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# Pileated Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

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Yellowlegs

## President's Column By Gael Bissell

I hope all of you have had a great summer and enjoyed the many warm sunny days, hopefully birding or going on field trips! We were so looking forward to getting back together in person this fall; unfortunately, the Delta variant had something else in mind. Out of an abundance of caution, we have decided to make our public meeting Sept 13<sup>th</sup> **virtual** and not in-person! I am sooooo sorry. However, Dave Manuwal will be presenting an incredible program on cicadas (and birds) – details on page 3. We hope to record the presentation for those who can't attend virtually. And we will also hold elections and share bird stories, Bird Brains, and information about upcoming FAS field trips (page 9), and the fantastic Jewel Basin Hawk Watch 2021 (page 8).

Many of you noted that birding was a little different, maybe even disappointing, this year with fewer songbirds singing or being observed, particularly in June. FAS will be looking to various bird researchers and organizations to see if this was just a fluke due to heat and smoke or part of a trend. See Dan Casey's article "Bird Numbers 2021 Concern Many" on page 5 for more information on this subject.

Flathead Audubon, along with many Flathead Valley non-profits, helped kick off the **Great Fish Community Challenge** that runs **Aug. 5 – Sept 17** and is sponsored by the Whitefish Community Foundation. This event helps support over 60 non-profit organizations in the Flathead! We encourage you to go to [https://whitefishcommunityfoundation.org/great-](https://whitefishcommunityfoundation.org/great-fish/)



[fish/](#) to find out more about the event and learn how you can make a difference. This is our second year in the Great Fish. The Whitefish Community Foundation will again provide a percentage match on the first \$20,000 raised by each participating nonprofit organization. For information on how you can donate to Flathead Audubon through the Great Fish Community Challenge, see Kay Mitchell's article on page 8.

Funds allocated to Flathead Audubon support our outstanding Conservation/Education Program, Jewel Basin Hawk Watch, Owen Sowerwine Natural Area, and next year's Birds of Prey Festival.

All non-profit organizations need energetic, informed, and responsible Boards of Directors. To create and maintain such a Board,

one that is in touch with its mission and members, as I believe Flathead Audubon has done for almost 45 years, we need your input and your votes!

We will be holding our **annual election at our September 13 digital meeting**. Our excellent slate of candidates is described elsewhere in this newsletter with Cory Davis running for President and Darcy Thomas as Vice President. Learn about these new candidates and others running for the board. If you are interested in joining this organization as a volunteer, committee member, or board member, contact Bob Lee or myself. Please join the meeting by Zoom or phone and vote!

Finally, we invite members and other raptor enthusiasts to join our Primary Hawk Watch

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### SEPTEMBER FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

**Tuesday September 7, 2021. 6 PM. FAS Board of Directors Meeting.** Wayfarer's State Park Pavilion. You may bring your own dinner at 5:30. Feel free to come earlier for a walk around the Wayfarer's State Park trail.

**Monday, September 13, 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.

**Wednesday, September 8, 8 AM-11AM. Birding at Smith Lake.** See page 9.

**Sunday September 19, 9:00 AM- 6:00 PM (approximately). Jewel Basin Hawk Watch.** See page 9.

**Wednesday September 29, 3:30 PM-7:30 PM and October 6, 7 AM-11 AM. Sandhill Crane viewing at West Valley.** See page 9.

# BIRD OF THE MONTH

## American Pipit

by Darcy Thomas

My first introduction to the American Pipit *Anthus rubescens* was in the Skagit valley in Washington state where I saw a small flock foraging for insects in the winter. They were a rather nondescript brown bird that I did not notice at first glance as they blended in so well to the agricultural field I was passing. They reminded me of shorebirds because of their foraging behavior although they were more like sparrows in appearance. I didn't think too much about them other than learning to identify them and observing their habitat. Later that year my daughter and I took a hike to Sunrise Point in Mount Rainier National Park. We hiked to a beautiful subalpine meadow and, lo and behold, there we saw a small brown bird that I knew was a pipit but, what was it doing up here? It was quick stepping in the short grasses and plants while foraging for insects. I had to learn more about this amazing bird that could be found in such diverse habitats.

It turns out that the pipit I saw on Mount Rainier may not have even been eating live insects. As lower valleys warm up, air rises carrying insects along for the ride. They land on the snowpack, die and freeze in place. Pipits use this natural event as a feeding strategy to simply walk around while dining on the frozen treats.

