



the
Pileated Post
Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

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Northern
Pintail



Offset.com

Barbara and Jim RYCHWALSKI chosen as VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR

Barbara and Jim Rychwalski richly deserve the Volunteer of the Year award for their devoted efforts preparing and mailing the monthly *Pileated Post*. They have spent countless hours over the past six years performing this onerous task.

Each month except the summer months they have accomplished the following for about 250 newsletters:

- * Placed inserts into each newsletter
- * Folded each newsletter
- * Applied labels to each newsletter
- * Applied mailing tabs to each newsletter

In addition to these tasks, the Rychwalskis review the address labels

and correct errors the membership chair is inclined to make upon occasion. Finally, they have delivered the package of newsletters to the Post Office for our member's viewing pleasure. In the past 6 years they have

handled 13,500 newsletters. To their credit, Barbara and Jim have not only been completely reliable and dependable, but are also consistently cheerful and friendly. Please plan to attend the Flathead Audubon meeting on March 14 to see Barbara and Jim receive this well deserved award and express your appreciation of their volunteer effort.

by Mike Fanning



Photo by Darcy Thomas

Below is the second installment in a new Post series called

GETTING TO KNOW OWEN SOWERWINE NATURAL AREA

Important Bird Area Status

Last month we began a series of articles describing the characteristics, history, and management status of the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area (OSNA). This month we examine its status as an "Important Bird Area", a designation that carries with it no legal protection, but that recognizes the value of the site to birds and the birding public.

The Important Bird Area (IBA) program is international in scope, administered by Bird Life International across much of the globe, often through other partner groups. The National Audubon Society took the lead for implementing the program in the United

States in 1995. Montana Audubon has administered the program here in our state. The central goals of the IBA program are to identify, monitor, and protect a network of sites critical to the conservation of birds. Although IBA designations are not legally binding, they can help to focus attention on the habitat needs of bird species of concern, and can help lead to habitat acquisition, conservation easements, or voluntary habitat management activities.

So what criteria can qualify a site as an IBA?
continued on page 8



MARCH FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

Monday March 7, 2022. 5:30 PM. FAS Board of Directors Meeting. Public Meeting Room, Fish, Wildlife & Parks building, 490 N. Meridian Rd., Kalispell.

Monday, March 14, 2022. 7 PM. Flathead Audubon General Meeting. Can be attended in person or by Zoom. See page 3 for how to participate.

Sunday March 6, 10 AM-noon. Lawrence Park Winter Trek. See page 6.

Sunday March 20, 8 AM-noon. Spring Waterfowl, Church Slough and Lower Valley Wetlands. See page 6.

Tuesday March 22, 9-11:30 AM. Spring Equinox (nearly) at Steel Bridge Trails. See page 6.

Friday-Saturday March 25-26. Freezout Lake and the Snow Goose Migration. See page 6.

BIRD OF THE MONTH

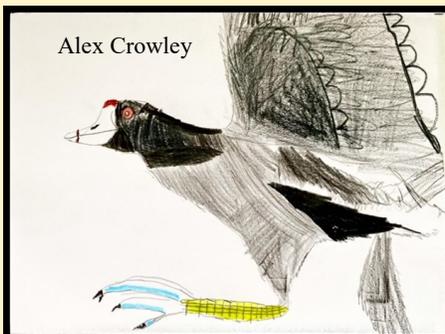
The American Coot

by Alex Crowley (age 12)

Chicken? Duck? Nope! It's the American Coot, one of the coolest birds you can see here in Northwest Montana! The American Coot, or *Fulica americana*, can be found along the banks of our slow rivers and on the edges of our lakes and ponds. You may even see one on a golf course. When you first see the American Coot with its beautiful plump black body and rounded head with white bill you may think you are looking at a duck but look again. Smaller than a crow but bigger than a robin they are 15.5-16.9 inches. Their wingspan is 23.0-25.0 inches. If you are lucky enough to get close you will see they have a small patch of red on their forehead, amazing red eyes, and very unique feet.

American Coots are omnivores, they eat seeds of pondweeds, grasses, algae, insects, tadpoles, fish, worms, snails, prawns, and eggs of other birds. The big variety in their diet means they can live successfully in a lot of places, which makes them common across the state of Montana. We can see American Coots all year long in the Flathead Valley.

