



the

Pileated Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

 April 2022
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Towhee

Birdsoftheworld.com

Center for Native Plants earns Conservation Achievement Award

One of the wonderful jewels of the Flathead Valley is the Center for Native Plants in Whitefish. It is the only retail nursery in the Flathead Valley for native plants. They grow over 200 species of wildflowers, grasses, groundcovers, shrubs, and trees – all native to Montana and the mountain areas of the Northwest. It is Flathead Audubon's special honor to recognize the Center for Native Plants with our Conservation Achievement Award. Hailey Moore and her dedicated, knowledgeable staff spend much of their time educating people and encouraging the use of native plants to help promote and protect our biodiversity and ultimately our birds.

The Center for Native Plants is part of its parent company, Forestation. "Our interest in native plants began years ago while working on land restoration projects throughout the Crown of the Continent ecosystem", states their website. "The more time we spent in the woods, the more we began to appreciate the beauty and diversity of native plants, as well as their many benefits." But, the Co-owners, David Nodtsinger, Andrew Beltz, and Greg Gunderson had a hard time getting native plants for use in their projects. They began to think about growing their own plants.

"Learning a lot along the way", says Nodtsinger, "we had two big things happen to help us

achieve our dream – that was the acquisition of land and hiring Hailey Moore as General Manager for the newly created Center for Native Plants".

Hailey, as it turns out, is a native plant enthusiast. She is so much more than a designer and planter. For the past seven years Hailey and her team have collected seeds from the forest and brought them back to the nursery. Hailey then begins the husbandry of nurturing and fostering them into viable plants that can be grown in landscapes throughout the valley and other parts of NW Montana.

"These are plants grown sustainably right here in the valley, without the use of pesticides, which is so important for protecting our native insects and biodiversity", explains Kathy Ross, a Center volunteer. "They are grown outdoors, making them hardy and

well-adapted to the climate of the area".

"Growing native plants is not easy but it is a fun challenge," says Hailey. Seeds are hand collected and sown into sterile soil. Each plug, all 21,250 of them per year, is inoculated with Mycorrhizae and beneficial bacteria. Then they winter over in the open air. "Our long-term goal would be to have a heated indoor growing space", Hailey adds with a dreamy look in her eyes.

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APRIL FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

Monday April 4, 2022. 5:30 PM. FAS Board of Directors Meeting. Public Meeting Room, Fish, Wildlife & Parks building, 490 N. Meridian Rd., Kalispell.

Monday, April 11, 2022. 7 PM. Flathead Audubon General Meeting. Can be attended in person or by Zoom. See page 3 for how to participate.

Sunday April 10, 9-11:30 AM. Birding at Smith Lake, Kila. See page 6.

Wednesday April 20, 8-11AM. Earth Day Celebration at Creston Fish Hatchery. See page 6

Sundays April 24, May 8 and May 22, 8-10 AM. Sonny Boon Memorial Trail, Somers. See page 6.

Saturday April 30, 9:30 AM-1 PM. Owen Sowerwine Natural Area, See page 6.

Sunday June 12 –Tuesday June 14. Warbler Days at Tally Lake. See page 6.

BIRD OF THE MONTH

Canada Geese Do The Darnedest Things by Ben Long

You are not alone if you consider the Canada Goose a common, even uninteresting bird. But you would be mistaken.

Canada Geese get a bad rap. Golfers and lakeshore property owners are forever grumbling about the mess goose leave on fairways and docks. Honkers gonna honk, and they do put up a racket.

Heck, Canada Geese can even be aggressive, especially if spoiled with human handouts. As a small boy, my nephew had to go to the Emergency Room after getting assaulted by a goose in Colorado.

But Canada Geese are precious in their own loud, messy somewhat obnoxious way. I was reminded of this on one recent bitterly cold winter evening. Karen and I were driving the freeway along the Yellowstone River near Billings. The land was covered with fresh snow and flight after flight of Canada Geese were coming in for landings on the river, backlit by a pale yellow sunset. It was gorgeous.

And never to be taken for granted! While Canada Geese are abundant these days, they risked extinction not long ago. And migrations are becoming shorter and less common. More Canada Geese are content to stay put all winter, taking advantage of milder weather, delectable lawns and waste grain.

There are several generally recognized subspecies of Canada Goose. The largest is the most common "giant" Canada Goose. But in the 1800s, they were subjected to habitat destruction as we drained swamps and filled wetlands and mown down by unrelenting and unregulated market hunters, who often used boat-fixed cannons called punt-guns to harvest waterfowl by the flock.