American Pipits are one of the few American songbirds that nest in both the Arctic Tundra and subalpine meadows. Males arrive first, singing pi-pit, pi-pit, pi-pit as they fly. When females arrive, the breeding displays begin with males flying up to 100 feet in the air, then parachuting to earth in a spiral, tail feathers fanned out and cocked upward, wings spread out, singing all the while. This display attracts potential mates while marking their territory. Male pipits are highly territorial and often clash with other males, chasing each other as they display in flight. Territory size is dependent on food availability and may be as little as 1/3 acre to as large as 5 acres. Females build a nest cup on the ground with dried grasses and sedges brought to her by her mate. She places her nest on open ground protected somewhat by vegetation, a rise in the ground or a rock, and lines it with fine grass and feathers. She will lay 3-7 eggs and begin incubating them. Foraging alone, her mate will bring food to her, passing it to her on the wing while fluttering in the air away from the nest.



Insects and their larvae are the primary staple of the American Pipit diet. They supplement this diet with spiders and ticks as well as seeds and other plant material, especially in the fall and winter. In marine habitats they add marine worms and small crustaceans to their diet. They have no trouble foraging on unstable snow or mudflats because of a wonderful

adaptation to their feet which have a long hind toe called a hallux, capped with a toenail. American Pipits are pretty unremarkable in appearance being overall brownish above and pale below with most subspecies showing streaks along the breasts and sides. Their bills are short and thin, less heavy than a sparrow. While pipits are found in the open and are not all that shy, they can be rather difficult

to see as they blend into the background. You are likely to hear them before you see them as they call during flight.

American Pipits are highly migratory. In the fall, beginning in mid-September through October, they leave their Arctic or subalpine breeding grounds, traveling during the day in loose flocks on their way to the southern United States south to the tip of Central America. They return in the spring with peak migration occurring from late March to early May. Most people see pipits during migration or throughout the winter months where they can be found foraging in flocks in agricultural fields and other open areas. They are often spotted on airfields and grassy sports fields, beaches and mudflats. They also like to forage along the sandy or muddy margins of rivers, lakes and reservoirs. If at first, you think you have spotted a shorebird, look again. You may be looking at an American Pipit. They have a similar foraging habit of walking briskly while jutting their heads forward and making lots of quick turns. American Pipits are often seen with Horned Larks who like similar habitat.

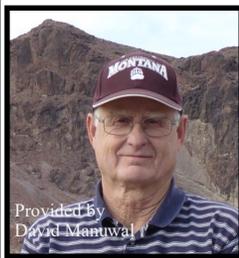
While American Pipits may be declining in numbers, they continue to be widespread and common and are of low conservation concern. These are pretty resilient birds. High in the Beartooth mountains of Wyoming a snowstorm buried 17 pipit nests for 24 hours. All of the nestlings that were 11 days old or older survived and a few of the younger nestlings survived as well. So, go out and enjoy the fall weather. Keep an eye out for the American Pipit and listen for its' call – Pi-pit, pi-pit, pi-pit!

# September Program

## The 17 Year Itch the emergence of Brood X Cicadas in parts of the Eastern U.S.

presented by David Manuwal

Dr. David Manuwal, who has studied birds in the western US for over 60 years, will be the featured speaker at the Monday, September 13 virtual meeting of the Flathead Audubon Society at 7 PM. (See below for how to join the Zoom meeting.)



Provided by David Manuwal

Cicadas are large insects that occur all over the United States but there are only 5 species in Montana., but many more in the eastern part of the country. Dave visited Indiana in June and was able to experience this impressive emergence first-hand. He will talk about what he ob-

served, the natural history of cicadas and the impact of birds on cicadas.

He received his undergraduate degree from Purdue University and a Master's degree working with Dick Taber at the University of Montana in 1968. He received a PhD studying marine birds at UCLA in 1972. Dave taught and conducted bird research for 41 years at the University of Washington's School of Environmental and Forest Sciences. After retiring in 2013 as Emeritus Professor of Wildlife Science, he is now an affiliate professor at UM. He now resides in Kalispell with his wife Naomi.



### How to Attend the September 13 FAS General Meeting

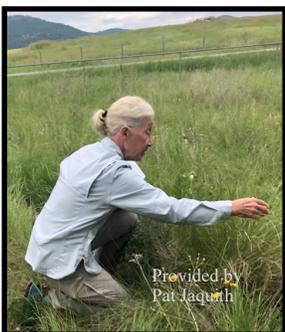
Time: September 13, 2021, 7:00 PM Mountain Time (US and Canada)

You can attend this meeting by Zoom or telephone.

For information on how to do this contact [cory@flatheadaudbon.org](mailto:cory@flatheadaudbon.org)

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

## Pat Jaquith receives Conservation Achievement Award for volunteering



Provided by Pat Jaquith

Pat Jaquith was born and raised on a small family dairy farm in Vermont. She says she spent every spare moment (and there weren't many) studying plants and other natural wonders in the woods on their property. As a result, she fell in love with wild orchids at a young age, and has looked for and appreciated them throughout

her life. After she left the farm, she pursued other interests. She became a mathematics teacher to college students, and became active in planning and zoning issues with an eye toward conservation. But retirement and family led her to the Flathead Valley and back to the woods. And here she became a self-trained expert botanist and an astute observer of

birds. She has used these skills in a variety of volunteer efforts to promote conservation here in our Valley.

