



Pileated the Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

Volume 19

Number 9

December, 1994

1994 Christmas Bird Count Plans Announced

The 21st annual Bigfork Christmas Bird Count will be held on **Saturday, December 17th**, according to Dan Casey, co-ordinator. Part of the 95th annual nationwide effort, the count comprises a one-day attempt to count all the birds within a 7.5 mile radius circle centered on the "Little Brown Church" north of Bigfork. A total of 130 different species have been seen during the Bigfork counts since 1974.

Over the past 10 years, we have recorded an average of 10,000 individuals of 75 species on this count. Over 80 species have been recorded in the past five years, the highest in the state. This area has the distinction of hosting the nationwide high count for Wild Turkeys in each of the past six years; 702 last year was the all-time national high count!

Sand Hill Cranes were added to the Bigfork count last year, the first time they were ever noted on this local count. Another first were Bramblings, which were seen during the count week.

The chapter is hoping to have 40 people in about 15 groups in the field for the count. Dan Casey will be calling last year's participants to arrange area coverage. Final arrangements will be made at the December meeting.

To cover the editing and publishing costs of the annual CBC issue of *American Birds*, there is a mandatory fee of \$5 per participant. As in past years, there will be a

potluck compilation dinner at the Bigfork Senior Center, starting at 5 pm on the day of the count.

Plan on taking part in Montana's #1 Christmas Count! Birders of all skill levels are encouraged to join in, as are feeder-watchers and half-day helpers. Give Dan a call at 857-3143 (evenings) or 752-5501 (days), and tell him to count you in!

Ninepipe Refuge Bird Count. This count will be held on **Sunday, December 18**. Contact Jim Rogers, Polson co-ordinator, for particulars (883-3611).

The **Swan Valley Bird Count** will also take place during that week. Give Rod Ash a call for full information (754-2289).

Take Note!

⇒ December General Meeting

Monday, December 12, 1994

Fish, Wildlife & Parks Bldg.

490 N. Meridian Road, Kalispell

Meeting: 7:30 pm - Program: 8:15 pm

December Program —

Plans for the Christmas Bird Counts will be featured at the meeting. Dan Casey will have full particulars for the Bigfork Count and final plans will be provided on the Ninepipe and Swan Valley Counts.

Special Raffle: 2 adult one-day ski passes, 2 *Encyclopedia of North American Birds* and the book *Birds of America* by Frank Shaw.



THE EDITOR'S SPOTTING SCOPE

It was autumn -- a time to be outside with the falling leaves, the sunshine and the brisk air that began to leave promises of what was ahead. Birds fluttered incessantly around the feeders: chickadees, pine sisken, juncos, finches, sparrows, an occasional flicker and nuthatches. It was a fall day to experience and enjoy.

A new friend came by to visit. We were in the get-acquainted stage, so he didn't know that much about me and I was just getting to know him. There was an age difference that some of our common interests overcame: he was 10 and I wasn't.

He joined me in the back yard, playing with the dog and talking about the neighborhood bears and other wild creatures. Noticing the bird feeder with its bevy of birds, he asked about it and I explained.

"Oh, Man!" he lamented. "I wish I had my B.B. gun!"

I was stunned! Because of his obvious interest in the outdoors and its environs, it never occurred to me that he'd want to shoot birds at a feeder.

"Why?" I demanded, a little on the harsh side and accompanied by relief that he didn't have it. He looked at me with disbelief that I would even question why.

Jean Robocker, Flathead Audubon Chair who speaks to schools and clubs for the chapter, addresses this problem when she talks about birding to youngsters in a classroom. "These non-game birds -- who do they belong to?" she asks. "Why they belong to everyone, so we really don't have a right to shoot them, do we? They are there for everyone to enjoy."

My young friend received a little lecture on the shooting of birds that you can't eat and it was suggested that he hone his shooting skills on tin cans. (Not nearly as

exciting, I know, but much more rewarding in the long run.) I could visualize him becoming a man who enjoys hunting because it ties in with the great outdoors, which he obviously cares a great deal about, coupled with his interest in guns.