In 1918, Canada Geese were protected by the federal Migratory Bird Act. It worked wonders. Market hunting stopped and groups like Ducks Unlimited worked to restore wetlands while wildlife agencies restocked vacant habitats. Numbers rebounded. Recreational and subsistence hunting rebounded too. In fact, some 2.5 million giant Canada Geese are eaten every year in a sustainable fashion.

I, myself, ran a-fowl of this law. When I was

11, my friend (Brian Ferguson, aka "The Ferg") and I threw smoke bombs at geese at a city park in Idaho. We got a stern warning and a ride home from the cops, telling us we were risking federal offense. I was scared straight.

Geese are well studied, yet still harbor surprises. Consider their lifespan for example. While on average they don't live long (because they suffer such high attrition as chicks) the outliers may get old enough to vote. The oldest known Canada Goose was tagged with a leg band in Ohio in 1969 and shot by a hunter in Ontario in 2001. It was 33 years old! It was probably a tad tough on the fork.

We romanticize geese for their mysterious migrations. Some populations do indeed migrate great distances, but others are more residential. Migrating, say, from bare

grass Buffalo Hill Golf Course to open water on the Flathead River.

But here's an oddball to consider. A Canada Goose was fitted with a neckband in Nanaimo, British Columbia, a few years ago. Most of the geese in that study were residents of the east side of Vancouver Island, although the more adventurous did foray into Washington and Oregon.

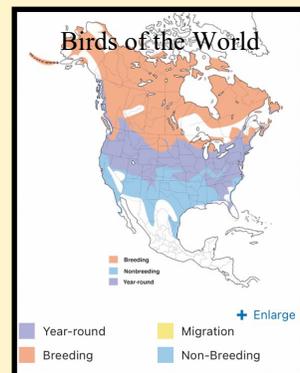
Researchers were astounded when one goose from their study showed up on the shore of Lake Michigan in Chicago's Lincoln Park. That's about 2000 miles, as the crow flies. And east-west, not north-south. Indeed, such an assumed flight path would go directly over Flathead Lake.

So, what was the deal with that goose? Perhaps it got swept up in a storm. Or perhaps it fell in with a migratory flock. Perhaps it had a gene for wanderlust. Or perhaps it got lost. Nature is awash with such mystery.

Even in the humble, common form of a Canada Goose.



Esmé Rosen



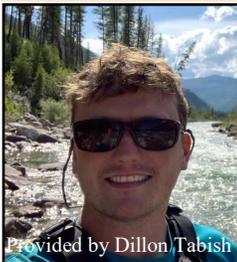
April Program

The Boom of Outdoor Recreation and the Importance of Promoting Sustainable Behavior

presented by Dillon Tabish

At the April 11 meeting Dillon Tabish will talk about the spike in recreation interest in recent years and what Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is doing to try and expand outdoor opportunities while promoting sustainable behavior, such as Recreate Responsibly.

Dillon was born and raised in Missoula. He worked as a river guide in Idaho



Provided by Dillon Tabish

and a wildland firefighter in western Montana before graduating from the University of Montana School of Journalism in 2008. He spent nearly 10 years working as a journalist in the Flathead Valley, and in 2017 he joined Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks as its regional communication and education program manager in Kalispell.

How to Attend the April 11 FAS General Meeting

We had a great turn out both in-person and virtually at our March meeting, and it was great to visit with friends we hadn't seen in a while. We hope more of you will continue to migrate back to our meetings at the Gateway Mall as you feel comfortable and as the weather gets warmer.

The hybrid meetings seem to be working well, so we're going to stick with the mixed method for our April 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. Attendees have been good at practicing social distancing for seating in the large meeting room and wearing masks and we will continue to encourage that.

Meeting Time: April 11, 2022 07:00 PM

If you will be joining virtually, you will first 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.

You can also get an audio connection to the meeting without the Zoom visual.

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!

May Meeting FAS

We're excited to announce that our May potluck and silent auction will be back this year!

Where: Room 26, East side of Gateway Mall (United Way building), along Glenwood Rd, Kalispell

When: Monday, May 9, 2022

Doors Open 5:00 PM, Potluck Dinner 6:00 PM, Meeting Begins 7:00 PM.

Please bring your own plates, utensils, and cups. There is no sink to wash dishes so prepare accordingly. Be sure to arrive early enough to look over and bid on silent auction items! Officers and Board Members will also be elected.