Pat has become Flathead Audubon's resident botanist, helping us with plant field work and guides, and actively helping with invasive plant removal and restoration in Owen Sowerwine Natural Area. She has spent over 150 hours working on removal of the exotic invasive common buckthorn at OSNA since it was first identified there 4 years ago - by Pat herself! She has used up many, many cans of pink marking paint to identify the invasive buckthorn and guide the cutting crews. And she continues to be our touchstone in the plants of the area.

Pat has also put in long hours doing volunteer surveying of birds. While living in the west valley for the past 6 years she has been monitoring the birds in the West Valley Ponds on a daily basis. Pat and friends have done the Christmas bird count in

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## Remembering Jean Robocker

Jean Robocker passed away on June 28, 2021, at the age of 98.

Jean was a founding member of Flathead Audubon. She played a central role in starting and growing the FAS education program. She was Chair of the FAS Education program in 1977 when FAS was founded, then again in 1984-86, and then became head of "Clubs and Schools Presentations" for 9 years, 1986 to 1995. During those years she spent many hours visiting local schools and community organizations to bring bird education to young and old through stories and slides, study skins of local species, and her own hand-drawn images of our local birds. During those 9 years she also served on the FAS Board of Directors.

In 2013 Jean was presented with Flathead Audubon's Conservation Achievement Recognition for a lifetime of conservation education and land stewardship efforts." In addition to her work as a bird educator for Flathead Audubon, the award cites her 7 years as a member of the Flathead Community College Board of Directors, and her service on the Montana State Board of Education for a 3-year term. Her land stewardship efforts began in the 1950s when Jean and her husband Eugene established a 160-acre dairy farm on a bend of the Flathead River. They set aside a portion of their land to be left pristine as a place for native plants and local wildlife. And then in 1973 they put a Conservation Easement on these 160 acres with the help of The Nature Conservancy. It was one of the first of its kind in the Flathead Valley. A few years later an additional 90 acres of farm land were placed in another Conservation Easement, with the assistance of the Montana Land Reliance. These two easements permanently protect over 250 acres of prime river bottom lands from development, preserving a wonderful riparian area for wildlife and birds for the future.

Jean was one of the best birders in the Valley.



She bubbled with enthusiasm when describing her latest sightings or recounting the antics of the birds in her yard or reporting the spring return of the swifts that nested in her chimney. She was part of the group that started the Bigfork Christmas Bird Count in 1975, and went on to participate in every Bigfork Count held since then. In recent years, when she couldn't walk her usual territory, she participated as a feeder-watcher, counting the birds that showed up in her yard. (When the circle was drawn in 1975 she made

sure it included her place.)

Jean's other interests included weaving and Dutch Bantam chickens. She was a founding member of the Alpine Spinners and Weavers Guild in the Flathead Valley and owner of Allen Looms. And for many years she raised prize Dutch Bantams behind her house and shipped them to buyers throughout the US. She regularly took them to poultry shows around the country – carrying them with her on the airplane in boxes. In 1986 she became a founding member of the American Dutch Bantam Society.

Jean was a warm, funny, smart, energetic woman who loved to tell people about her birds - the wild kind she loved to observe and teach others about, and the chicken kind she raised in her yard and took travelling in boxes. She started Flathead Audubon's tradition of taking bird education into local schools and helped shape our now 45-year-old Bigfork Christmas Bird Count. She was a valued friend to so many of us in Flathead Audubon. We are fortunate to have had her in our midst for so long.

*by Linda Winnie*

(Some information above was drawn from previous Pileated Post articles about Jean by Robin Maggadino (Nov 2003) and Leslie Kehoe (May 2013), available at <https://flatheadaudubon.org/about-us/pileated-post-archive>.

## CHIRPS & SQUAWKS

### Highlights from the May 3, 2021 Board of Directors Meeting

- ◆ The Board of Directors reviewed and adopted the Financial Policy, which had been compiled, reviewed and edited by the Finance Committee. Some individual items in the policy required a motion. All of those items were well explained by Treasurer Rod Wallethe, and the motions made and passed. The components of the plan will be implemented at the earliest feasible date.
- ◆ The Budget for 2021-2022 was thoroughly reviewed, and all questions resolved, so the budget as approved and adopted.
- ◆ Cindy Roberts presented the Educational Strategic Plan for 2021-22, and it was approved.
- ◆ Updates were given on many projects: Bad Rock Conservation Easement, Birds of Prey Festival, Jewel Basin Hawk Watch, Day of Giving, Field Trip attendance and liability form, and Membership data management.

