



the

Pileated Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

November 2022
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Dark-eyed
junco



Capitolhillseattle.org

FLATHEAD LAND TRUST PROPOSES PURCHASE OF CONSERVATION EASEMENT ON OWEN SOWERWINE!

Audubon members, neighbors, and friends of Owen Sowerwine are very excited about the possibility of **Flathead Land Trust purchasing a perpetual conservation easement on Owen Sowerwine**, a State School Trust parcel administered by Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC). This unique and highly diverse riparian wetland parcel lies just east of Kalispell off Willow Glen Road along the banks of both the Flathead and Stillwater Rivers (Figure 1). This parcel has been managed as a natural area open to compatible public uses since the late 1970s. Flathead Audubon Society and Montana Audubon assumed the Flathead County lease from DNRC in the late 1990s and have been managing through various leases and licenses ever since for its habitat, conservation education, and com-

patible public use values.

The approximately 442-acre parcel is composed of islands, sloughs, wetlands and mature cottonwood forests that support over 150 species of resident and migratory songbirds such as Pileated Woodpecker and Red-eyed Vireo, significant population of white-tailed deer, occasional black and grizzly bear, many species of small mammals and bats, western toads, painted turtles, rubber boa, as well as westslope cutthroat trout (Species of Special Concern) and bull trout (listed as threatened) (Figure 2). Montana Audubon has listed Owen Sowerwine as an [Important Bird Area](#).

The parcel lies in the heart of a major braided section of the Flathead River surrounded by other
Continued on page 4

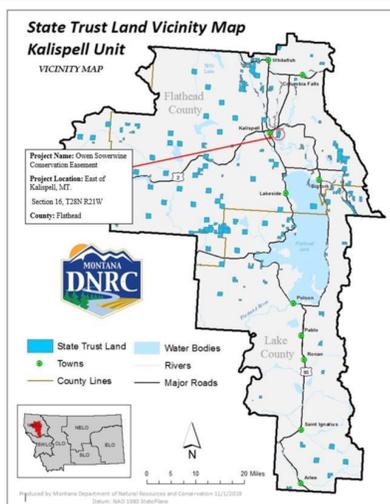


Figure 1. General location and aerial photo of the Owen Sowerwine parcel located east of Kalispell, MT.

NOVEMBER FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

Monday November 7, 2022. 6:00 PM. FAS Board of Directors Meeting. Public Meeting Room, Fish, Wildlife & Parks building, 490 N. Meridian Rd., Kalispell. You may bring your own dinner at 5:30.

Monday, November 14, 2022. 7:00 PM. Flathead Audubon General Meeting. United Way Gathering Place Room 26, Gateway Community Center, US Hwy 2 West, Kalispell. East side of Gateway Mall along Glenwood Rd. All are welcome. See page 3 for how to participate digitally.

Thursday, November 3, noon-2 PM. BIRDING at WEST VALLEY PONDS. See page 5.

Friday November 4, 9:30 AM-noon. AUTUMN BIRD STROLL NEAR OLD STEEL BRIDGE. See page 5.

BIRD OF THE MONTH

Black-backed Woodpecker *Picoides arcticus*

by Sneed B. Collard III

Scientific Name

Picus is Latin for woodpecker, from a legend in which the enchantress Circe turned Picus, the son of Saturn, into a woodpecker; *-oides* is Greek for “resembling,” so *Picoides* means “woodpecker-like”. The word *arcticus* is Latin for northern or arctic.

At first glance the newly burned forest looked devoid of life, with acres of charred dead trees standing like silent sentinels on the slopes. Still, my son Braden tapped a key on his smartphone and raised a Bluetooth speaker over his head. A second later, the recording of a woodpecker drumming in rapid-fire staccato burst across the landscape. Braden let it play for a few moments and then turned it off.

“There!” I shouted, as a dark shape swooped down the mountain and landed in a dead tree above us. Our hearts racing, we lifted our binoculars to admire a bird that was not only incredibly handsome, but a key to bringing this burned forest back to life: the black-backed woodpecker.

Appearance

The black-backed woodpecker dresses to suit its name, sporting a solid charcoal-colored topcoat that makes it almost invisible against the charred trunks of trees. Only from the side or in flight does the bird reveal its white throat and speckled black-and-white breast. The black-backed and closely related American three-toed woodpecker stand out from all other U.S. woodpeckers in that both have only three toes rather than four, and males have stunning yellow crowns instead of the traditional woodpecker red. A smattering of white on its back distinguishes the American three-toed, another Montana native woodpecker, from its black-backed cousin.

Sound

The black-backed’s staccato drumming often reveals its presence in a burned forest, especially when the bird is staking out territory or trying to attract a springtime mate. This “snare drum roll” would be the envy of many any marching band, staying remarkably consistent during its two-second duration. Like many other woodpeckers, the black-backed also unleashes a variety of squeaky and clicky calls, including a “scream-rattle-snarl” call during aggressive interactions with other woodpeckers.