SILENT AUCTION

It's Back! - The annual Silent Auction at the Flathead Audubon May Potluck. Now's the perfect time to gather all of the valuable "stuff" that you might be able to live without. The type of items we're looking for are bird books, outdoor gear, art work, live bedding plants, homemade pies and cookies and bird houses and feeders of all kinds. We'll have a few special items that have been donated to FAS and details of those will be coming in next month's newsletter. Proceeds from the silent auction will benefit our Conservation Education program.

by Cory Davis

From the FAS Education Committee

Science Fair Winner Chosen for Flathead Audubon Society Conservation of Wildlife Award

On Thursday, February 24th, Flathead County students in grades 3 through 12 shared their science fair projects with judges at Flathead County Science Fair, held at the Flathead County Fairgrounds Expo Building. In addition to the many grade-level life, earth, and physical science awards given that day, I had the privilege of selecting a winner for the Flathead Audubon Society Conservation of Wildlife Award. This year's winner is Asher Stanfield, a seventh grader attending Kalispell Middle School. His project was entitled, "Winter Birds and Their Feeding Preferences." Asher did a wonderful job of explaining how he set up his project to gather data about the birds



Asher Stanfield

coming to his feeders this winter, and the types of feed they preferred to eat. He showed knowledge of the birds that spend their winters locally and of the scientific method of investigation. Well Done, Asher!

Also of note at the Science Fair was a very interesting program presented to all of the students by Kathy Ross and other volunteers from Wild Wings, an organization responsible for helping birds that have been injured in this area. The group brought out dozens of birds, such as owls and hawks, giving students close up views of beautiful birds and compelling natural history information about them.

by Cindy Roberts

Below is the third installment in a new Post series called

GETTING TO KNOW OWEN SOWERWINE NATURAL AREA

A Great Beginning!

A common question about Owen Sowerwine is: "so how did Flathead Audubon get involved?". Brent Mitchell can answer that question because he was involved from day one. Brent says, "Along came an interesting article in the Daily InterLake. The Parks Board had for several years paid the lease fee – a mere \$200 per year. Finances were tight and they were considering forfeiting the lease, since the MT Department of State Lands was planning to raise the fee to \$550! I read the article and thought, "Whoa, maybe Flathead Audubon could help out the Park people." I was the new President of FAS at the time. I called our immediate past president, Robin Maggadino of Bigfork, for advice and her take on whether we should get involved. Robin's response was, "Heck yes! Check it out." As wildlife biologists, both Robin and I knew the importance of riparian bottom lands and vegetation to wildlife, birds in particular.

I called the Parks director, Bob Norwood, and set a meeting to discuss the options available. At that first meeting, Director Norwood explained the \$350 increase was not budgeted for and was enough to be a deal breaker for his department. I asked him if FAS were able to make up the shortfall, could the Parks Board hold on to the lease for a couple of years until a permanent fix could be designed? Mr. Norwood said yes, but he would first check with the state agency and the Parks Board.

Over the next couple of weeks, we wrote a letter to the editor of the InterLake, asking interested private parties or groups to donate to a special separate fund just for the OSNA lease payment. FAS pitched in \$350 to start building the account and we received 3 or 4 donations from the public. The Parks Department was able to continue the lease. Ah, a breather after the crisis!"

With the support of Brent Mitchell and the other FAS officers, Janet Ellis of Montana Audubon conducted negotiations with DNRC, and in February 1997 Audubon took over the lease and management from the Park Board. Through additional negotiations, a 10-year license was established in the spring of 2001, designating Montana Audubon as the Managing Entity, and a separate agreement between Montana Audubon and Flathead Audubon delineated management tasks and financial responsibilities.

In Fall of 2001, the new OSNA Committee was formed. Neal Brown, Dan Casey, Janet Ellis, Leo Keane, Brent Mitchell, and Linda Winnie wrote a Management Plan, which was adopted by the State Land Board in January 2003. The OSNA Committee became a standing committee in November 2002. In the Spring of 2002, Bruce Tannehill organized an OSNA *continued on page 8*





Photo by JP Edge
Hungry Horse News

Conservation Educator's Niche by Denny Olson

Flathead Audubon and its Education Committee, partner Flathead Land Trust and consultant Region One Fish, Wildlife and Parks, are embarking on a plan to use 7th and 8th-grade education

about birds as a portal to a broader concept of "place-based" education.

