kotter

Conservation Corner

by Carole Jorgensen

It's Fall Migration. Ok, if you are a hummingbird, your southerly migration may have begun in late June. If you are one of several species of waterfowl, you might hang around until late December. The Fall Migration is much less distinct than Spring Migration, and flyways are less refined according to an article by Audubon (<https://www.audubon.org/magazine/july-august-2009/fall-migration-hot-spots>) *Migrating birds probably cross every square mile of land and water in North America. So billions of migrants are spread across millions of square miles, and the magnitude of the passage often escapes our notice.*

What can we do to help these critters on their journey? Artificial lights can cause much confusion to our feathered travelers, causing them to unnecessarily burn much-needed energy required to make their journeys of thousands of miles (often without eating en route). Enjoy the darkness of fall by turning off your yard lights, shutting your drapes at night, and let them navigate by the sun, moon and stars.

Also give them some opportunities to drink and bathe. Water is very important to help them on their way. For those of you who are not in bear country, consider providing some suet or fat-full seeds and

nuts to help them build a food reserve for their flights that may take many days or weeks.

As always, plant some native vegetation to help all of our native critters and insects. Don't forget the critters the birds depend on: Leave some standing or dead down wood, brush piles and bark mulch around your yard to provide over-wintering habitat for insects and other tasty critters.

* * * * *

For those of you (hopefully ALL of you) who are tracking Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) issues:

The changes proposed **under the previous Administration** to weaken the MBTA were to take effect in March, 2021, but the current Administration proposed to set back those changes. Many court cases are whirling around these issues. A solution bill H.R.4833 **called the Migratory Bird Conservation Act**, was proposed **and introduced** in the House of Representatives by Alan Lowenthal of California. **Little action has taken place since July, 2021.** Consider nudging our Representative, Matt Rosendale, (DC Office Phone: 202-225-3211) to support this bill (<https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/4833?s=1&r=15>).

Flathead Valley Bird Report

by Dan Casey

Rare and Notables – Aug/Sept

Cold fronts were few and far between, and correspondingly, the quantity of fall migrants seemed low. But several rarities were found, including two county firsts (Chestnut-sided Warbler, Ruddy Turnstone). Sandhill Cranes began to gather in the West Valley as the last hummingbirds, swallows and Ospreys moved on to points south.

8/19 – **Anna's Hummingbird** (through 9/01), Creston (David M.) Another in Kalispell (Harriet M.)

8/20 – **Chestnut-sided Warbler** (county first), Columbia Falls (Bridger D.)

8/24 – **Ruddy Turnstone** (county first), West Valley Bird and Wildlife Viewing Area (Dan C.)

8/29 – **Bohemian Waxwing** (early), Jewel Basin Hawk Watch (Joshua C.)

9/02 – **Lapland Longspur**, Jewel Basin Hawk Watch (Josh C.) Another in Somers, 9/03 (Dan C.)

9/07 – **Yellow-bellied x Red-naped Sapsucker** (hybrid), Jewel Basin Hawk Watch (Joshua C.)

9/10 – **Palm Warbler**, Lost Trail National Wildlife Refuge (Craig H., Rod W.)

9/10 – **Sabine's Gull**, West Valley ponds (Dan C.)

9/12 – **Short-billed Dowitcher**, Creston Wetland (Craig H.)

9/14 – **American White Pelican** (4), Creston Wetland (Craig H.)

9/14 – **Broad-winged Hawk** (30) Jewel Basin Hawk Watch (Joshua C., Bo C.)

9/16 – **Short-billed (Mew) Gull** West Valley Bird and Wildlife Viewing Area (Mani G.)

What to Expect – September 2021

Late September through mid-October is a true migratory transition period. Most neotropical migrants have left, although large, diverse flocks of sparrows can still be found. Waterfowl diversity and abundance also begins to increase, with the first Tundra Swans and scoters often appearing by mid-October. Harbingers of winter include the first arrivals Harlan's Red-tailed Hawks, Bohemian Waxwings, Iceland (Thayer's) Gulls, and Rough-legged Hawks. It is prime time for stray Anna's Hummingbirds (for those wishful thinkers who have left feeders out).