Habitat and Distribution

Though occasionally found in live forests, the black-backed is the ultimate burn specialist. It prefers the aftermath of “hotter” that produce lots of dead,



large-diameter trees. After four or five years, it usually abandons an area to seek out fresher burns. As its scientific name indicates, the blacked-backed resides mostly in northern forests across the continent. Maine, western Montana, and northern Idaho serve as U.S. strongholds for the species, but its range also follows the Cascades down into California’s Sierras Nevada.

Feeding

The black-backed feeds mainly on wood-boring beetle grubs that thrive in the dead trees of a newly burned forest.

“Wood-boring beetle larvae are deeper than bark beetle larvae,” says Dick Hutto, previously director of the University of Montana’s Avian Science Center. “Most woodpeckers are getting bark beetles

and stuff, but black-backed woodpeckers are digging in deeper to get the bigger larvae.”

Breeding

Both males and females participate in excavating the nest hole, incubating the eggs, and feeding the ravenous young a steady diet of larval and adult insects. Typically, the female lays three or four white, oval eggs. The young leave the nest three to four weeks after hatching, usually from early June to early July.

Interestingly, only the black-backed, American three-toed, and hairy woodpeckers have the ability to dig fresh nest cavities in the cement-hard wood of freshly charred trees.

Keystone Importance

The black-backed woodpecker serves as a keystone species by creating critical nest holes for other cavity-nesting birds. These other species enjoy high nesting success where fire has cleared out chipmunks, squirrels, and other small mammals that prey on eggs and hatchlings. Eventually, black-backed holes serve as homes for a wide variety of wildlife—including mammals and other woodpeckers (see “Lewis’s Woodpecker”, *Montana Outdoors*, March-April 2022).

Conservation

Scientists don’t consider the black-backed a threatened species, but because the bird lives in remote areas, little is known about its population dynamics. Salvage logging reduces suitable habitat for this woodpecker species. The permanent loss or degradation of northern forests from climate change also could harm populations. But for now, the increase in forest fires across the bird’s western range is providing additional habitat.

November Program

Becoming a Kid Again! : New Horizons in the Flathead Audubon Conservation Education Program

presented by Denny Olson

In Denny's checkered past, he has performed alter-egos Critterman, Doc Wild, Professor Avian Guano, The Lost Voyageur, Dr. Loonacy and the Mad Herbalist well over 3000 times in 49 states, has trained hundreds of teachers and nature interpreters in storytelling, published 5 books on the relationships between humans and the rest of nature, presented 99 keynotes at conferences, 19 college presentations, and 50 special event presentations. He "got around a bit" before saying bye-bye to work travel and settling into his all-time favorite role as Flathead Audubon's Conservation Educator.

Since he remains immature (and proud!), he



Photo by JP Edge
Hungry Horse News

has taken that energy into expanding the FAS education program with video production, designing student learning kits with an emphasis on *fun*, and promoting the value of birds to anyone who will listen. Denny will bring along several of the new Learning Kits for you to play with, explain the recent history and evolution of the FAS Education Program, and introduce you to some students in the programs. Want to know where your contributions go? Here's your chance to find out.

This will be an interactive evening, where YOU have permission to get out of passive chairs and be a kid again!

November Meeting FAS

The hybrid meetings seem to be working well, so we're going to stick with the mixed method for our November 14 Meeting. For those coming to the meeting, we'll meet in Room 26 of the Gateway Mall (United Way building) at 7 PM. This room is on the east side of the building along Glenwood Rd in Kalispell. Look for our banner hanging outside.

If you join virtually, you should 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. You can also get an audio connection to the meeting without the Zoom visual capability .

For information on how to attend by Zoom, or how to get an audio connection to the meeting by phone, contact cory@flatheadaudubon.org

Looking forward to seeing everyone!

Is Your Membership Current?

Last year we updated our membership database system. One of the big changes we made was that your membership is good for one year from *the time that you renew* instead of rigid dates on the calendar. This means that your membership is now good for a full 12 months.

While we make an effort to let you know when your dues expire, we don't have the big fall push to renew memberships that we traditionally had. If you

have renewed in the last 12 months or have made a donation of \$25 or more, congratulations, you're current! If not, head over to our website at <https://flatheadaudubon.org/join/> to renew or join by mail or online.

If you're not sure whether or not you're current, feel free to drop us a line at membership@flatheadaudubon.org and we'll let you know!

Natural Events To See This Month:

Golden Eagle southerly migration is in full swing.