Montana School Standards, are by definition, generic. They have application across educational systems nation-wide. Their strength is in ensuring basic understandings in students of certain general concepts, and the over-arching idea is to "raise the bar" of education across the United States. The weakness of teaching these standards *to the exclusion* of any more specific local expectations is that 1) children are denied direct learning experiences with their local world, replacing concrete, direct sensory experiences with abstract, indirect, virtual experiences, 2) they are inadvertently encouraged to take their talents elsewhere when they graduate, 3) many remain unmotivated and disempowered to help solve problems right where they live, and to make solid contributions to "home", and 4) they fail to form emotional bonds to their "place", which has been shown to be a positive influence on mental health.

We want to fix that.

The Flathead's natural outdoors is integral to our quality of water, air, food, human life and enjoyment. Sound research has consistently shown that children and adults who spend significant time in nature are healthier, happier, and smarter. Familiarity with our home "place" is important to our health and happiness through a sense of belonging, and stimulates intelligence and relevant critical thinking regarding making good decisions about our local area. We want to fit bird education into standard core science and arts curriculum to give teachers an interesting, hands-on, unique, in-your-face way to teach concepts about biodiversity and ecosystems that incorporate outdoor field trips.

So, we have tied the Goals and Objectives of the Flathead Bird Education Program to both national and state standards, but also to standards concerned with the place in which they are living and growing. We call those "Place Standards".

Place-learning has built-in relevance. Local politics affects us at a much greater rate and intensity than state, national or global politics. Local air, water and food conditions affect us much more than on those larger scales. Local people are the ones with which we must have relationships. Local land and wildlife are what we see, feel, hear, smell, and taste when we walk out of the door. One rather dominating fact seems to have escaped those of us in the educational community. We are *here ... now*. So let's use the here and the now.

And birds are accessible -- always here, now. Every citizen of the Flathead should have a sense of where they fit into this wonderful area of the world. Glacier National Park is an obvious, no-brainer. Flathead Lake is a clear, cold, huge recreational and economic treasure. We need to know what makes it tick -- its unique biology and the threats to its integrity. Those are the obvious pieces of that wonder. But the entire watershed of the Flathead system feeding water to our Lake treasure is also part of that. Kids, and adults too, need to understand the dynamics of the Flathead forks, Stillwater, and Whitefish river systems, and how their integrity translates to our inland great lake.

How many of our citizens know about the spectacular Sandhill Crane migration stopover in our West Valley, where in October they can stand in one spot and see hundreds of wild cranes filling their senses with wild, raucous rattling calls? How many have witnessed four hundred Swans and thousands of ducks cramming the river and sloughs of the Lower Valley in late March? Who has cruised the roads of that same area in the dead of winter to watch dozens of northern migrant hawks and owls hunting from their perches? Who hasn't listened to the cacophony of late spring bird song in the river bottoms right next to our towns.?

Place literacy is important for so many reasons. We need to know where our water comes from, and where it goes when we flush the toilet. We need to have a geographic overview of how our yard our neighborhood our watershed, and the world itself relate to each other. These are the things that are prerequisites to making good decisions about, and bonding to, our wonderful place. We are citizens -- *of a place*. Let's learn about it, and celebrate it.

We could start with birds. Just saying ...

Natural Events To See This Month:

Male Northern Flicker calls and drumming dominate the neighborhood.

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.



BIRDING at SMITH LAKE, KILA, Sunday April 10, 9-11:30 AM. Join FAS field trip leader Darcy Thomas for a morning of birdwatching. We will drive around Smith Lake to designated pullouts to view birds. Along the way we will stop at Ashley Creek and pass through a variety of habitat including shallow wetlands and marsh, agricultural land, stands of willow and other shrubs, as well as coniferous forest. We should see geese, ducks, teal, and grebes, herons, Sandhill Crane, Northern Harrier, Bald Eagle, Swallows, and Bluebirds. Walking is minimal. Bathroom available at fishing access site. Bring binoculars and a spotting scope if you have one. To register contact Darcy at 406-407-8263 or darcy@flatheadaudubon.org.