Flathead Audubon Education Update

Tell an educator you know about Flathead Audubon Educational Trunks!

Flathead Audubon Society has educational trunks available for check-out again, with materials for teachers, home-schoolers, and others interested in



Pre-school bird ID

birds, their habitats, and conservation. All trunks are free of charge.

The trunks and materials can be used to build, enhance, and bring a local tie into a class science unit. These hands-on and interactive materials will provide students with a unique and fun learning opportunity.

Audubon Trunks are located at Lone Pine State Park. Make a trunk reservation online at <https://flatheadaudubon.org/learn/educational-trunks/> by clicking on the name of the trunk you would like to reserve, then selecting the dates you would like to reserve on the calendar, and fill in the trunk reserva-

tion form. Lone Pine Visitor Center Staff will assist you with checkouts and returns. Call them at 406-755-2706 Ext. 2, or email [Julia Smit](mailto:Julia.Smit@mt.gov) ([julia.smit@mt.gov](mailto:Julia.Smit@mt.gov)) for directions and help. You may request delivery and pick-up by an Audubon Volunteer Ambassador.

You may also request a classroom visit and lesson from Flathead Audubon conservation educator, Denny Olson, by emailing him at AudubonEducator@gmail.com.

Trunks available for check-out include:

Chickadee Who's Who and Bird ID Basics
Owls of Montana
Snowy Owls
Riparian Wetlands-Birds and the River
Bird Anatomy & Preschool/Early Primary Costume
Common Birds of the Flathead
Bird Field Studies (with field guides and binoculars)
Our Changing Neighborhood Storybook
Cavity Nesters
Hummingbirds

Also available to check out separately are bird skins, feathers, nests and eggs, plush bird toys and puppets, and Growing Native School Gardens.

by Cindy Roberts

Owen Sowerwine Workday October 9

The 2021 the work day for Owen Sowerwine will be held Saturday, October 9, from 9 am to about noon. We would be thrilled to have you join us. Meet in the parking lot of Kalispell Montessori (349 Willow Glen Drive), to say hello (at a safe distance), and to divide up the jobs (because of health concerns, we will not have access to the school building). Then we will regroup at various locations to volunteer a few hours to get some work done. We will work outside at disbursed locations to avoid close contact. We encourage you to maintain a healthy distance and carpool only with family members or while wearing a mask. Wear sturdy footwear and clothing appropriate for the weather, bring a pair of work gloves and some water; at least one person in each group should have bear

spray. A nut bar and sparkling water snack will be provided in the parking lot.

The various jobs (and tools you could bring) include: replacing faded materials in the kiosk display (all materials/tools provided); setting fence posts for the research deer enclosure (work gloves); stacking sticks and small logs at the viewing blinds (work gloves); emptying nesting boxes (mask/nitrile gloves provided); rework edges of ADA trail and bench (bring loppers, shovel, rake, gloves); trail work on Greenridge entrance (bring shovel, rake, pulaski/pick, gloves). If you have questions contact Pam Willison, 406-270-0225 or pam@flatheadaudubon.org. Thanks, and I hope to see you there!!

by Pam Willison

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP NOW!

Please renew your membership in Flathead Audubon by November 11.

Dues for FAS membership are \$25 for a basic membership, \$40 for a supporting membership. This year we really need support for our excellent education program. We are the only organization in the Flathead Valley that offers free environmental education.

You can renew at www.FlatheadAudubon.org or use the membership form on the back of this newsletter. Please include your email address with your renewal so we can email you our Flathead Audubon Fly-by which will bring you occasional FAS updates, notifications, and reminders.

By Mike Fanning

Jewel Basin Hawk Watch – 2021 Fall Season to Date

By Dan Casey



The fourteenth fall season of raptor migration at the Jewel Basin Hawk Watch got off to a great start, with 23 surveys conducted as of September 18th. We have counted 1,249 individuals of 17 species to date as the weather has mostly been forgiving and observers have spent more than 150 hours on site. Highlights of the first half of the season included higher

than usual numbers of several species more common east of the mountains: two Ferruginous Hawks; six Swainson's Hawks; 15 Prairie Falcons; and 38 Broad-winged Hawks. Josh Covill and Bo Crees had 30 Broad-wings on September 14th, a new one-day high for our site.