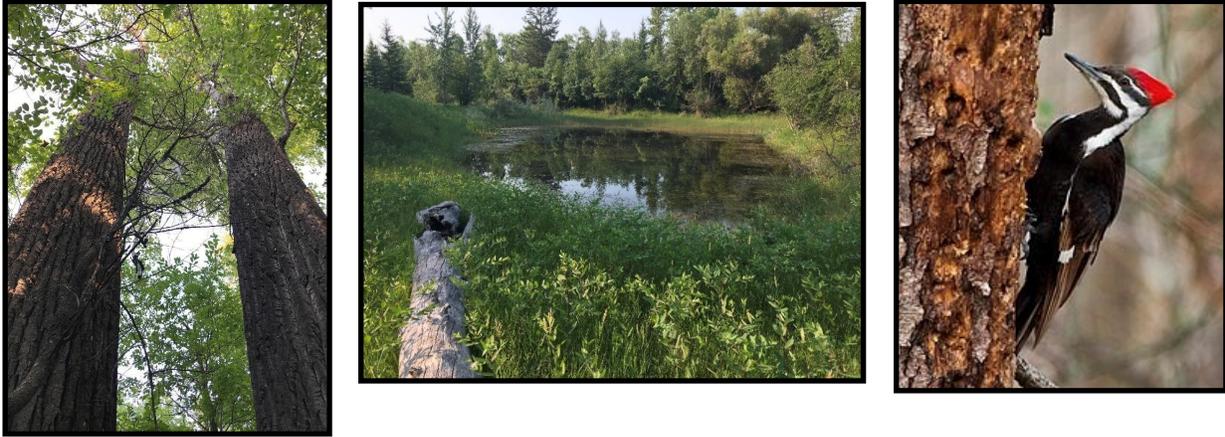


Figure 2. Photos of Owen Sowerwine’s sloughs and mature cottonwood forest and commonly seen Pileated Woodpecker.

Conservation Easement continued from page 1

conserved properties (in green) such as Otter Island Fish Conservation Area to the north, county park land to the south, several Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Habitat Protection Areas to the east and many conserved farms across the river. The area provides intact floodplains and wetlands critical for reducing flood risks to neighbors and maintaining high water quality in the lower Flathead River and Flathead Lake (Figure 3). Current allowed public uses include activities such as walking, wildlife viewing, nature observation, conservation education, fishing and hunting consistent with

local regulations and DNRC access requirements. Montana and Flathead Audubon have created roughly 2 miles of trails for wildlife viewing and conservation education on a portion of the parcel and have been actively managing the area’s weeds and invasive species over the last 19 years. Through Flathead Audubon’s Conservation/Education program, Owen Sowerwine has been visited by hundreds of K-12 students, teachers, and families each year. It is becoming a key part of our new middle school curriculum that focuses on importance of birds to our ecosystems and to our own lives (Figure 4 on page 5).

Continued on page 5

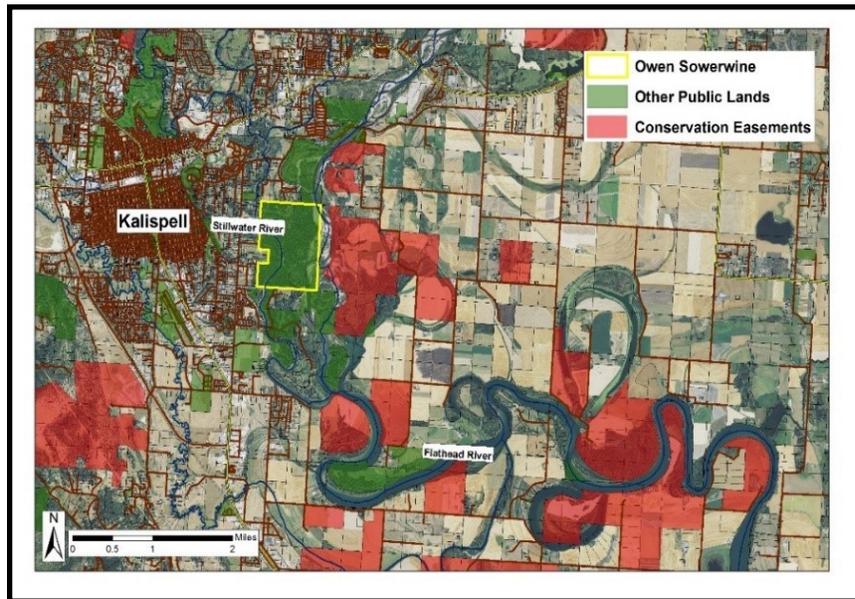


Figure 3. Conserved properties along the Flathead River near Owen Sowerwine.