Hopefully, our conversation in the backyard will stay with him as he matures. If he ever draws a bead on a robin or a bluebird or an eagle, or any other non-game bird, let's hope a little voice will remind him: "That bird belongs to everyone to enjoy; so you don't have the right to shoot it."

Sharon Bergman



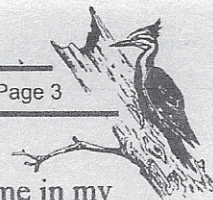
1995
COLORADO PELICAN FESTIVAL
April 28-30, Greeley

Three Days of Fun, Celebrating Our Wildlife:

- Field trips
- Workshops
- Pawnee National Grasslands
- Nature art
- Merchant discounts
- Our famous Walk-Like-A-Pelican Contest (be sure to enter!)
- Programs
- White Pelicans
- Banquet
- Local hot spots
- Star gazing

Full information: Platte & Prairie Audubon Society, PO Box 3354, Greeley, CO 80633. Or call: 303-330-5082 or 303-351-0166.

**THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF
FLATHEAD AUDUBON WISHES YOU AND
YOUR BIRDING FRIENDS A JOYOUS
HOLIDAY SEASON ○○○**



The President's Page >>

In my hometown, there was a "rite of passage" for 12-year old boys. It was called Gun Safety. Any boy with an inclination toward outdoor pursuits was bound to heed the call in the autumn of his twelfth year.

In our town, surrounded as it was by lakes, sloughs, cornfields and oak-covered hills, that was nearly all of us. The great outdoors and the adventurous life always beckoned just at the edge of town. I had more than an inclination toward the outdoors; I craved it. Dreaming of outdoor adventures would keep me awake at night and often even in school.

On weekends my friends and I would pack our haversacks and head off into the labyrinth of hills and valleys called Indian Creek and try to get lost. Looking back now, Indian Creek was truly a lovely place, wild and full of game, but too small for even a kid to get lost in. Still it was the only wilderness we had — and within walking distance from home.

In September of my twelfth year I was really ready for Gun Safety. In my mind, the only thing better than rambling over hills and fields would be rambling over hills and fields with a gun. That was big adventure. Throughout that autumn my nighttime meetings at my Gun Safety Instructor's house became a holy ritual. His home was just as it should be: dark and wood-paneled, with a gun cabinet, some stuffed birds and an outdoor calendar. All of us boys would listen quietly and be attentive, hanging on his every word. He knew it all: from competent gun handling to marksmanship to hunting ethics. And I soaked it up like nothing I ever learned in school. My Gun Safety class was truly a passage in my life.

By late October of that year I had completed Gun Safety and had earned my hunting permit. That meant I could finally

carry a gun afield. For the first time in my life I could go hunting.

One evening after dinner my father called me to the basement. He stood there holding two gun cases. He slid a gun out of one and handed it over to me. It was a .410 shotgun, a bolt action, all I had ever dreamed of. From the other case he lifted his gun, a large and heavy 12 guage Remington. He had bought them that day at the local hardware store.

I was beyond words. In retrospect, well I should have been. My father was not an outdoorsman. His passion was for the more social pursuits of bowling and golf; otherwise he devoted himself to his business. For him to buy us these guns was at once to acknowledge our differences and to believe in the value of my budding interests.

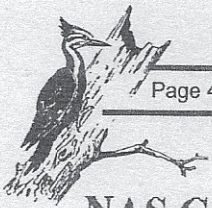
The next day we went pheasant hunting. There were many men and lots of shouting and whistling. I recall wading through fields of cornstalks and, when we reached the far end, a dizzying blur of pheasants flushing and flying every which way. I remember finally shooting my .410 at the end of the day — at a tossed ear of corn.

Weeks

later I would go hunting again, all alone — to Indian Creek.



There was fresh snow and I hunted pheasants this time by instinct. In deep, wild grass by the creek I picked up a track and stalked him till he flushed — a swirl of crimson feathers against the blue December sky. The .410 went to my shoulder and fired. He came down. I found him perfectly still amidst the grass and snow by Indian Creek. I will never forget that morning. To this day it is why I hunt. **Leo Keane**



NAS Convention Report

The Road to Cairo Via Miami, a report from the Conference on Population and Development.