## Bird Numbers in 2021 Concern Many

A number of the most active Flathead area birders commented that overall numbers of spring migrant and local breeding bird species were noticeably low in 2021. Sparrows, warblers, swallows and flycatchers were conspicuously late to arrive, and present in lower densities than expected in most habitats. It remains to be seen if we will see this trend continue in future years, but when viewed in the context of “3 billion birds lost” (<https://abcbirds.org/3-billion-birds/>), there is truly cause for concern. Some have suggested that the low numbers across the West were due in part to the large-scale die-off reported from the desert southwest in 2020 (<https://www.aba.org/the-data-behind-mysterious-bird-deaths-in-new-mexico/>).

From my own perspective, I was surprised how quiet the rich riparian habitats of the Sonny Boon trail in Somers were this spring, and how few Savannah Sparrows could be found in the lower valley habitats where they are typically abundant. I posted the following to the Montana Bird Discussion FaceBook group on 18 May:

*Anyone else getting concerned about the lack of abundance and diversity of long-distance migrant landbirds this spring? Not only are arrival dates running generally late, numbers seem low across the board. While there is always annual variation in migra-*

*tion patterns, I have been quite surprised by just how empty many prime habitats seem to be here in the Flathead Valley.*

This generated quite a list of responses:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2191128444282720/posts/4231504593578418>

And I've received similar comments on this issue from several other experienced birders.

Scott Somershoe, USFWS Denver, who runs several eastern Montana Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) routes, said that several species, most notably Sprague's Pipits (a Species of Concern) were much less abundant than last year.

Ed Harper, long-time Montana birder and Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) volunteer also noted that many species were in lower than expected numbers on his south-central and north-eastern Montana BBS routes.

Flathead Valley birder Craig Hohenberger also noted similar trends on the Kalispell BBS, which runs from Smith Lake to Lower Valley.

Similar stories abounded across social media platforms this Spring. But it will be interesting to see if data from standardized surveys, banding and citizen science projects confirm these apparent trends, at local, regional or continental scales. *by Dan Casey*

## Flathead Valley Bird Report

by Dan Casey

### Rare and Notables – Summer 2021

May-August 2021 was characterized by late arrivals and low numbers of migrant songbirds throughout valley habitats. Some highlights included the first local records of Lesser Goldfinch, and the third western MT record of Purple Martin, a rare summer record of Purple Finch, and higher than usual numbers of late migrant Snow Geese and White-faced Ibises.

5/03 – **Purple Martin** (male) West Valley Wildlife Viewing Area (Dan C.)

5/08 – **Dunlin** (2) West Valley Ponds (bj W.)

5/08 – **Snow Goose** (78) Lingering flock all spring at West Valley Ponds (m. ob.)

5/13 – **Greater White-fronted Goose** (1) West Valley Ponds (Dick W.)

5/17 – **Iceland (Thayer's) Gull** (late) Flathead County landfill (Dan C.)

5/17 – **Eurasian Wigeon** (late) Happy Valley area (Bob S.)

5/23 – **Loggerhead Shrike** (1) Whitefish area (Shannon and Bridger D.)

5/29 – **White-faced Ibis** (49) West Valley Ponds (Dick W.)

6/19 – **Purple Finch** (singing male) Camas Creek, Glacier NP (Joshua C.)

6/25 – **Lesser Goldfinch** (5) Owen Sowerwine Natural Area (Alex. L., via eBird)

6/26 – **Ovenbird** (single male) Tally Lake Road (Kit P.)

7/17 – **Broad-winged Hawk** (adult) Wild Horse Island; very rare in summer (Doug M.)

8/07 – **Lesser Goldfinch** (2) Creston (Craig H.)

### What to Expect – September 2021

Late August through September offers perhaps the greatest diversity of southbound migrants through the Flathead Valley. Early during this period, we still have flocks of swallows staging for their departure, and juvenile hummingbirds visiting our flowers and feeders. Shorebird migration, well underway for over a month, continues as the first cold fronts of fall bring in raptors and flocks of sparrows. September is the best month to look for such rarities as Sabine's Gull and jaegers on local lakes, and Sandhill Crane flocks will accumulate in the West Valley. All in all, September is a great month for birding!



## Conservation Educator's Niche

By Denny Olson

I decided to take a departure from the usual this month. Recently, we have seen our Valley "relapse" into another round of a pandemic variant, and the resulting cancellations and disappointments, and the depressing prospects of us returning to "normal" soon, have taken an emotional toll. But lest we forget, we have some tools inside of us to ward off the low times. And of course we always have birds to brighten any day. I want to share an anthropomorphic indigenous-style story I wrote some time ago. Apologies for the lack of non-gendered pronouns in our language, as I suspect "Creator" would not be male or female. This time, I went with the road less traveled ... and the gender that mostly isn't afraid to ask for help ...