EARTH DAY CELEBRATION at CRESTON FISH HATCHERY, Wednesday April 20, 8-11 AM. Please join FAS field trip leader Darcy Thomas to hike the trails and view the pond from a birding blind while we look for early migrants including waterfowl. The Creston National Fish Hatchery grounds provide a variety of habitats that are attractive to several species. While ducks are more typical on the ponds, the grounds offer a bubbling creek, woodland edges and plenty of shrubs and trees. This is an excellent place to find migrant songbirds, Great Blue Herons, Bald Eagles, Belted Kingfisher and American Dipper. We will also look for early blooms. Dress warmly and bring binoculars and a spotting scope if you have one. Walking of up to two miles on easy trails is possible. If desired and the weather permits, bring a picnic lunch to enjoy at the covered pavilion at the end of the field trip. Bathrooms available. Participants limited to 10. Contact Darcy to register at 406-407-8263 or darcy@flatheadaudubon.org.

SONNY BOON MEMORIAL TRAIL, SOMERS, Sundays April 24, May 8 and May 22, 8-10 AM.

Dan Casey will be leading three Sunday morning bird walks along the Sonny Boon Memorial Trail in Somers during this spring migration season. The paved trail follows a portion of the old railroad bed along Somers Slough and offers excellent views of waterfowl as well as a wide variety of land-birds reliant on the diverse riparian habitat. Indeed, 157 species have been reported at this eBird hotspot (<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L1390990>). These round-trip walks will be one mile each way, and will last approximately 2 hours, starting at 8 AM. Attendance is limited to 10 people. Please call Dan at 406-270-5941 to reserve spots on the attendance list. Walks will be held on the following dates:

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

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

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

OWEN SOWERWINE NATURAL AREA, Saturday April 30, 9:30 AM–1 PM. Linda deKort and Pat Jaquith will lead an exploration of the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area with the goal of updating the plant list. Bring your favorite reference book if you have one. Bring binoculars if you're interested in the Spring birds providing the music! Dress for the weather and wear sturdy footwear. Walking may be on uneven ground and in wet conditions. Group size will be limited. To reserve a space, e-mail pjaquith07@gmail.com.

WARBLER DAYS at TALLY LAKE, Sunday June 12- Tuesday June 14. This year's Tally Lake campout is scheduled for Sunday June 12 (arrive after 12 noon) to Tuesday June 14 (checkout by 11 AM). This is an ideal time of year to find a variety of migrant and resident birds, most notable is that virtually all the warbler species that are found in Northwest Montana are here. There will be guided walks by expert birders. Details will follow in the May Pileated Post.

Natural Events To See This Month:

Sandhill Cranes dance and gargle in wet meadows.

Flathead Valley Bird Report

by Dan Casey

Rare and Notables – Feb/March

The Long-tailed Duck at Bigfork, first found in Feb, was joined by another at the same location. One or more Snowy Owls continued near Somers, and a variety of uncommon gull species were reported, mostly from Flathead Lake. Bluebirds and Western Meadowlarks arrived in early March, and waterfowl abundance and diversity was rapidly increasing by mid-month. See <https://ebird.org/region/US-MT-029?yr=all> for more.

- 02/18 – **Western Meadowlark** (1), Lower Valley (Joshua C.)
 02/19 – **Glaucous Gull** (1), Bigfork (Mani G.)
 02/24 – **Common Grackle** (1), Creston (Mani G.)
 03/06 – **Mountain Bluebird** (1), North of Kalispell (Markus and Erin B.)
 03/07 – **Western Bluebird** (6), North of Kalispell (Markus and Erin B.)
 03/07 – **Long-tailed Duck** (2), Wayfarer's State Park (bj W., Shawn R.)
 03/07 – **Lesser Black-backed Gull** (1), Flathead L.

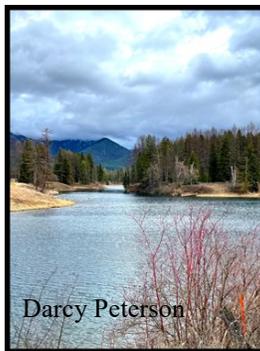
- North Shore (Shawn R.)
 03/08 – **Cackling Goose** (1), Creston (Craig H.)
 03/08 – **Eurasian Wigeon** (1), Church Slough (Dan C.)
 03/08 – **Glaucous-winged Gull** (1), North Shore Flathead Lake (Dan C.)
 03/16 – **Lesser Black-backed Gull** (1), Egan Slough (Bob K.)
 03/17 – **Sandhill Crane** (1), Egan Slough area (Mani G.)

What to Expect – April 2022

Late March and April bring peak migrant waterfowl numbers, and by the end of the period even the latest duck species (e.g. Cinnamon and Blue-winged Teal) have arrived. Large numbers of swallows also arrive in early spring (typically by St. Patrick's Day), and more of our breeding songbirds begin to arrive. These include Yellow-rumped Warbler, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Spotted Towhee and more. By mid-April, even the first few hummingbirds may be showing up.