National Audubon has a long history in the field of human population impacts on wildlife and the habitat we share. The creation of NAS grew from the conflicts of people and egrets in Florida.

Over the past 20 years, Audubon has carried out an influential and successful program connecting population consumption and the environment. As a result, Pat Waak, Director of Human Population & Resource Use Dept., was asked to serve as a member of the U.S. delegation for the U.N. National Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) over the past two years.

Despite reports in the press, there was broad agreement in Cairo on the need to address population in the context of development. The new addition was to include the environment as an important factor.

The NAS Population Conference focused on the long-term objective of Audubon's Population & Resource Use Dept., to develop sound population policies that contribute to the well-being of people in the U.S. and elsewhere in the world. Also, to seek to protect non-human species and habitat.

In addition to Audubon members in attendance at the conference, participants included non-governmental organizations from A to Z and exhibitors, offering information on population issues.

I hope to share with you what I have learned about the inter-connectedness of our world. I am convinced that coalition building and improved communication are essential for implementing our Audubon Cause and the population program goals. Some of the issues include: population and the

environment, poverty, immigration and migration, empowering women, education, social justice, and consumption and sustainability of food sources.

Ferne Cohen, Delegate

Important Audubon Election Set for the Rocky Mountain Region

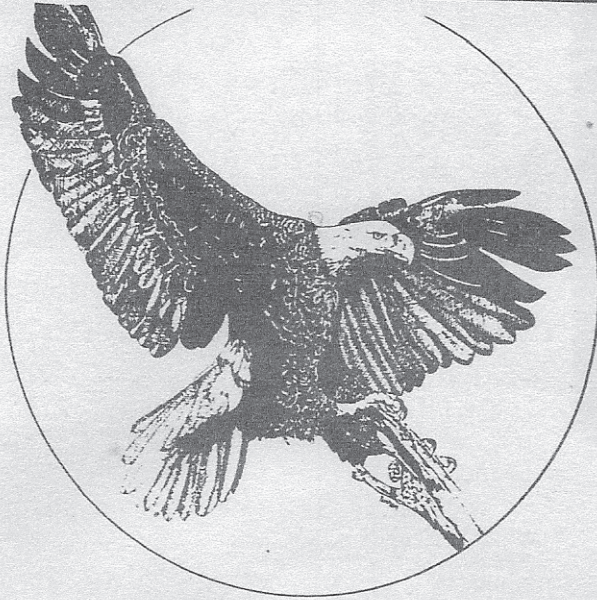
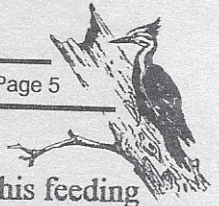
Nominations are now open for the chapter-selected candidate from the Rocky Mountain Region to the National Audubon Society Board of Directors. Any chapter in the Rocky Mountain Region may nominate one candidate for the Board this fall and winter. The election to choose the candidate will be held in the spring.

Nominees should be willing and able to:

- * Help set overall national policies.
- * Articulate the issues and concerns of our region.
- * Participate in fund raising, and maintain the fiscal integrity of National Audubon Society.
 - * Fill the position for the next three years, beginning December 1995.
- * Attend 4 Board meetings per year, each 3 days in length.

Contact a chapter officer with your suggestions.

The nomination from your chapter should be sent to the regional office by January 31, 1995.



Eagle Viewing at its Best

A few years ago we could watch large numbers of eagles feast on spawning Kokanee salmon on the Flathead or Kootenai Rivers, but the salmon declined and most eagles departed. Today the best viewing is below the Canyon Ferry Dam out of Helena.

According to a recent article in the *Missoulian*, birders should take Highway 12 east out of Helena for about 10 miles and turn left at the flashing yellow light, following the signs to the dam. The Riverside campground is just below the dam on Hauser Lake, and at this time of year there is no entrance fee. Also there is no warming shelter or drinking water, so go prepared. (There is one portable toilet.)

It is cold and windy along the river, and layered clothing, warm boots and a wind breaker are a must. Needless to say, take your binoculars or spotting scopes. To give the eagles room to fish and feed, the viewing area is set back from the river, so you'll need a telephoto lens on your camera.