*Long, long ago, after the Creator had made the big, humming World, she felt very good about it. And from those feelings she made two very special things. She called them "Love" and "Honor". They were her Special Gifts to the World.*

*Love helped parents feel good about each other, and about their young. Love helped neighbors be helpful and kind to each other.*

*Honor helped them all be truthful and trust each other. Honor helped them learn from their mistakes. Honor helped them to do their best -- whatever they tried.*

*But Creator had one worry. It was the Two-leggeds. A few of them might be confused, and twist Love and Honor for selfish reasons. They might make things seem like Love and Honor when they really weren't. So she asked the other animals for help -- to protect the Special Gifts.*

*Early in the morning, Eagle came soaring from the East. Eagle was the keeper of the dawn, and the messenger from the sky. He offered to fly the special creations far up into the sky -- even to the Moon. "That will be a good hiding place", he told Creator.*

*The Creator thought about Eagle's offer for a while, but then shook his head. "They will find them there," he said. "One day, another flying thing will land on the Moon. It will have Two-leggeds inside, and they will find the Special Gifts."*

*About noon, Mouse scurried to Creator from her home in the South. Mouse was the keeper of the warm, green summer. She offered to take the Gifts and bury them under the miles and miles of grass on the prairie. "That will confuse them. The prairie is so big."*

*Creator thought this idea might work, but then she shook her head. "No", she said. "Those Two-leggeds will someday turn over the whole prairie with their iron plows. They will think it all belongs to them. They will leave no room for the First People or the Buffalo. And*

*they will find the Gifts."*

*At sunset, Bear lurched to where Creator sat, huffing his way from his home in the West. Bear always stayed near the sunset because he was the keeper of the night. He offered to take the Gifts to the high mountains and dig a deep cave. "If I put them there, the rocks will be too heavy for the Two-leggeds to dig, and they will give up."*

*Creator thought, and then shook her head again. "Those Two-leggeds are clever", she said. "One day they will take giant machines and dig the rock away. They will be looking for shiny things. They will find the Special Gifts because they will dig holes in the Earth as big as the mountains."*

*When it was dark, the night cooled the air, and Wolf loped to where Creator sat. She came from her home in the far North. Wolf was the keeper of the winter. Wolf offered to take the Gifts to the farthest North spot. She could bury the Gifts in the huge sheet of ice and it would never melt. "They will never want to go there," she said.*

*Creator pondered Wolf's offer for a while, and then, sadly, shook her head again. "I think those Two-leggeds will have a curiosity that will make them do things just because they can", she said to Wolf. "They will not ask themselves if they should, because they will be so proud of their skills. I think they will make special boats which will go under the Great Ice, and they will find the Special Gifts."*

*Creator sat until dawn, thinking. Just before the sun rose again, Earthworm pushed it's slippery little nose from the ground, between Creator's feet. Earthworm was startled at first, but then greeted Creator, and asked her what was troubling her. Creator explained the problem.*

*Earthworm was quiet for a while, and then spoke to Creator. "I know I am just a small worm, and you are the great Creator. I know you have asked the wisest animals from the farthest places to help you and they could not. I can only dig a small circle here under your feet. I only know about the insides of the Earth, the insides of things, but I have an idea."*

*"Why don't you take the Gifts of Love and Honor and bury them deep inside the hearts of these Two-leggeds. They will have to look very hard to find them."*

*It was a great idea, and that's what Creator did. Creator smiled, and thanked Earthworm for reminding her that even a humble Earthworm is very important, and can be very wise.*

*And you know, to this day, the only Two-leggeds who have found those Special Gifts ... are the ones who know just where to look ...*

*So Auduboners, during frustrating times, try to remember what you carry with you all the time.*

## 2020 Elections

After being postponed due to the pandemic, the 2020 elections will be held during the September 13 meeting which will be held digitally. See page 3 for how to attend the meeting. The candidates running for President, Vice President, and several director positions are described below.

### OFFICER CANDIDATES

**President - Cory Davis.** I am very excited to be the next FAS President after serving as VP the last two years. However, it will be very difficult to meet the high standard set by Gael Bissell and Kay Mitchell before me. Birds have been a passion of mine since I first started birding as an undergraduate at UC Santa Barbara. I went on to study birds for several years throughout the West including Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Alaska, and even Belize. I have lived in Whitefish since 2003 and have been a FAS board member since 2014. I worked at Glacier National Park for several years as a Biologist and currently work for the University of Montana's Franke College of Forestry and Conservation as a Science Communication Specialist for the Northern Rockies Fire Science Network. I love the work that FAS does to educate people about birds and conserve important bird habitat and look forward to help keeping that going!