FEBRUARY 27 FIELD TRIP REPORT: *CRESTON FISH HATCHERY*

The day dawned cloudy and cold (22 degrees) and fortunately there was little wind. We had a good turnout of birders. Some open water helped our observation and hearing of 26 different species. Two American Dippers were jumping around in the creek and singing near the hatchery building, six Trumpeter Swans, who were initially just floating along quietly, put on a flyover display and honking while doing so, a couple Great Blue Herons perched in a tree allowing good viewing,



and a Belted Kingfisher was flying and calling in the trees. There were numerous other species including hawks, Bald eagles, woodpeckers, nuthatches, chickadees and various species of ducks, and a flying pheasant. We heard Red-winged Blackbirds singing, a sure sign that there might be spring! Thanks to Steve Gniadek who participated and helped with the identification of birds and birdsongs.

by Margaret Parodi and Kathy Ross

CHIRPS & SQUAWKS

Highlights from the March 7, 2022 Board of Directors Meeting

- ◆ In prior months, the Board had received information, and had a chance to ask questions, about establishing an endowment account with Whitefish Community Foundation. The decision was made to proceed with creating a WCF endowment using \$50,000 of investment funds.
- ◆ Jake Bramante was approved to Chair the Membership Committee. Linda Winnie is stepping down as the Chair of the Newsletter Committee. We are seeking nominations for new Board members.
- ◆ OSNA update: A new Management Plan and Memorandum of Understanding are being written, we are planning several spring work days in the next few weeks to clear invasive Buckthorn, and the Biennial Report was prepared and submitted to DNRC.
- ◆ Denny Olson met with local school Principals and several have are interested in participating in the education programs we offer. Denny has once again been busy doing classroom and public presentations.

Conservation Award continued from page 1.

Hailey's enthusiasm for native plants is driven by the importance of their role in the health of our ecosystems and their ability to enhance biodiversity. Not only are they wild and beautiful, but they also benefit birds and other wildlife such as pollinators by improving native pollinator sources and providing food, shelter, breeding, and nesting habitat that is designed for the animals that live in Montana. Native plants provide natural defenses against insects and diseases and save water because they require less irrigation. Because they are native, they are perfectly adapted to the local soil and environment, ensuring they are hardy during cold winters and hot, dry summers.

As if hand collecting seeds, sowing them, and fostering native plants were not enough, Hailey and

her team also work directly with clients to help them plan their outdoor spaces to include the native plants. This involves a lot of education as well as plant delivery and landscaping services. To top this off they also offer informational educational programs for the community. "We offer classes on protecting biodiversity and gardening with natives", says Hailey. "Our hope is to become a hub and outreach "center" for the community."

With the valley growing rapidly we lose habitat every day. The Center for Native Plants plays a vital role in educating people about the importance of native habitat and offering an alternative to exotic plants. For this reason, they richly deserve this Conservation Achievement Recognition.

Of Birds and Bears--Finding a Balance

We have had the enormous pleasure all winter of enjoying birds at our feeders and the birds have benefited. Now is the time to consider taking the feeders down. If you live in bear country, out of respect for our furry, hungry neighbors, it is essential. Besides helping to keep bears out of trouble, taking your feeders down also encourages birds to go for their natural food sources of insects, especially caterpillars. Over 90% of our birds (even hummingbirds!) eat insects, a source of protein and nutrients vital to their health and

more importantly essential for raising baby birds. It has been observed that it can take 6,000 to 9,000 caterpillars to raise a brood of chickadees (average brood 5-10). Perhaps we would start seeing fewer insects in the landscape, creating less need for toxic insecticides and helping nature to find its own balance. Taking feeders down during the summer can be a win-win for bears, birds and the environment!

by Kathy Ross

OSNA continued from page 4

Birdathon, which raised about \$2000 to help FAS cover their management and lease expenses.

And then, the real work began!! On October 5, 2002, the first Fall Work Day was held in OSNA, and 28 people volunteered. According to the report in the PP "Over a period of about 4 hours, these volunteers removed a sofa, a rabbit hutch, a tire, a barrel, beer cans, and other litter and flood debris from the forested area along the Stillwater and Flathead Rivers. They filled two pickup trucks with trash. The group also cleared brush from the entrance at Treasure Lane, generating a dump truck load of brush that was then composted." Whew!!