The best time to see bald eagles feeding is in the morning, although the birds may be active throughout the day. They depart for night roosts around 4 pm. This activity generally runs from October through

December, so if you haven't seen this feeding spectacle yet, give yourself a birding Christmas present and head for Canyon Ferry Dam.



Thanks for Art by Bonham

The distinctive ink drawing of the bald eagle at the top of the page was created by Jan Bonham Metzmaker of Whitefish. We are very fortunate to have several of her nature drawings made available to us, to enjoy in this and future issues. On behalf of all our readers, Jan, thanks for sharing the fruits of your labor. They will certainly enhance the newsletter.

The Owl and the Pine Sisken. Jan and her husband Pete are bird enthusiasts, so there was a certain amount of concern when that old familiar sound of a bird hitting a pane of glass echoed through the house. A Pygmy Owl, with a dead Pine Sisken still clutched in its beak, was on the ground under the window, stunned.

The owl was brought in the house to be checked over, and recovered as it warmed up, taking flight before it could be caught. How do you catch an owl flying through the house? You wait till it lands in the venetian blinds. And so it was that the story had a happy ending, except for the Pine Sisken, and Jan & Pete have a bird story to share. * * * * *

Blue Jays Everywhere!

After the newsletter item last month about blue jays being sighted, Lou Bruno of East Glacier called to report that he's seen blue jays all over Montana. A teacher and board member of the Montana Wilderness Ass'n, he commented that he's seen them in such areas as Great Falls, Billings, St. Mary's, East Glacier, Bigfork and Polson since the middle of October. Let's see if we have some on the bird counts. * * * *



Flathead Audubon Society Directory

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Carla Prach, 110 Goat Trail, Whitefish, MT 59937
Gail Leonard, 514 Pine Place, Whitefish, MT 59937
June Ash, P.O. Box 1129, Condon, MT 59826
Sharon Bergman, 354 LaBella Lane, Big Arm, MT 59910
Ed Prach, 110 Goat Trail, Whitefish, MT 59937
Liz Hill, 888 McCaffery Rd, Bigfork, MT 59911
Lynn Kelly, 6525 Rocky Point Road, Polson, MT 59860
Jean Robocker, 1655 Montford Road, Kalispell, MT 59901
Neal Brown, 560 Wolf Creek Drive, Bigfork, MT 59911

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Montana Audubon Council

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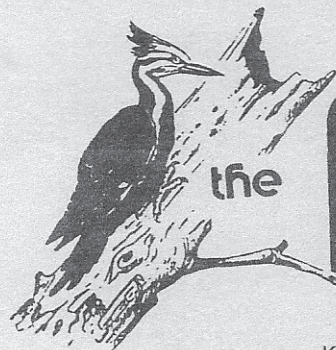
Janet Ellis, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624

443-3949

BIRDING HOTLINE: 756-5595

The Flathead Audubon Society is affiliated with the National Audubon Society and meets on the second Monday of each month from September through May. A business meeting is held at 7:30 p.m. followed by a special program at 8:15 p.m. The regular monthly meeting is preceded by the Executive Board meeting. Both meetings are open to all those interested.

THE PILEATED POST is published September through May and is sent to members of the Flathead Audubon Society as a membership benefit. Subscriptions for non-members are \$5.00 per year.
Deadline for newsletter copy: the 20th of each month.



the Pileated Post
Flathead Audubon Society

P.O. Box 9173
Kalispell, MT 59904

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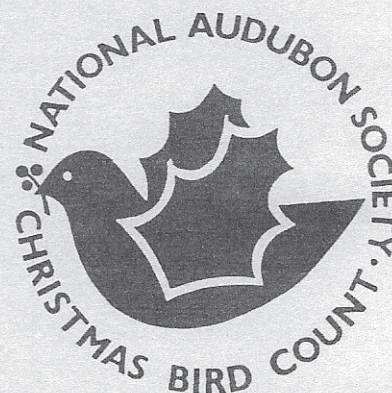
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Send this application and your check to:

National Audubon Society
Chapter Membership Data Center
P.O. Box 51001
Boulder, CO 80322-1001

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