Conservation easement continued from page 4

The **proposed purchased conservation easement**, would be an agreement that would protect and secure the future of the land in perpetuity and would be recorded with the title of the property. Flathead Land Trust would pay full market value for this conservation easement and those funds would provide a significant source of income for K-12 schools in Montana. The conservation easement would ensure the forested riparian habitat and wetlands would remain intact for birds, insects, fish, other wildlife, and native plants as well as for the public to enjoy in perpetuity. It would help ensure that we can continue K-12 conservation education programs.

The mission of DNRC is to administer Montana's State Trust Lands for the purpose of generating revenue for education and other institutions that benefit the citizens of Montana. Revenue is generated from a multiple use management concept which utilizes all of the various resources available on the state lands. **Owen Sowerwine is a parcel of State School Trust Land designated to generate revenue for Montana K-12 Common Schools Trust.** In FY21, Trust Lands distributed \$46.3 million to the Common Schools trust, contributing \$311 per K-12 student in Montana.

DNRC needs to hear from YOU! They are beginning their public outreach for their consideration of this project through a **30-day Scoping Notice** ([link](#)) that runs from **October 3-31, 2022**. They want to know if you support this proposal and if you have any questions or concerns. Your input will help form the

basis of their environmental analysis per the Montana Environmental Policy Act.

TO COMMENT: E-mail your comments to Kara Neal at kara.neal@mt.gov or send them by mail to the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Attn: Kara Neal, 655 Timberwolf Pkwy. Ste. 2, Kalispell, MT 59901. Kara can also be reached at 406-751-2265.

For additional information, you can contact Laura Katzman at Flathead Land Trust (lkatzman@flatheadlandtrust.org) or Gael Bissell at Flathead Audubon Society (gael@flatheadaudubon.org).

Thanks so much! by Gael Bissell



Figure 4. Flathead Audubon led field trip to Owen Sowerwine.

FALL/WINTER 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.



NOVEMBER 2022 FIELD TRIPS

BIRDING at WEST VALLEY PONDS, Thursday, November 3, noon-2 PM. Please join Bridger and Shannon Donaldson for an afternoon of birding the fields and wetlands in West Valley before winter sets in. We are likely to see a variety of waterfowl including swans, Snow Geese, Buffleheads and more. Raptors such as Red-tailed and Rough-legged Hawks are very likely, along with eagles. Songbirds such as Snow Buntings and American Tree Sparrows are possible. Please bring a scope and binoculars if you have them. We will meet, rain or shine, at the wildlife viewing area and possibly drive to another nearby spot or two. Contact Shannon Donaldson to sign up: shannon@flatheadaudubon.org 406-261-3466.

AUTUMN BIRD STROLL NEAR OLD STEEL BRIDGE, Friday November 4, 9:30 AM-Noon. Join FAS field trip co-leaders Darcy Thomas and Margaret Parodi for an Autumn walk by the Old Steel Bridge Fishing Access along the Flathead River near Kalispell. Belted Kingfisher, Hairy Woodpecker, Ring-billed Gulls, Northern Flickers, chickadees, nuthatches, and kinglets are among some of the birds we hope to see. A Merlin is known to be a common hunter in this area. We will be walking up to three miles on mostly flat terrain. Dress for the weather and bring binoculars, water, and bear spray. Pit bathrooms are available at the parking area. For information and to sign up contact Darcy Thomas at 406-407-8263 or darcy@flatheadaudubon.org.



Photo by JP Edge
Hungry Horse News

Conservation Educator's Niche by Denny Olson

Owen Sowerwine, Our Local Outdoor Classroom

A couple of days ago, I led a small group of three on a field trip to Owen Sowerwine, that roughly 442-acre parcel of State School Trust land located along the Stillwater and Flathead Rivers just east of Willow Glen near Kalispell. The trip emphasized the transitions that wildlife and plants undergo in the fall. The yellow leaves were wafting their way to the ground, and compared to the loud spring cacophony, bird song was infrequent and confined to the wintering-over few. I had low expectations about spotting birds, but I should have known better.

Mixed flocks of Black-capped and Mountain Chickadees, Dark-eyed Juncos, Red-breasted Nuthatches and follow-up Downy Woodpeckers and Blue Jays moved busily through the woods in their disorganized buffet lines. The Chickadees gave their "3-dee" typical "Humans here. Ho hum" calls -- announcing that we posed no culinary threat to them. Roasted Chickadee is not usually on our menu, and they know it.

Further on, the chatter became dead silence for a few minutes when a Sharp-shinned Hawk flew over. We looked at Great Horned Owl and Pileated Woodpecker nests from this spring, as I described how the fuzzy owl and scraggly woodpecker chicks can actually seem cute when they beg. Just then a Pileated flew to a dead snag above us, immediately followed by a tiny male Sharpie whose eyes were clearly bigger than his abilities. The woodpecker parried with him, sharp beak to small talon, until the Sharpie realized he was half its size and he was way over his head. End of drama.