Here are our season totals as of September 18:

Turkey Vulture	3	Unidentified Accipiter	15	American Kestrel	47
Osprey	5	Broad-winged Hawk	38	Merlin	14
Bald Eagle	18	Swainson's Hawk	6	Peregrine Falcon	11
Northern Harrier	29	Red-tailed Hawk	153	Prairie Falcon	15
Sharp-shinned Hawk	561	Ferruginous Hawk	2	Unidentified Falcon	2
Cooper's Hawk	268	Unidentified Buteo	11	Unidentified Raptor	2
Northern Goshawk	11	Golden Eagle	38	TOTAL:	1,249

Smith Lake Field Trip Report



A morning of bird watching September 8 at Smith Lake in Kila was very successful. Eleven birders joined leader Darcy Thomas; two were visiting from out-of-state; the youngest was 5 years old. It was a bit chill at 41 degrees when we started but warmed up comfortably later in the morning. A haze of smoke surrounded us and gave views of a red sun.

The group saw 31 species including Canada

Goose, Trumpeter Swan, Wood Duck, Northern Shoveler, Mallard, Ring-Necked Duck, Common Goldeneye, Ruddy Duck, American Coot, Killdeer, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Pileated Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, American Kestrel, Black-billed Magpie, American Crow, Common Raven, Black-capped Chickadee, Barn Swallow, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Marsh Wren, European Starling, American Robin, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Yellowthroat, and Western Tanager.

by Darcy Thomas

CHIRPS & SQUAWKS

Highlights from the September 7, 2021 Board of Directors Meeting

- ◆ The Board decided to hold the September and October general meetings virtually, and will evaluate the situation each month to decide how the following meeting will be done.
- ◆ Gael Bissell is working with Linda Hunt to create a fact sheet which offers information for new cat owners about keeping wildlife, particularly birds, safe from cats.
- ◆ Cory Davis reported that the Conservation Easement for Owen Sowerwine is being written, an initial appraisal is being prepared, and that a building envelope has been identified, which would contain any parking or structures. Many thanks to Will Beyer for volunteering over 45 hours in OSNA this summer cutting and bagging houndstongue seed heads.
- ◆ We need for new/more field trip leaders. If interested, contact Margaret Parodi.
- ◆ Cindy Roberts reported that the education trunks will once again be available to classrooms.

Sandhill Crane continued from page 2
their habitat is preserved, especially in areas they use for the essential resting and feeding during the spring and fall migrations. Lead poisoning from spent shotgun pellets can be a concern in some marshes that see heavy waterfowl hunting. Safeguarding areas

through conservation easements, as was done in the West Valley, aids in the preservation of this splendid bird. A public bird viewing area was included in this West Valley conservation easement. It is located north of Reserve off of West Valley Drive. For more information see the Flathead Audubon website.

FALL 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 are highly recommended, and we ask you to not share binoculars or spotting scopes. The number of participants allowed on trips will be limited as will carpooling.

JEWEL BASIN HAWK WATCH, Sunday October 3, 9:00 AM- 6:00 PM (approximately).

Dan Casey will lead a trip to the Jewel Basin Hawk Watch site on Sunday, October 3. October is an ideal time to see Golden Eagles migrating in addition to hawks and other raptors. We expect to see 10 or more different species and several hundred birds if conditions are favorable. Last year we saw 595 birds on 21 Sept, our all-time high count! This trip involves a 2.2 mile hike of moderate difficulty (each way), gaining 1,400 vertical feet from the Jewel Basin parking lot. Attendees should wear sturdy footwear; hiking poles are recommended. Bring binoculars, water, lunch and clothing layers for changing weather conditions (we will cancel or reschedule if weather is unsuitable). The trip is limited to 10 participants. Please contact Dan at (406) 270-5941 to sign up and get more information. Carpooling is encouraged for vaccinated people as the road to the Jewel Basin is rough and parking limited. Time of the trip includes both driving from Bigfork and hiking to the viewing area.