Fall Work Day in 2003, focused efforts toward WEEDS! Brent wrote in the newsletter that "a whopping 34 energetic weed-pulling folks" ... "scoured the trails and entrance to OSNA for thistle, burdock, hounds tongue, and knapweed. The weeds didn't stand a chance. At the end of 2 hours, the pile of large trash bags stuffed with weeds resembled a small mountain." In addition, they cleared all the trails with a brush cutter. Apparently, there were still more weeds, because the 2004 Fall Work Day was again organized to pull and bag weeds "to avoid having to spray with chemicals." These early examples of hard work over chemicals continues to be reflected today in OSNA - volunteers spent 110 hours pulling, cutting, and bagging weeds in 2020 and 2021.

Next month, we will continue with the history of OSNA, as efforts were directed toward making OSNA more user-friendly, with improvements such as signs, entrances, a kiosk, bridges, and fencing. Through the hard work, time, and commitment of many people, OSNA lives up to the tag Brent Mitchell gave it in 2004: "A Community Treasure".

contributions by Brent Mitchell, Pam Willison and Linda Winnie



photo by Sheryl Hester

Birds and Native Plants of Flathead Lake State Park, Wayfarers Unit May 5th, May 26th, and June 2nd

Montana State Parks (stateparks.mt.gov) announced that they will be partnering with the Montana Native Plant Society-Flathead Chapter and Flathead Audubon Society to bring you several programs about the native plants and birds that thrive on the lovely east shore landscape.

Thursday, May 5th, 6-7 PM Creating Birdsong in Our World, One Garden at A Time

In this presentation by Kathy Ross, you'll learn why the relationship between native plants, insects, and birds is important to understanding the loss of habitats and biodiversity. She'll explore why the simple acts of leaving native plants or planting native plants are one of the most direct ways to help birds and the environment. Participants will gain an understanding of how we can do this in our landscapes and gardens while creating sustainable habitats. 96% of our birds depend on insects to feed their young. Look at your garden from a new perspective through the eyes of the other beings who share the landscape with you. Celebrate the holes in leaves and rethink pretty! This talk is limited to 20 participants. For meeting place and to register call [406-837-3041 ext. 0](tel:406-837-3041)



Thursday, May 26th, 8-10 AM and Thursday, June 2nd, 6-8 PM

Putting it all together, Naturalist walk at Wayfarers

Join naturalists from Audubon and MT Native Plant Society for a short walk at the Wayfarers Unit of Flathead Lake State Park in Bigfork. You'll learn about the native plants and birds that thrive on this lovely east shore landscape where biodiversity abounds! Participants may observe; spotted towhees flitting around the waves of the lupine understory, warbler species calling high above in the trees, and catbirds searching for insects amidst the spring blossoms of ninebark and serviceberry. These hikes will be less than 1.5 miles, please dress for spring weather and bring water. Each walk is limited to 12 participants that may choose either a short or long walk option. For meeting place and to register call [406-287-3041 ext. 0](tel:406-287-3041)

For More information call the Ranger Sta-



Wayfarers State Park



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.



On “Of Birds and Men” by Rosemary McKinnon

The Economist is an unlikely magazine in which to read information about birds, and yet, a 2021 Christmas article sought to bring attention to some unusual men who have traveled further into the world of birds than most of us will ever even imagine. Many people turn to bird watching as a solace from the cares of everyday life or to become more closely in tune with nature. Very few of us actually want to become birds.

“Of Birds and Men: How men long to be at one with the spirits of the air” explores these few. An Italian, Angelo d’Arrigo, learned to fly, rigid arms outstretched borne aloft by a hang-glider, in order to learn about bird migration patterns. He flew with desert hawks from Senegal to the Mediterranean and then helped western Siberian cranes raised in captivity learn how to migrate 5,500km from Siberia to the Caspian Sea. Before his early death he raised two young condor chicks from eggs and then he taught them how to fly by crouching, running and jumping-off. He called his project “Metamorphosis: man into bird” and, in so far as this is possible, he seems to have achieved this goal. A second man, Sam Lee, became a bird musician, singing with nightingales in the English woods during April and May and developing a unique communication with them through harmonic whistles, “spinning myself farther back into the web of nature” until he became one with the nightingales through song.

What are the sources of such passionate quests by men to become more like birds?