It brought back memories of leaning against a tree in Owen Sowerwine and having a Pileated tail brush my hat as it landed, and the many times the woodpeckers have given a show to my field trip charges. With witnesses, we have watched single Merlins herding a thousand Bohemian Waxwings, waiting for the one that drops back just a little... I've watched nesting Goldeneyes with 8 chicks making a living on the large Owen Sowerwine slough, as well as mom Wood Ducks with smaller broods and male Hooded Mergansers bobbing and stretching their giant white crests for the girls. That led to thoughts of watching the power of the normally dry fossil channels transforming into raging Stillwater River Channels in late May and June, flushing the system and rearranging flora and fauna almost every year.

In the spring and fall, Owen Sowerwine is a

superhighway of migrating waterfowl on the river and songbirds in the trees -- one hundred and fifty-six species so far. They travel the length of the great system of valleys called the Rocky Mountain trench, stretching from Southern Idaho to the Yukon. Its designation as an Audubon Important Bird Area is an understatement. When we understand that black cottonwood river bottom like Owen Sowerwine represents less than a single percent of the habitats of Montana (and most of that river bottom is developed or urban), it is hard to exaggerate its importance to natural systems in our State.

This wild area, a designated Important Bird Area by Montana Audubon, is an absolute treasure to have literally adjacent to the Kalispell city limits. Because of its convenient location, it has provided years of unparalleled educational opportunities for local students -- ask any kid field trippers from the adjacent Montessori School, or middle schoolers from Evergreen, West Valley, Cayuse Prairie, or Fairmont Egan Schools all of whom have participated in Flathead Audubon's Conservation/Education program over the last decade or so. Research says that kids get happier, healthier and smarter through these outdoor experiences in wild areas. Keanu, our newest International Baccalaureate Flathead High School apprentice, was along on the latest field trip. In this next year, he'll be doing research and education projects on breeding birds, native plant restoration, invasive species, and impacts of deer browsing on cottonwood seedlings. And being multi-talented, he will hopefully complete some artwork destined for one of our Winter Birds of Prey Learning Kits.

Owen Sowerwine has been a giant wonderful outdoor classroom used by local residents, families, individuals, and Flathead Audubon's Conservation/Education program for the last 40 years through various Flathead County, Flathead Audubon, and Montana Audubon's agreements with DNRC. These agreements have helped keep this land open to public hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, and individual uses as well as for conservation/educational purposes for all this time. Funds from these agreements have supported K-12 public schools of Montana. A new proposal by Flathead Land Trust to purchase a conservation easement on this School Trust parcel will insure it will continue to be available to the public much as it has been for the last 40 years (see companion article and Flathead Audubon website) and it would contribute significantly to K-12 common schools.

This could potentially be one of those "everybody wins" situations, with the biggest winner being the plants and animals that have called that river bottom "home" for thousands of years.

Flathead Valley Bird Report

by Dan Casey

Rare and Notables – Sept/Oct 2022

Unseasonably warm weather continued to dominate, and perhaps made some birds linger, and slowed the passage and arrival of such winter visitors as Rough-legged Hawks (which did show up in low numbers at the Jewel Basin). Broad-winged Hawks made a good showing in the Jewel, with a one-day high counts of 13 on both the 20th and 24th of September. It was the first fall in several years that no Sabine's Gull or jaeger species was reported locally during September.

- 09/19 – **Lesser Black-backed Gull** (1) Flathead Lake WPA (Dan C.); Somers, 10/6 (Craig H.)
- 09/21 – **Common Tern** (10) Flathead Lake WPA (Shawn R.)
- 10/01 – **American Golden-Plover** (2) West Valley Ponds (Craig H.) Also one there 10/8 (AHH)
- 10/01 – **Clay-colored Sparrow** (2) Creston (late) (Craig H.)
- 10/01 – **Harris's Sparrow** (1) Creston (seen nearly daily thereafter) (Craig H.)

- 10/03 – **Gray Catbird** (1) Columbia Falls (late) (Chris H.)
- 10/12 – **Ferruginous Hawk** (1) Jewel Basin Hawk Watch (Pete F.)
- 10/15 – **Broad-winged Hawk** (1) Jewel Basin Hawk Watch (late) (Denny O.)
- 10/16 – **Osprey** (1) Moose Lake (late) (Julie O.)

What to Expect – November 2022

As winter weather commences, our mixed feeder flocks should be growing as chickadees, nuthatches, finches and more set up their winter feeding rounds. Local lakes should host growing numbers of diving duck flocks, including scoters; watch also for our rare loon species (Pacific, Red-throated, or even a Yellow-billed). Herring Gulls will become more numerous in the flocks, and will be joined by Iceland (Thayer's), Glaucous and Short-billed (Mew) Gulls. Rough-legged Hawks will become common over the local fields. Watch also for lingering Anna's Hummingbirds!