**Vice President - Darcy Thomas.** Born in Seattle, our family moved to Kalispell in 1970 where I graduated from Flathead High School. After community college at FVCC I moved to Missoula to finish my degree in Psychology. Although I planned to return to the Flathead, I got sidetracked by a tall handsome rock climber whom I married and raised four children with. We lived in Florence in the Bitterroot Valley. Early in my marriage I got my BSN in nursing from Montana State University and enjoyed a career as a nurse evolving from Oncology to Public Health and School Nursing and ending in Infection Control. During all this time I loved birds, teaching my children about them and enjoying them wherever I happened to be. One of my great birding joys early on was participating in a two-week field study with Dick Hutto while collecting data on the Long-billed Curlew. It took 40 years, with an interlude returning to Seattle, before I finally returned to the Flathead Valley to retire with my second husband. We are happily ensconced in our dream home in Kalispell. My retirement goal is to be active in Audubon, make myself useful to my community, and advocate for birds.

### DIRECTOR CANDIDATES

**Kay Mitchell.** With the new elections this September, I will be handing over the title of Past President to Gael Bissell. I have agreed to run for a regular board position because I believe I can offer a good combination of historical knowledge and understanding of current FAS activities and programs. I served for many years as newsletter editor, have been active from the beginning of Flathead Audubon's management of the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area, and currently serve as grant writer for the Great Fish Community Challenge and as financial reviewer. I am a firm supporter of Flathead Audubon's programs and an advocate for land and habitat protection. My husband Brent and I operate a tree farm west of Kalispell.

**Dan Casey.** I am a long-time Flathead Valley resident and a co-author of "Birds of Montana". I recently retired as the Northern Great Plains Joint Venture Coordinator with Ducks Unlimited, working on grassland bird conservation from Billings. Formerly I worked from Kalispell as the Northern Rockies Conservation Officer for American Bird Conservancy (2000-2014), and as a biologist for Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (1983-1999). I have served Flathead Audubon in the past as a Board member, field trip leader and Christmas Bird Count compiler (Bigfork and Kalispell). I conceived and still coordinate the Jewel Basin Hawk Watch. Susannah and I are happy to once again be living in our house in Somers.

**Jake Bramante.** Growing up in a log home in northwestern Montana, I frequently ran around with my brother in the Forest Service land adjacent to our property. Armed with the blue, Golden Guide to Birds of North America, I helped an area wildlife biologist with his section of the Libby area Christmas Bird Count with my fondest memory being a Northern Pygmy Owl that flew right over and landed on a scrappy bush next to me. After a few years away at college in the desert, I came back with a renewed commitment to enjoy the woods that I missed so much which culminated in a summer where I hiked all of Glacier's trails. I now create day hiking maps for national parks and sneak out to bird as often as I can when I'm not on the trail.

**Derrick Rathe.** Currently serving on the board and running for reelection

**Jan Metzmaker.** Currently serving on the board and running for reelection.



## SUPPORT FLATHEAD AUDUBON in the GREAT FISH COMMUNITY CHALLENGE



It's a new season of Flathead Audubon – welcome to everyone! After a summer of scattering to the winds, now we have an opportunity to come back together (in person and/or virtually) to enjoy all of our birds (including some newborn speckled ones), view fall migration in awe, take in a field trip or two, and listen to fascinating programs at our general meetings. We educate people all year long - with birds, about birds and for birds.

Again this year, Flathead Audubon has the pleasure and privilege of participating in the Great Fish Community Challenge, hosted by the Whitefish Community Foundation. (Clarification: Only the September 11 Celebration and Fun Run have been COVID-cancelled; all the rest of the Great Fish Community Challenge is still open and actively seeking donations.) This fundraising campaign gives you the opportunity to donate to your favorite local nonprofit organizations to help us help the Valley. With just one transaction (check or credit card), you can show your support for any or all of the nonprofits in the campaign. It's much easier than responding to many appeals for money several times during the year. We hope you

will remember Flathead Audubon in your Great Fish Community Challenge contribution. Donations to Flathead Audubon through the Great Fish Community Challenge are used 100% locally to further our dedicated mission of birds, their habitats and conservation.

The campaign runs only until 5 PM, September 17. Here are the details:

Online donation portal:

<https://whitefishcf.fcsuite.com/erp/donate/list>

Printable Donor Form: [https://](https://whitefishcommunityfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/DonorForm2021.pdf)

[whitefishcommunityfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/DonorForm2021.pdf](https://whitefishcommunityfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/DonorForm2021.pdf)

Mailing address: Whitefish Community Foundation, P.O. Box 1060, Whitefish, MT 59937

Do not send your donation directly to Flathead Audubon. Send your completed Donor Form and your check made out to Whitefish Community Foundation, P.O. Box 1060, Whitefish, MT 59937.

Thank you for donating! Your gift is especially welcome this year, to help us continue to bring birds and nature education to the Flathead Valley during a stressful time for kids and all the rest of us.