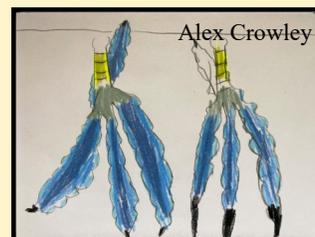
A group of American Coots is called a raft. Parents have 8-12 eggs that can look a buff pinkish or a buff gray with dark brown speckles. Coot chicks don't look like their parents! They are bright and colorful unlike their parents, with yellow and orange downy feathers. Their bare heads are red and black, and their bills are red and orange. Chick's fancy coloring helps parents determine the age of their chicks. Younger birds are brighter colored. Baby coots can leave the nest and follow their parents into the water right after hatching, which is important because coot parents are tough. Sometimes they lay more eggs than they can feed, so not all the chicks survive. Also, sometimes American Coot parents drop off their eggs in their neighbor's nest. It can be a hard start for an American Coot chick.



American Coots have natural enemies both on the land and in the air. Coming from the sky are Great Horned Owls, Bald Eagles, Osprey, and Northern Harriers. On land American Coots have to be watchful for coyotes, skunks, racoons, foxes and other small predators.

My favorite part about the American Coot is its lobed toes, which make it easy for them to get around both on land and in the water. Like a duck's webbed foot, the coot's toes help

push it through the water. These feet are also good for walking on top of vegetation in the marshes and on land. And they look like T. Rex feet with yellow-green scales and bluish-grey shadows with long talons! One of the most important uses for their feet are getting airborne. To take off they run across the surface of the water like a Basilisk lizard and furiously flap their wings.

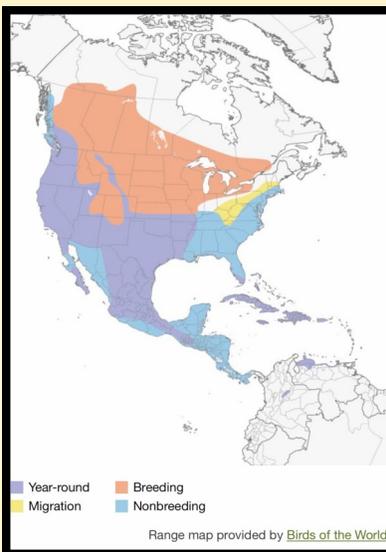


American Coots are not threatened by people, probably because they are considered inedible. Some scientists use coots to monitor the environment since many toxins like agricultural runoff end up in their marshy diet.

Here's a fun fact, the oldest American Coot lived to be 22 years and 4 months old!

The first time I saw an American Coot in real life was on the Flathead Audubon trip to the Creston National Hatchery. It was an incredible day. I got to stand in the duck blind and observe this amazing bird with the dinosaur feet and dark red eyes. I hope you get a chance to see one too!

Sources available from Darcy Peterson at darcy@flatheadaudubon.org



Natural Events To See This Month:

Open areas on rivers and lakes are packed with mixed waterfowl flocks.

March Program

"Bird Brain" is a Compliment!

presented by Denny Olson

Birds have often been described in disparaging terms as "dodos" -- incapable of anything but instinctive behaviors, and having tiny brains with limited learning capacity. After all they're just reptiles with feathers, right? Bird brains are smaller, to be sure, but mostly because of the weight limit demands of flight. Even though bird brain parts are arranged differently than ours, and our ways of gauging intelligence are much different than theirs, they operate at many times the speed of humans, have complex language-learning capabilities, show memories the dwarf our abilities, do complex trigonometry with sound and light, "see" magnetic lines of force during migrations, make an array of specialized tools, and even have those "human" qualities of altruism and empathy. Join Denny for a humorous examination of the avian brain and dozens of mind-boggling and fun examples of bird intelligence. Fair warning: if you are a human, it could be a humbling experience ...

Denny Olson's formal training as a biologist and geologist, as well as teaching nature for over 45 years in the north woods and mountain west, has given him expertise in many disciplines. He has done research on Common Loons, beavers and snowshoe hares, and received an M.S. Degree, (magna cum laude) from the University of Minnesota. From those scientific beginnings he forged an unlikely union between science, humor, and drama, and established a reputation as an innovative performer and educator.