Jewel Basin Hawk Watch Update

The 2022 migration season at the Jewel Basin Hawk Watch has been characterized by sunny skies, consistent coverage, and above average numbers across almost all species. As of October 18th, we had conducted 47 surveys averaging 6.6 hours each, and had tallied 2,776 raptors of 17 species. Along the way we recorded our 26,000th Accipiter, our 18,000th Sharp-shinned Hawk, our 4,000th Buteo and our 1,000th American Kestrel over the history of our count. We are now just 39 birds shy of 40,000 raptors counted since

2007. Our season totals have exceeded our 14-yr mean counts for 15 species, with only Northern Goshawks and Peregrine Falcons recorded in below average numbers. Our totals through October 18th, as the season may be nearing its end, were as follows; thank you to our stalwart technician, Josh Covill, and to all the volunteers who have made this season a success.

by Dan Casey, JBHW Coordinator

Turkey Vulture - 5	Broad-winged Hawk - 47	Merlin - 25
Osprey - 8	Swainson's Hawk - 4	Peregrine Falcon - 10
Bald Eagle - 65	Red-tailed Hawk - 230	Prairie Falcon - 12
Northern Harrier - 47	Ferruginous Hawk - 2	Unidentified Eagle - 3
Sharp-shinned Hawk - 1,303	Rough-legged Hawk - 22	Unidentified Raptor - 10
Cooper's Hawk - 392	Unidentified Buteo - 13	
Northern Goshawk - 22	Golden Eagle - 416	TOTAL - 2,776
Unidentified Accipiter - 62	American Kestrel - 78	

Field Trip Summary - Waking Up with the Cranes

At dawn on September 29 a group of six early risers braved stormy skies to meet field trip leader Darcy Thomas to watch Sandhill Cranes as they lifted off the West Valley Ponds to forage and refuel in nearby agricultural fields before continuing their southward migration. There were close to 500 cranes milling about in the ponds prior to lift off. First to fly off were Mallards followed by Canada Geese. Then the cranes

began to take flight, several at a time, as they flew mostly east and south. These beautiful, graceful birds are such a joy to watch and truly made for a special morning. We saw a total of 19 species including a Great Gray Owl spotted during our travels by Hillary Crowley. Other notables were several Northern Harriers hunting over the pothole wetlands and three immature Bald Eagles. *by Darcy Thomas*

CHIRPS & SQUAWKS

Highlights from the October 3, 2022 Board of Directors Meeting

- ◆ The Great Fish Challenge and the Birds of Prey Festival were both considered to be successful this year. However, with an eye toward improvement, a list of feedback and suggestions was made for each event.
- ◆ Hawk Watch began August 25, and although the total numbers are below average, the surveys have been producing steady results, and the golden eagles are starting to move through regularly.
- ◆ The proposed Conservation Easement for Owen Sowerwine has been released for scoping by DNRC, and the Directors received some detailed information so they can answer questions people might have. Gael Bissell has planned information meetings, to be held in the near future, for neighboring property owners so they can be fully informed.
- ◆ Cindy Roberts reported there has been a significant increase in the use of the Education Kits by local educators. Denny Olson noted he is in full swing with presentations and field trips for local 7th grade classes.

Project FeederWatch 2022-2023 Put up a Feeder, Count Birds, Enter your Data

What is FeederWatch?

Project FeederWatch turns your love of feeding birds into scientific discoveries. FeederWatch is a November-April survey of birds that visit backyards, nature centers, community areas, and other locales in North America. **You don't even need a feeder!** All you need is an area with plantings, habitat, water, or food that attracts birds. **The schedule is completely flexible.** Count your birds for as long as you like on days of your choosing, then enter your

counts online. Your counts allow you to track what is happening to birds around your home and contribute to a continental data-set of bird distribution and abundance.

This is the perfect project for someone who likes birds, wants to learn more about them and wishes to contribute to scientific knowledge. Check out www.FeederWatch.org where you will find information on joining and access to a free on-line bird identification guide. You can also read about other people's experience since joining FeederWatch.

What a Beautiful Fall Work Day!

It's always a good feeling to have a "to-do list" and to be able to cross off every item. On Saturday, October 1, 18 volunteers made that happen in Owen Sowerwine. They volunteered a total of 54 hours and enjoyed some camaraderie, some sunshine and beautiful fall colors, and the satisfaction of helping to get a variety of jobs done during the Fall Work Day.