SANDHILL CRANE VIEWING at WEST VALLEY. Wednesday October 6, 7:15-9:30 AM.

View Sandhill Cranes as they stage in the West Valley on their fall migration. See these magnificent birds as they fly in or out of nearby agricultural fields where they feed during the day. The number of participants is limited. For information and to sign up contact trip leader Darcy Thomas darcy@flatheadaudubon.org or (406) 407-8263. **Please note:** This is a time change from information published in the September Post.

OWEN SOWERWINE NATURAL AREA, Saturday October 23, 8:00 AM-12:00 noon.

Join Darcy Thomas for a beautiful autumn walk through OSNA. This is a good place to see woodpeckers, chickadees, nuthatches, goldfinches and juncos. Registration is required and space limited to 10 birders. Please call or text Darcy at (406) 407-8263 or email darcy@flatheadaudubon.org to register.

Upcoming eBird Event: October Big Day!

Twice a year, the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and eBird sponsor Global Big Days, 24-hour opportunities to celebrate birds near and far. This year's fall eBird Big Day will be **Saturday, October 9**. We encourage all Flathead eBirders to submit a variety of checklists on that day.

By taking part in October Big Day you're also joining the second-ever Global Bird Weekend (<https://globalbirding.org/home>) and celebrating World Migratory Bird Day (<https://worldmigratorybirdday.org/>).

Be a part of the global team, and help set a new record for birding. And if you don't submit any checklists, you can still keep an eye on how the lists

are growing in different parts of the world, with reports from more than 160 countries. Stats will be updated in real-time at <https://ebird.org/octoberbigday>.

On October Big Day 2020, more than 32,000 participants submitted 80,400 checklists with 7,128 species. How many checklists and participants will we have this year? No matter where you bird, have fun, stay safe, enjoy the birds you find, and share your sightings on eBird. Your observations will help us better understand global bird populations through products like abundance maps (<https://ebird.org/science/status-and-trends>) brought to you by eBird Science.

by Dan Casey

Natural Events To See This Month:

White-tailed Ptarmigan molt to pure white.

Lead Bullets and Wildlife

By Lewis Young and Kate Stone

With big game rifle hunting season approaching you can help wildlife by switching to non-lead bullets if you are hunter using lead bullets. Lead bullets, even copper jacketed lead bullets, fired from high velocity guns fragment on impact losing 20-40% of their mass when they hit an object. As many as 200 fragments disperse throughout the carcass and are often too small to see. The fragments may permeate the meat you bring home and often riddle the gut piles and carcasses left in the field.

Lead fragments are a problem because avian and mammalian scavengers feed on the gut piles and carcasses and ingest the lead fragments. Overwintering eagles in many parts of Montana test positive for elevated lead levels and several die each year from acute lead poisoning. Evidence from multiple studies points to lead fragments as the culprit behind elevated lead lev-



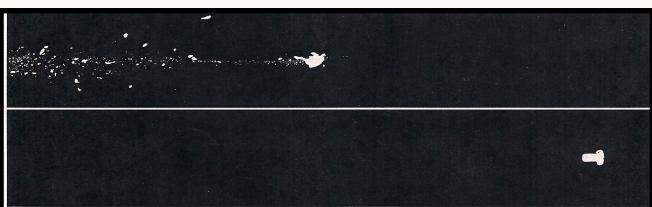
Found near Hamilton MT, 2014, this Bald Eagle died from lead poisoning. It exhibited clinical signs of lead poisoning such as head and wing droop, muscle tremors, and anorexia. Photo courtesy Brooke Tanner, Wild Skies Raptor Center.

els in eagles and other scavengers.

Simply switching to a non-lead bullet makes a difference. A voluntary program in the Jackson Hole area of Wyoming in 2009-2010 to get hunters to switch to non-lead bullets resulted in a corresponding decrease in the blood-lead levels of eagles using the area so it does work.