Denny has trained thousands of naturalists, teachers and students in acting techniques, lectured

on Native American storytelling as a teaching tool, and conducted workshops nation-wide. He has performed his humorous alter-egos (inc. Critterman, Wolfman, The Grizz, Dr. Death, Prof. Avian Guano, Dr. Loonacy, The Lost Voyageur, The Mad Herbalist) over 3000 times, in 49 states, for over 2 million people, including 80+ conference keynotes, 44 national park presentations, and 26 university performances.

He's published 5 books, did a five-year "newscaster" run on the Montana NBC network on "Critterman's News from the Woods" and is now nestled into semi-retirement and working as Flathead Audubon's Conservation Educator.

Photo by JP Edge
Hungry Horse News



How to Attend the March 14 FAS General Meeting

The hybrid meetings seem to be working well, so we're going to stick with the mixed method for our March General Meeting. For those coming to the meeting, we'll meet in Room 26 of the Gateway Mall (United Way building) at 7PM. This room is on the east side of the building along Glenwood Rd in Kalispell. Look for our banner hanging outside. Please **practice social distancing for seating** in the large meeting room and **we strongly encourage mask wearing**.

If you join virtually, you will eventually be let into a "waiting room" where you will then be added to

the meeting by the host. Please sign in with your name when you enter the room so we know to admit you. You will be muted when you first join the meeting. You can use your computer's microphone and speakers (most computers have both, whether you see them or not), and this is the preferred way to join.

To attend by Zoom, or to get an audio connection to the meeting without the Zoom visual capability, contact cory@flatheadaudubon.org

Looking forward to seeing everyone!

Lead Poisoning in Birds

by David Manuwal

Death by lead poisoning is a tragic way of dying and it can be prevented. The article in the January 5, 2022 Hungry Horse News about the death of a swan found at Flathead Lake reminds us that lead poisoning is still a source of mortality among birds.

There are several symptoms of lead poisoning. Neurological signs such as blindness and head tilting may occur or a wing droop or leg paralysis can indicate poisoning. A bird just may not 'look' well, sitting quietly with fluffed feathers. A bird may exhibit noticeable weakness, depression, loss of control and coordination of body movements. It may produce frequent runny green droppings, and it may suffer from seizures, muscle tremors and finally death.

Birds obtain lead by eating lead shot from shotgun shells, either incidentally (waterfowl, scavengers such as eagles) or preferentially because it appears like seeds (Mourning Doves). Birds may also consume lead sinkers used in fishing.

History of lead poisoning and what we do about it

The following information was obtained from The Center for Biological Diversity [Birds \(biologicaldiversity.org\)](https://www.biologicaldiversity.org).

Lead poisoning in wild birds was first identified in 1842. In the 1870s, first documented incidents of lead poisoning of waterfowl at hunting sites were found. Here is a list of some important events related to lead.

1890's- The first documented mortality of waterfowl due to lead shot was reported.

1959- A major scientific study identified spent lead shot as the source of exposure and widespread hazard for waterfowl.

1970 – The Clean Air Act passes congress, giving the Environmental Protection Agency a mandate to identify, and set standards for, harmful pollutants, including lead.



Bald Eagles and Common Ravens
at a deer carcass.

1970s – Concerns about lead toxicity from fishing weights for water birds were published.

1972 – First nontoxic shot use requirements for limited areas in United States were instituted.

1991 – Lead shot is banned for all waterfowl

hunting in the entire United States.

1992 – Studies were published on the hazards of lead fishing sinkers to loons.

1994 – EPA proposes nationwide ban on manufacture, import, processing, and distribution of lead fishing sinkers of a size hazardous to waterfowl — but the regulations are never ratified

1997 – Canada implements partial ban on small-sized lead fishing sinkers in national parks and national wildlife areas.

1999 – Canada issues ban on lead shot for hunting migratory game birds.

2000 – Scientific reports show significant reduction in lead exposure to waterfowl after implementation of 1991 lead shot ban.

2007 – California legislature approves the Ridley-Tree Condor Preservation Act, requiring hunters to use nonlead ammunition for hunting big game and coyotes within the California condor's range in central and Southern California.