Gael and Kay hunted and bagged the seed heads of houndstongue and Canada thistle in the interior of the Education Trail. Will, Cindy, Tom, and Cory did the heavy lifting by cutting open and clearing the fence line in the south-west corner of Owen Sowerwine. Darcy, Rob, Ronda, and Pam used hoes and shovels to clear vegetation from the kiosk area and the edges of the ADA trail that leads to the viewing bench. Bruce worked near the Treasure Lane entrance to clear and stack some vegetation along the west boundary to make it easier to access for weed control. Denny led a crew that included Andrea, Keanu, Devin, and Michelle and did some maintenance on two study areas. In one area we are looking at the effects of white-tail deer browsing on cottonwood seedlings, and in the second we are comparing hand pulling to chemical spraying of seedlings of invasive common buckthorn. Bridger and Shannon trav-

eled the furthest as they visited each of the bird nesting boxes to clear them so they will be ready for spring nesting. Along the way, they collected several bags of houndstongue and Canada thistle seed heads. They also discovered that one of the nesting boxes was swept away in the spring flooding of the Stillwater River.

Thanks so much to the volunteers for donating their time and their hard work to keeping Owen Sowerwine in good shape. The birds and human visitors will enjoy the benefits of your efforts. It's a beautiful time of year in Owen Sowerwine, so be sure you stop by for a visit.



Bruce mixing hard work with a smile. Photo by Pam Willison

by Pam Willison

Flathead Audubon Establishes Endowment Fund

Flathead Audubon is always looking to the future in securing our ongoing operations and promoting sustainability. To this end we have recently established a permanent endowment fund. This endowment is a permanent special account, held and invested by Whitefish Community Foundation. This endowment grows over time allowing Flathead Audubon to be able to take annual distributions. The beauty of a permanent endowment is that this distribution grows as the fund grows and provides crucial operating income every year in perpetuity so Flathead Audubon can continue to run programs. Donors wishing to leave a legacy through a bequest can set this up through the Whitefish Community Foundation's Legacy Fund program.

A significant benefit in contributing to our permanent endowment fund is the Montana Endowment Tax Credit which allows the donor to save on their Montana State income tax liability. Donors may receive a state income tax credit of 40% of the present value of a qualifying planned gift, up to \$10,000 per year for an individual (\$20,000 if filing jointly).

Flathead Audubon's permanent endowment fund is operated and maintained solely by Whitefish Community Foundation. All inquiries or donations are done through Whitefish Community Foundation. They can be contacted at (406) 863-1781 or through their website at whitefishcommunityfoundation.org.

by Rod Walette

The 14th Birds Of Prey Festival

Thanks to Rod and June Ash, the visionaries who started the Birds of Prey Festival, FAS is proud to carry on the tradition to provide this semi-annual festival of great quality to the Flathead Valley each September.

Our final participant numbers for the festival have been tallied. An impressive total of 516 drive-up participants parked down the Lone Pine Road and quite a number hiked in on the trails. Combined with about 70 exhibitors and helpers, there were well over



Denny Olson

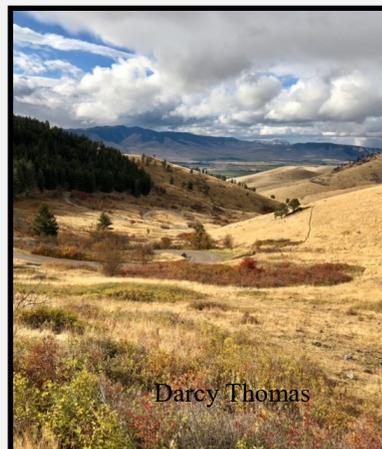
700 people who came to learn about our feathered predators. This makes this year's festival the best ever!

Again, many, many thanks to Lone Pine and all those unnamed who helped publicize and make this a seamless and great event. We are currently coming up with ideas to make next year's festival even better. If you have ideas you would like to share please let us know.

by Denny Olson & Darcy Thomas

Field Trip Summary – Bison Range

A small group of four birders spent a lovely Indian Summer Day at the Bison Range. Our bird count was not large (23 taxa) but was varied as we saw both resident birds and migrators. The list included Red Crossbills, Evening Grosbeak, Townsend Solitaire, eagles, hawks, harriers, kestrel, kinglets, siskins, nuthatches, chickadees and more. Other wildlife included coyote, both white-tailed and mule deer, elk, pronghorn antelope, and painted turtles. As we sat in our camp chairs at the summit of Red Sleep Mountain eating our lunches, we were serenaded by bugling elk. To top off the field trip we stopped at the old Job Corps campus at Kicking Horse and enjoyed a nice dinner at Ninepipes Lodge. It was a long day trip, but it was worth it. *by Darcy Thomas*



Darcy Thomas

Field Trip Extravaganzas!