The third man mentioned in the article was an Englishman. John Alec Baker lived in Essex and is best known for his remarkable book, *The Peregrine* (1967). Robert MacFarlane, a well-known British writer on the subject of landscape, lives in Cambridge in the east of England on the border of Essex, where he is a fellow at Emmanuel College. In his own intriguing book, *Landmarks*, MacFarlane has given some serious thought to the psychology behind Baker’s obsession with hawks and his extraordinary book. Baker was a private and pained man who was severely myopic. He was diagnosed as a child with rheumatic fever and as an adolescent with ankylosing spondylitis – acute, inflammatory arthritis which fuses muscle, bone and ligament in the spine. Baker was introduced to

bird watching in the 1950s by a friend and it became first a distraction, then a passion and finally an obsession. He became enraptured by “the predatory nature of falcons, their decisive speed, their awesome vision and subtle killings.” Housed in the library at the University of Essex are 1,600 pages of notes and field journals which, after five meticulous drafts, were distilled into the hyperkinetic prose of *The Peregrine*. This is not merely a book about bird hunting, killing and feeding but a book about becoming a falcon, learning to see the world through their eyes, and ultimately escaping the human shape into the wildness of the bird – the very antithesis of Baker’s struggle with limited eye sight and mobility. Baker teaches himself to see like a peregrine. He “sees and remembers patterns we do not know exist... He finds his way across the land by a succession of remembered symmetries... He sees maps of black and white.” In MacFarlane’s words he “becomes the *catascopos*, the looker down – a role usually reserved for Gods, pilots and mountaineers.” MacFarlane explores the role of binoculars as a way of focused looking which excludes the periphery of the surroundings and suggests that this is the perfect emblem of Baker’s own intense and intensely limited vision through which he pursues his obsession. Through close observation Baker identifies with peregrines and escapes his own limitations.

These three unusual men are not mere observers but are steeped in the world of birds. Angelo d’Arrigo flies with birds as their parent and teacher. Sam Leo sings and communicates as a bird, but only Baker actually attempts to describe what it means to “be” a bird.

Those who subscribe to the *Economist* can read or listen to the full article at <https://www.economist.com/christmas-specials/2021/12/18/of-birds-and-men>. Mike Fanning has offered to share his copy of the article with those who don’t subscribe. Contact him at shrdu@centurytel.net.



Flathead Forestry Expo

Flathead Audubon will be part of the annual Family Forestry Expo’s Family Day on Saturday, May 7th. Our exhibit will be located near the Wildlife station along with the live raptors from Wild Wings Rescue. The Expo is a week-long event for Flathead Valley 5th-graders, But on the last day, families are invited to participate. This year, Audubon will be concentrating

on activities about one of our most common and most amazing families of birds, our four kinds of Chickadees -- and the amazing value of birds to human beings. The expo is located just over two miles north of the Highways 2 and 40 intersection, just off of Halfmoon Road on Tamarack Lane. It’s a great (and free!) all-day event.
by Denny Olson



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 Feb 19 - March 18, 2022

Caroll Farrar in memory of June Ash .

Montana Native Plant Society April Program

The April program in the Montana Native Plant Society series MNPS Presents! will be **Native Plant Landscaping in Montana**, April 27, 7 PM, via Zoom. A panel of landscaping experts from around the state will provide tips on the topic and answer your questions. Advanced registration is required; this can be done when the date gets closer on the MNPS facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/MTNativePlantSociety>

CAN RADAR REALLY BE USED TO TRACK BIRDS?

Yes, radar beams are reflected off swarming masses of birds just like precipitation or water vapor. In the early days of World War II, British radar operators noticed mysterious, ethereal shadows drifting across their screens. In 1958, a New Orleans high school student named Sidney Gauthreaux figured out they were masses of birds. Next Generation Radar (NEXRAD) made studying bird migration much easier. The Air Force started using it to avoid collisions in their Bird Aircraft Strike Hazard program. More information available from The Cornell Lab of Ornithology website <https://www.allaboutbirds.org>.



SPECIAL GIFTS

I wish to help make Flathead Audubon's vision a reality. Here is my contribution to the continued success of our chapter.



- Eagle Donation, \$1000+
- Osprey Donation, \$500+
- Snowy Owl Donation, \$250+
- Merlin Donation, \$100+
- Kestrel Donation, \$50+
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Flathead Audubon Society

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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
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Newly scheduled field trips & events



THE PILEATED POST is delivered BY EMAIL!

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

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

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



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- Basic Membership —————\$25
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- Supporting Membership —————\$40
Extra \$15 funds local projects such as
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Owen Sowerwine Natural Area
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New member? Renewal?

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