2007 – The California Fish and Game Commission approves additional hunting regulations that expand the nonlead bullet requirements to include hunting nongame birds and mammals within the condor range.

2007 – Number of condor deaths in California confirmed or linked to lead poisoning rises to 15 birds.

2008 – The California Fish and Game Commission extends protections of the Ridley-Tree Condor Conservation Act to depredation hunting, the shooting of animals deemed a nuisance or threat.

2009 – Lawsuit filed to force management plans on public lands in Arizona to include actions to protect Grand Canyon condors from toxic lead

2009 – National Park Service announces plan to eliminate use of lead ammunition and lead fishing tackle in national parks by 2010

2009 – The EPA grants citizen petition to ban lead automobile wheel balancing weights — regulations requiring nonlead alternatives to be issued in 2011.

2010 – California passes legislation reducing amount of lead that is permissible in plumbing products used to convey or dispense drinking water.

2010 – Confirmed lead poisoning death of 15th endangered condor in Arizona since reintroduction program began in 1996, with many more deaths suspected to be from spent lead ammunition.

So we have some legislation that outlaws the use of lead shot in shotgun shells used for waterfowl hunting. However, many states, including Montana, allow hunters to use lead ammunition for upland game birds and big game. Lead shot is readily available in Montana. For example, at Sportsman's Warehouse in Missoula you can buy a 25 lb. bag of lead shot for \$44. There are lots of possibilities for scavengers to

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Photo by JP Edge
Hungry Horse News

Conservation Educator's Niche

By Denny Olson

Aside from the usual reasons someone in my advanced state of decay would wake in the middle of the night, occasionally I jolt awake with an idea. Last week's "somnus interruptus" was a doozy. My brain was in full fisheye lens mode -- the big picture -- and I was contemplating existence itself, and its component parts. You know the categories -- birth, life, growth, joy, pain, death and recycling (and beer, can't forget that) ... Addressing most of those categories are beyond my limited depth, and courage for that matter, so in the fog of semi-consciousness, I quickly arrived on the easy one, joy, and almost as quickly thumbed through the things that represent joy to me -- family, friends, my Audubon cohorts, learning new things, everything natural -- and arrived at "birds". Go figure.

I can't describe the number of times I have seen a bird or heard its song with a big grin on my face. I tend not to be a competitive birder, constantly aware of numbers, and life / state / county / daily / weekly / yearly lists. My preference is to learn about the absolute wonders of their lives, habits, preferences -- and what brings *them* joy. And I hope it shows that I also love to teach what I have learned, and see a smile on someone else's face.

I mean, really, aside from poop on the windshield, what's not to like? They *fly*, wherever they want. They are literally everywhere. Their audacious music is mesmerizing, if we listen, and very, very complex. They plant seeds, complete with fertilizer, profusely. They are first responders to dead animals of every kind, and begin the essential recycling processes of death back to life. They tell us in no uncer-

tain terms if our life support system is endangered. And they are knock-your-socks-off eye candy.

I'm not alone. Bird-joy works for a lot of people, it turns out. Here's what they say, better than I can:

"Be as a bird perched on a frail branch that she feels bending beneath her; still, she sings away all the same, knowing she has wings." - Victor Hugo (with apologies to male birds, who actually do most of the singing)

"Birds are an ecological litmus paper." - Roger Tory Peterson

"Tame birds sing of freedom. Wild birds fly." - John Lennon.

"I keep looking for one more teacher, only to find that fish learn from the water and birds learn from the sky." - Mark Nepo

"I pray to the birds because they remind me of what I love rather than what I fear. And at the end of my prayers, they teach me how to listen." - Terry Tempest Williams

"There is nothing in which the birds differ more from man than the way in which they can build and yet leave a landscape as it was before." - Robert Wilson Lynd

God loved the birds and invented trees. Man loved the birds and invented cages. - Jacques Deval

"Everyone likes birds. What wild creature is more accessible to our eyes and ears, as close to us and everyone in the world, as universal as a bird?" - Sir David Attenborough.

I hope you love birds too. It is economical. It saves going to heaven. - Emily Dickenson

If I keep a green bough in my heart, the singing bird will come. - Chinese Proverb

The green bough is alive, lush and vibrant, sometimes enough to wake me up at night.