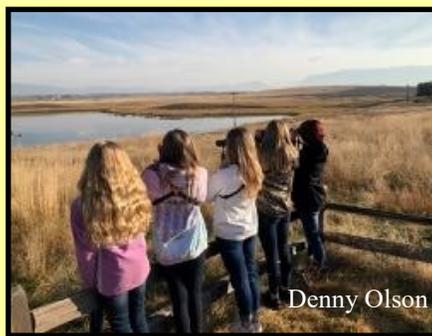
The Sandhill Cranes in West Valley put on a show for students from Evergreen Middle school (2 days), West Valley School (2 days), Cayuse Prairie School, Fairmont Egan School and two adult morning and evening field trips led by Darcy and Denny and assisted by Tom and Cindy Roberts. Bald Eagles in every age plumage, Harriers and Red-tailed Hawks harassed the coots and shoreland mice. Huge flocks of Canada Geese roared in like clockwork at 10 AM every day, Cranes on landing approach passed through a spectacular sunset, and a Great Gray Owl at each of the adult trips highlighted the cacophony of loud cranes coming in to roost. We are SO lucky to have this stopover on their long migrations!

Laura Katzman from Flathead Land Trust organized and co-led the Evergreen and West Valley school trips, as well as four 8th grade groups from Evergreen in Owen Sowerwine Natural Area acquainting our kids with Pileated Woodpeckers and the wonderful world of chickadees.

Denny led another OSNA trip for adults and the group watched a Pileated fight off and frustrate an

overly-ambitious Sharp-shinned Hawk for a couple of minutes. The woodpecker, at least twice the size of the Sharpie, seemed to be saying "Really?"

And, of course, many of us this fall have visited the "top of the world" Jewel Basin Hawk Watch ridge for entertainment by a few thousand raptors doing their 100 mph flybys. Let it be said: we live in an absolutely wonderful place .by Denny Olson



Cayuse Prairie Students watching Cranes

Pika Patrol

Rocky Mountain Wild has developed a new [Pika Patrol mobile app](#). This new app will help the community and scientists alike to track observations and monitor populations of the climate-sensitive American pika. By making it easier for hikers, community members, and visitors to record pika observations, we can gather even more data on this charismatic mountain dweller!

"Each summer, thousands of hikers see pikas dashing around rocky slopes above the treeline," said Megan Mueller, Conservation Biologist at Rocky Mountain Wild. "With Pika Patrol, there is now a simple way for them to record these pika sightings and share their observations with scientists. "The app was designed to be easy to use. All you need to participate is a mobile device.

And documenting pikas is just the start! The new app also includes a carbon offset program, which will connect users with opportunities to take direct action to protect pikas and their habitats.

"Pika Patrol shows you how to offset the carbon emissions from your drive through a donation to the [Colorado Carbon Offset Partnership](#)," said Dr. Nicole Rosmarino, executive director of the Southern Plains Land Trust. "These donations directly preserve grasslands in Colorado that sequester carbon, which helps pikas cope with climate change and creates a permanent refuge for prairie wildlife."

Pika Patrol is available for free in the Google Play and Apple App Stores. [Visit the Pika Patrol page to download the app for free.](#)

For the Wild!

Using Radar and Saving Birds at the 9/11 Tribute In Light

As bright beams illuminate the New York City skies above the National 9/11 Museum & Memorial's Tribute in Light, thousands of migratory birds circle and call, disoriented by the lights. As the swirl intensifies, Cornell Lab of Ornithology scientist Andrew Farnsworth gives the signal, the lights turn off, and the birds disperse into the night.

Each year, nearly 600 million birds are estimated to die in collisions with buildings in the United

States alone. By observing birds at the Tribute and using radar to detect birds aloft beyond the beams, Andrew and collaborators showed that densities of birds over lower Manhattan could reach 150 times normal levels when drawn in by the lights. The Cornell Lab's BirdCast project now tracks and forecasts bird migration with radar across the country, enabling groups like Houston Audubon to ask their cities to save birds by turning off lights during peak migration.

Great Fish Community Challenge

Thanks to all of our fine members who donated to Flathead Audubon through this year's Great Fish Community Challenge! Our donation total was higher than last year's; with the addition of Whitefish Community Foundation's match of \$ 12,364, our final tally reached \$ 39,458!

Whitefish Community Foundation hosts the Great Fish Community Challenge each year. These are the dedicated folks who work hard behind the scenes to help Flathead Valley and Eureka nonprofit organizations provide their services to our local citizens. Please give them credit and sincere thanks for helping our Flathead Audubon chapter continue to bring bird and nature education programs to our local school children and adults.

Correction

The photo of the Red-breasted Nuthatch was incorrectly attributed in the October Pileated Post. Linda DuLac is the correct photographer. We apologize for the mistake.



Linda DuLac



SPECIAL GIFTS

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



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the Pileated Post

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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.

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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 darcy@flatheadaudubon.org.**

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