*by Kay Mitchell*

### Jewel Basin Hawk Watch 2021

August 25<sup>th</sup> 2021 marks the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of season-long migration monitoring at the Jewel Basin Hawk Watch. Volunteers and one paid technician (Joshua Covill) will serve as primary observers for surveys through November 7<sup>th</sup>, weather and road access permitting. We encourage birders of all levels to join us on the ridge this fall!

The Jewel Basin site has a well-deserved reputation as one of the best places to survey accipiters (Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawk, Northern Goshawk) in the northern Rockies. Indeed, on the best days, literally hundreds of these birds pass by, many at "arms-length". We have counted more than 32,000 hawks, eagles and falcons of 18 species over the past 13 seasons. Last year we had our two best days ever, including one survey where we counted 1-3 birds per minute all day, and ended up with 595 birds for the day, including more than 350 Sharp-shinned Hawks! Peak migration usually runs from mid-September

through the first week in October.

The Jewel Basin Hawk Watch is supported through cooperation with the Flathead National Forest and hundreds of hours donated by local and visiting volunteers. There will always be an experienced primary observer on site, but extra sets of eyes are needed on the busiest days! The Jewel Basin site sits on the ridge crest about ½ mile north of Mt. Aeneas. Getting there involves a 2 ¼ mile moderately difficult hike from the Jewel Basin parking lot to the ridgetop, steadily gaining about 1,400 ft in elevation. The scenery is as spectacular as the birding.

We will be including monthly updates of this year's effort in the Pileated Post. But if you would like more information, contact Dan Casey at (406)270-5941. There is a google group dedicated to the effort ([jewelers@flatheadaudubon.org](mailto:jewelers@flatheadaudubon.org)); you can also follow daily surveys in real time by visiting <https://dunkadoo.org/explore> and clicking on the Flathead Audubon Society icon. *by Dan Casey*

### Birds of Prey Festival Canceled

The Birds of Prey Festival originally scheduled for September 18 at Lone Pine State Park has been canceled due to the risks posed by the resurgence of Covid-19 in the Flathead area. When it is rescheduled sometime in 2022 it will be advertised in the Pileated Post.

### 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.

**BIRDING AT SMITH LAKE, Wednesday, September 8, 8 AM-11 AM.** Join Flathead Audubon for a morning of bird watching around Smith Lake WPA in Kila. We are likely to see ducks, geese, shorebirds, hawks and eagles. This is mostly a drive around the lake with very little walking as we stop at the fishing access site and other pullouts. Car pooling is a good idea in this area as some of the pullouts are not large. Besides your binoculars, bring a scope if you have one. Masks are optional though highly recommended. For information, and to sign up for this field trip, contact the trip leader, Darcy Thomas at 406-407-8263 or [darcy@flatheadaudubon.org](mailto:darcy@flatheadaudubon.org). The number of participants is limited.

**JEWEL BASIN HAWK WATCH, Sunday September 19, 9:00 AM- 6:00 PM (approximately).** Dan Casey will lead a trip to the Jewel Basin Hawk Watch site on Sunday, 19 September. The second half of September offers peak numbers and diversity of passing raptors; we expect to see more than 100 hawks of 10 or more species if conditions are right. Last year we saw 595 birds on 21 Sept, our all-time high count! (See Jewel Basin Hawk Watch article elsewhere in this newsletter). 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. You should also bring binoculars, water, lunch and clothing layers for changing weather conditions (we will cancel or reschedule if weather conditions are unsuitable). The trip is limited to 10 participants. Please contact Dan at (406) 270-5941 to sign up and get more information. Carpooling will be encouraged for vaccinated people as the road to the Jewel Basin is rough and parking limited. Time of trip includes both driving from Bigfork and hiking to the viewing area.

**SANDHILL CRANE VIEWING at WEST VALLEY. Wednesday September 29, 3:30-7:30 PM or Wednesday October 6, 7:00-11:00 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. Two field trips will be offered and numbers of participants are limited. For information, and to sign up for one of these field trips, contact Darcy Thomas, trip leader, at (406) 407-8263 or [darcy@flatheadaudubon.org](mailto:darcy@flatheadaudubon.org).

### Owen Sowerwine Workday October 9

The 2021 Owen Sowerwine Workday will be held Saturday, October 9, 9 AM until noon. Details will be announced in the October Pileated Post.

### Kootenai Forest Fair



If you are looking for a nice little day trip for look no further. The Kootenai Forest Stakeholders Coalition (KFSC) is hosting a Forest Fair in Libby September 24<sup>th</sup>, 3-6 PM at Riverfront Park. There will be something for everyone with lots of informational tables from a variety of non-profits and businesses that have an interest in the forest. Flathead Audubon will have a

table so please stop by to say hi while you are there. You may enjoy a presentation or demonstration on outdoors skills such as a crosscut competition or fly casting. Kids will have their own activities and a visit with Smokey Bear. Buy a raffle ticket to win a great prize. Food and drinks, including free beer, will be available. The grand idea is to spark conversation and foster solutions for public lands management better between the Forest Service and the community while celebrating our timber, trails, wildlife, and water.