2022 Long-Billed Curlew Citizen Science Survey

Are you ready to hear the 'currleeeee' of the Long-billed Curlew? Well, grab your binoculars and get ready, because curlew season is just around the corner! These charismatic shorebirds will be trickling back into the state in early April and we need your help finding as many as possible in and around the Mission, Blackfoot, and Helena Valleys!

Since 2013, volunteers have recorded curlews sightings in these three Montana valleys and this data helps inform statewide habitat models as well as highlight important tracts of intact grassland that are in need of conservation. As a species specific survey, this is a great time for aspiring citizen scientists and veteran birders alike to contribute to the conservation

of a treasured Montana bird species.

In addition to supporting citizen surveys, this year we are hosting an online webinar to learn more about the project and how to participate. Save the date for March 31st at 6 PM with more details coming in our March eNews! For now, you can find everything you need to participate on Montanabirdsurveys.com and you can reach out to Peter Dudley at peter@mtaudubon.org for more information and to sign up!

The Long-Billed Curlew Citizen Science survey will take place from April 8 - May 7 and May 8 - May 31.

by Amy Seamon, Director of Policy & Science

WINTER/SPRING 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. 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.



LAWRENCE PARK WINTER TREK, Sunday March 6, 10 AM—noon. Join FAS field trip leader Darcy Thomas for a winter trek through Lawrence Park in Kalispell. This is a mostly flat walk with varied terrain of up to three miles. We will likely see Canada Geese, ducks, woodpeckers, Blue Jays and passerines. Dress warmly and bring binoculars. We may need YakTrax depending on ice on trails. Restrooms and park benches are available. Space is limited to 10 birders, Contact Darcy to sign up at 406-407-8263 or darcy@flatheadaudubon.org.

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

SPRING EQUINOX (nearly) at the STEEL BRIDGE TRAILS, Tuesday March 22, 9—11:30 AM. Join FAS field trip leader Darcy Thomas for a birding walk along the Flathead River at the Steel Bridge trails. We are likely to see Bald Eagles, gulls, and woodpeckers as well as various passerines. This is a flat walk on varied terrain of up to 2.5 miles. Since the spring equinox stands for rebirth, fertility, and new beginnings we will listen for bird songs and look for signs of the new breeding season. Dress warmly and bring binoculars. Space is limited to 10 birders. Contact Darcy at 406-407-8263 or darcy@flatheadaudubon.org to sign up.

FREEZOUT LAKE AND THE SNOW GEESE MIGRATION, Friday and Saturday March 25 – 26. Snow Geese are beginning to move from their wintering grounds to their arctic nesting areas along with thousands of other waterfowl. They stop over at Freezout Lake WMA near Choteau to rest and feed before finishing their journey. We should go visit them! We will meet on Friday morning at 10 AM at the parking lot of the old K-Mart in Evergreen. From there, we will caravan to Choteau, birding along the way, and arrive in time for some afternoon goose watching. After spending the night in Choteau, we'll head back out to Freezout just before daybreak on Saturday to watch the "mass ascension" of geese from the ponds. After the morning's birding, we can return to Kalispell in the early afternoon at our own pace on Saturday. Bob Lee will provide a suggested schedule and route, and will be in the front of the group. With the impacts of the Omicron variant still unknown at this time, we will be taking precautions like limited carpooling, masking and social distancing and no gathering for dinner. Participants may pursue the geese on their own as much or as little as they, the weather and the birds allow. In 2021, there were an extraordinary number of people congregating to watch the geese. There is no indication of how many might be there this year. Please make your own arrangements for lodging. Primitive camping is available at the WMA. If there are lots of people, these sites may be limited. Motel options include the Stage Stop (406-466-5900), Gunther (406-466-5444), and Big Sky (406-466-5318). Make your reservations early as these motels will likely fill up quickly. For more information, contact Bob at RML3@centurytel.net or 406-270-0371.

Nominees Requested

Hard to believe but the FAS elections for 2022 are quickly approaching. This year we will elect a Secretary and a Treasurer. Pam Williston and Rod Wallette have agreed to run again for those positions, respectively. Others are also welcome to run for those positions if interested. We've had a trying couple of years; if you are ready to get out and be involved, a

Director position for Flathead Audubon is just the ticket. Everyone is welcome as there is no limit to the number of Directors on the Board. If you, or anyone you know, would make a good Director, please contact Bob Lee. Bob's email is RML3@centurytel.net and cell is 270-0371.