Non-lead bullets are available in factory loaded ammunition and multiple choices are available to those who handload their own ammunition. They are normally all copper or copper alloys and retain virtually 100% of their weight upon impact. Non-lead ammunition costs about the same as premium lead bullets.

Give our eagles and other wildlife a break and consider switching to non-lead bullets.



X-ray images of lead (top) and non-lead (bottom) bullets shot into a ballistics gel. Photo courtesy Jeremy Roberts/Conservation Media.

Sneezeweed



It's the time of year when common sneezeweed is blooming in Owen Sowerwine, and a person might assume it gets its name because it causes itchy eyes and sneezing in allergy sufferers. However, this native aster acquired the name sneezeweed because it was dried and used as a "snuff", resulting in sneezes that were reportedly to expel evil spirits. Some sources say the treatment was actually for relief of congestion.

Helenium autumnale, the genus name comes from a legend that these flowers sprung from the ground where Helen of Troy shed tears. The

species name *autumnale* is derived from the fact that it blooms in late summer or autumn. It might also be called false sunflower or Helen's flower.

It was recently spotted along the Stillwater River in Owen Sowerwine (see photo), which is appropriate considering it likes moist, and even gravelly, locations. Sneezeweed has a protruding greenish-yellow central disc and 8-21 bright yellow fan-shaped ray florets, tipped with 3 shallow lobes. Although it attracts butterflies and bees, all parts of the plant are toxic to humans when consumed in large quantities. It can also be poisonous to livestock if it is consumed repeatedly over a long period.

Sneezeweed is a welcome splash of color as most other flowers have faded.

by Pam Willison



FLATHEAD AUDUBON MISSION STATEMENT

THE FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY IS A LOCAL CHAPTER
OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY.

- ⇒ OUR MISSION IS TO CONSERVE BIRDS, WILDLIFE HABITAT, AND ECOSYSTEM DIVERSITY.
- ⇒ WE PROMOTE AWARENESS AND APPRECIATION OF THE NATURAL WORLD THROUGH EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND ADVOCACY PROGRAMS.
- ⇒ WE WORK WITH DIVERSE GROUPS AND AGENCIES TO ACHIEVE SOUND DECISIONS ON NATURAL RESOURCE ISSUES.
- ⇒ WHILE FOCUSING OUR EFFORTS IN NORTHWEST MONTANA, WE BELIEVE IN THE PROTECTION OF THE EARTH AND ALL OF ITS INHABITANTS.



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.

Bird Feeders and Bears

 Bird feeders are often a strong attractant to bears especially in the fall when they are trying to fatten up before entering their dens. Please consider not feeding birds until the bears have entered dens which usually happens by the end of November. Other attractants also create conflicts with bears. Montana FWP Bear and Lion Specialist Erik Wenum says "We are urging people to step up their efforts in getting attractants secured; lock up the garbage, put the pet foods inside and pick the fruit. It's unfortunate when we have to kill a bear. It's not something we enjoy doing, but when a bear is fed human foods that is typically the outcome. If residents take responsibility and clean up all attractants, we will have fewer problems and fewer bears will need to be killed." You may contact Erik Wenum at 756-1776 or 250-0062 for more information or to report a bear in your neighborhood.



FAS Financials Available

All of Flathead Audubon's financial reports and balance sheets are available at <https://flatheadaudubon.org/about-us/reports-financials/>.

FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY DIRECTORY

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FAS REP ON MT AUDUBON BOARD

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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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In memory of _____

In honor of _____

Please send a notification of this gift to:

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Please do not acknowledge my gift in the Post

Please make checks payable to:

Flathead Audubon Society

P.O. Box 9173

Kalispell, MT 59904

Your gift is tax deductible.

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 <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.

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



FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY

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
- Additional Donation of \$ _____
Total \$ _____

New member? Renewal?

If you wish to receive a paper copy by USPS check this box.

Dues and donations are tax deductible. Flathead Audubon Society is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Our federal tax ID number is 81-0447830.

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