**Presidents Column continued from page 1**

Observer, Joshua Covill, and our other volunteer observers, up at the Jewel Basin Hawk Watch site from Aug 25 to early November, weather dependent. To find out who is scheduled, sign up as a volunteer, or learn more about this effort, join the Jewel Basin Hawk Watch group on Google. The old Yahoo site is no longer supported. See Dan Casey's article on page 8

for details.

Thank you all for enjoying the birds and our programs, helping us keep Flathead Audubon on track and able to provide education and community activities across the Flathead for the better part of two years! We all look forward to seeing you digitally in September, and hoping we can see you in person in the coming months!

**Pat Jaquith continued from page 3**

Kalispell for 4 years and Bigfork for 3 years. And she has done the long-billed curlew survey in the nearby Mission Valley for 4 years along with her friend Pam Willison.

In addition to Flathead Audubon, Pat is involved with the West Valley Naturalists, providing photos and articles for their blog. She's an active member of the Montana Native Plant Society, and has led field trips for the Flathead Chapter. She also volunteers for the Glacier Symphony, raises a vibrant garden, and spends many hours with her grandson sharing her appreciation for all the amazing things they find out in the wild.

We in Flathead Audubon and all in Flathead Valley are fortunate that Pat Jaquith, formerly a mathematics teacher and now an expert botanist and birder, chose to retire here in the Valley. She has contributed many hours of her time using her expertise to identify and remove exotic plants from Owen Sowerwine, to promote the appreciation and preservation of native plants, and to monitor local bird populations. Flathead Audubon is proud to recognize Pat for her these conservation achievements. She will be presented with Flathead Audubon's Conservation Achievement Recognition at our September 13 general meeting. *by Denny Olson and Pam Willison*

## Tally lake Campout June 8 through 10, 2021

Wettest campout ever! After a mellow evening around the campfire, the rain began. In spite of that, about 20 people went on a birding walk at 7 AM in the pouring rain. It was unusually beautiful with silver light on the lake and shrubs in glorious bloom. Many of the birds stayed home in the bushes until afternoon when the rain stopped and the sun came out. Most people had gone home by then, but the few that stayed had a good time of wonderful birding and shared good food but no one stayed the second night.

We had visitors from as far away as Georgia, Alaska, Washington and Wyoming. Among our local

attendees were two very talented young birders from the Donaldson family. Bridger Donaldson compiled a bird list that may be found on the FAS website <https://flatheadaudubon.org>. Forty-six species were posted to the list, somewhat less than in years past, but there were more Western Tanagers than ever before. The first evening ended with a low fly by of a Merlin with an unidentified bird in tow, flapping vigorously to gain altitude.

Altogether those of us who stayed found it extremely worthwhile. *by Mike and Jill Fanning*

## MUST LOVE BIRDS

**Job Posting: Bird of Month Author** for the Bird of the Month column.

**Job Duties:** Write an engaging article of 700-900 words about a bird you love to be published in the *Pileated Post*.

**Requirements/Qualifications:** Must love birds and know how to type. Should be able to identify the bird you choose to write about.

**Benefits & Pay:** Self-satisfaction and praise from others who become your loyal readers. Most definitely bragging rights. May be published in the Daily Interlake.

**How to Apply:** email Darcy Thomas at [darcy@flatheadaudubon.org](mailto:darcy@flatheadaudubon.org)

If you are interested, please contact Darcy Thomas at [darcy@flatheadaudubon.org](mailto:darcy@flatheadaudubon.org).

### Natural Events To See This Month:

*Vaux's Swifts roost by the hundreds in Kalispell chimneys during fall migration.*



# 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.

## New Birds at OSNA

Look who Pam Willison found hanging out in OSNA the morning of this past May 5.

She was doing a walk through with two women from Flathead Conservation District regarding the grant application for OSNA when she was lucky to spot this elusive bird. Although she had never seen one before she



knew exactly what it was, even though it wasn't making it's funny dunkadoo sound. This certainly made Pam's day/week/month!! A pair of Lesser Goldfinch were seen just outside the entrance to OSNA off Treasure Lane behind the private driveway sign on June 25 by Alex Lamoriaux. The pair was continually calling their short, sad-sounding 'tleee' calls of

which Alex was able to make a sound recording. He heard at least three more calls inside OSNA proper.

The OSNA bird checklist has been updated and will be posted to the website. If you have a sighting you would like to report please contact Darcy, [darcy@flatheadaudubon.org](mailto:darcy@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+
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Flathead Audubon Society is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Our federal tax ID number is 81-0447830.

## FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY DIRECTORY

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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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