Flathead Valley Bird Report

by Dan Casey

Rare and Notables – Jan/Feb

At least two Snowy Owls persisted in the Lower Valley northeast of Somers throughout the period and were enjoyed by many local and visiting birders. Seasonally uncommon to rare, a White-throated Sparrow and a Brown-headed Cowbird continued at feeders in Whitefish and Creston, respectively. Migrant waterfowl numbers started to increase in February, with large flocks of Canada Geese and Mallards on Flathead Lake, Flathead River, and agricultural fields throughout the Valley. See <https://ebird.org/region/US-MT-029?yr=all> for more.

- 01/22 – **Double-crested Cormorant** (1), Bigfork (River C.) Likely the one seen on Bigfork CBC.
 01/22 – **Glaucous Gull** (1), Flathead County Landfill (bj W.) Still present 13 Feb (Josh C.)
 02/02 – **Hoary Redpoll** (1), Whitefish feeder (Dan C., bj W.)
 02/02 – **(Red) Fox Sparrow** (1), Columbia Falls (Josh C.) First seen 01/12
 02/03 – **Varied Thrush** (1, early migrant), Somers

- (Dan C.) With flock of American Robins
 02/08 – **Harris's Sparrow** (1), West Valley (Jake B.) Seen again 02/14 (bj W.)
 02/13 – **Yellow-headed Blackbird** (2), Creston (Mani G.) In mixed blackbird flock.
 02/13 – **Long-tailed Duck** (1), Flathead L. at Wayfarer's S.P. (Jake B., Cory D.)

What to Expect – March 2022

The battle between winter and spring begins in earnest during early March, frequently the “mud” season. Our winter raptors and finches may remain, but as days get longer and the thaw begins, migrants soon follow. By mid-March, a wide diversity of waterfowl species can be found, including large flocks of American (and a few Eurasian) Wigeons, Northern Pintails, Greater Scaup, Canvasbacks, Snow Geese, Tundra Swans and more. Mountain and Western Bluebirds will arrive, as will Western Meadowlarks. And the first insect-eaters, Tree and Violet-green Swallows should be coursing over local wetlands by St. Patrick's Day.

Nongame Wildlife Tax Check-off

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



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

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



CHIRPS & SQUAWKS

Highlights from the February 7, 2022 Board of Directors Meeting

- Rod Walette, Treasurer, reported that WCF has discontinued the Day of Giving fundraiser, he is seeking bids to renew the FAS insurance policies, and the Montana Audubon Wildlife Grant application will be submitted. Rod also initiated continuing discussion about investments/endowments at WCF, and it was agreed that a final decision should be made at the March meeting.
- Jake Bramante explained the equipment and set-up being used to hold the hybrid (live and Zoom) meeting as a test run for the January public meeting. He also reviewed the status of equipment purchases and gave a report on the progress of switching to a new data base management program.
- The Birds and Cats brochure was reviewed and the Board approved going forward, so it will be reviewed by a Humane Society representative, then the final wording formatted by a graphic designer.
- Denny Olson reported that the script and work on the Native Plants video is moving forward and filming will be completed in the spring; the deer enclosure structure in OSNA was completed and he can now look for a teacher/class to complete baseline information and monitor growth; and, he is working on creating the new education trunk on Osprey.

Ninepipes Christmas Bird Count December 19

The Ninepipes CBC was conducted on December 19th, with 19 participants split into 8 parties. 73 species, which is about average, were reported with no new species. The total number of birds was down about 30% mostly in Canada Geese and Red-winged Blackbirds.

A possible new species was seen on the 15th

during count week. A pelican had been seen regularly until then, but didn't make it to the 19th for the CBC. 17 eagles were spotted on the ice of Ninepipes clustered around a carcass about 300 yards out. Glimpses of yellow were noted as the eagles were squabbling.

James Oates



This picture is from a video that was taken on January 13 during the release of an eagle, which had been spotted a few days before by a hiker on the shoreline of Bird Point on Polson Bay. It was rescued by CSKT Wildlife personnel, and taken to Wild Wings Recovery for rehab. It was apparently uninjured, but somehow had its wing frozen to the ice during the quick cold spell. It was released near the spot where found.

provided by James Oates

OSNA continued from page 1

Discussions for the Montana program began in 1997, and have been modified over time as needed, but the definition is "a site that provides essential habitat to one or more high-priority species and their habitats (defined in part by the Montana Bird Conservation Plan of 2000), and can be either protected or unprotected, private or public, and any size amenable to conservation efforts." In order for nominated areas to be approved, they need to meet one or more of the following criteria:

Sites important to endangered, threatened, or vulnerable species of special concern or priority (e.g. Common Loon, **Bald Eagle**, **Pileated Woodpecker**, **Red-eyed Vireo**);

Sites important to moderate and high-priority national Watch List species with populations in Montana (e.g. Short-eared Owl, **Rufous Hummingbird**, **Gray Catbird**);

Sites with important habitats that support species or species assemblages largely restricted to a unique or threatened natural community, or that **are exceptional examples of functional natural habitats**;

Sites where exceptional numbers or **diversity of birds** concentrate for breeding, during migration, or

in winter; and/or

Sites important for long-term research and/or monitoring projects that contribute substantially to ornithology, **bird conservation, and/or education**.

The OSNA met several of these criteria, and Montana Audubon designated the site as an IBA shortly after it was nominated by our members in 2003. In addition to the excellent conservation opportunity that long-term protection on this exceptional riparian area represents, the diversity of birds known to occur here (now up to 168 species) includes several state and national bird species of concern (including those in bold, above). The fully updated OSNA bird list can be found on the Flathead Audubon website at <https://flatheadaudubon.org/osnabirds>.

The IBA designation certainly helped to solidify support for the efforts of both Flathead Audubon and Montana Audubon to maintain the natural character of this beautiful riparian area. And it is just one of 42 IBA sites Montana Audubon has approved in the state. Eleven of these are designated as Globally Significant IBAs (e.g. Glacier National Park, Bowdoin National Wildlife Refuge). Maps and information from each can be found on the Montana Audubon website at <https://mtaudubon.org/birds-science/iba/maps>

by Dan Casey

Lead poisoning continued from page 4

pick up lead in carcasses in Montana and other states that have not banned lead ammunition. For waterfowl, the problem is most important in areas where waterfowl hunting has occurred over a long period of time. Lead shot accumulated at the bottom of lakes and ponds and in marshes where hunting has occurred. Lead pellet densities in coastal hunting areas in Louisiana and Texas reach densities of 1,000-3,000 pellets per hectare (= 2.47 acres) *Journal of Fish and Wildlife Management* (2017) 8 (1): 173-180).

Even though mortality from lead poisoning

makes up a relatively small percentage of total bird mortality, we should make every effort to eliminate it, especially because its effects are acute for some key wildlife species such as the California Condor, and a variety of raptors and scavengers that acquire lead from carcasses.

What Can We Do?

We can encourage any attempt by Fish, Wildlife and Parks to ban the use of lead ammunition in all upland game hunting in Montana.



Thank You!

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

Donations to Flathead Audubon that are accompanied by dedications are listed each month in this space. The full list of 2022 donors will appear in February 2023.

Tribute Gifts Dec 1, 2021 - Feb 18, 2022

Leonard Boselovic in honor of Katherine Stone
 Carol Risher Brouha in memory of June Ash
 Joey Kositzky in the name of Jerry Lundgren and Alice Ford
 Ellen Sullivan in memory of June Ash
 Linda and John Winnie in memory of June Ash

Wild Wings in Choteau

Wild Wings in Choteau, a three-day celebration of the annual spring Snow Goose migration through Montana, will be held March 25-27 in Choteau Montana. It will include presentations, an art exhibit, and guided tours to Freezout Lake to view the large numbers of mi-

grating geese and swans that stop over there. The event is hosted by several organizations/businesses in Choteau, in coordination with MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks/Freezout Lake WMA. For details and registration look on Facebook at wild-wingschoteau.



clipartmax.com



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+
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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.

FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY DIRECTORY

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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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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 \$ _____
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New member? Renewal?

If you wish to receive a paper copy by
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