



the

Pileated Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

December 2022
VOLUME 47, NUMBER 4

Rough-
legged
hawk



Allaboutbirds.com

The 48th Bigfork CBC

I am assuming all regional (local) leaders will be doing the Bigfork CBC once again. If you were a regional (local) leader last year, and are not participating in the Bigfork CBC this year, please let me know. I will be sending out the **Bigfork CBC packets with bird checklists** and maps of your respective sub-regions in the **first week of December**. If there are multiple people in your regions, you can organize your plan of coverage, or just caravan. All volunteers are welcome, I will meet any interested birders in the parking lot at 8 AM at Flathead Lake Brewery on **Saturday, December 17th (day of Bigfork CBC)**.

Meeting after the count is yet to be deter-

mined; please return your packets with the map and bird checklists ASAP. You can either return them by mail (asap), email them to me (but return the maps), or drop the bird lists in my mailbox on Riverside Rd. (95 Hash Mtn. View.); it is about 1 mile south of Creston on Riverside Rd. on the corner of Obryan Lane.

Good birding,
Craig Hohenberger (Compiler)
406 890-1629
Email: asoleado2003@yahoo.com
My mailing address: PO Box 5021, Bigfork, 59911

Kalispell CBC

The 24th annual Kalispell Christmas Bird Count will be held on **Sunday, January 1, 2023**. Centered at Reserve Street and Highway 93, the 15-mi diameter count circle includes Evergreen, much of the Flathead River corridor, Owen Sowerwine, Happy Valley, Herron Park, Egan Slough, Lonestone State Park and the Kuhn's Wildlife Area. A popular New Year's tradition, this count typically depends on veteran group leaders to scour their areas, and we are always looking for additional participants to join in to

help us gain a better understanding of our early winter bird populations. The count averages 75-80 species each year and has tallied a total of 131 species. The circle includes the homes, bird feeders, and favorite birding spots of many of our Audubon members! The day will end with a gathering and final bird tally at Brannigan's Pub at 5 PM (optional). If you are interested in participating, contact Dr. Pete Fisher at fisherpete88@yahoo.com.

2022 Christmas Bird Counts

Kalispell	Jan 1 Sun	Pete Fisher	fisherpete88@yahoo.com	406-250-9624
Bigfork	Dec 17 Sat	Craig Hohenberger	asoleado2003@yahoo.com	406-890-1629
Glacier (GNP)	Dec 18 Sun	Lisa Bate	Lisa_Bate@nps.gov	406-888-7833
Ninepipes	Dec 18 Sun	Jim Oates	oates65@gmail.com	406-270-7826
Upper Swan	Dec 15 Thu	Eli Estey	eli@svconnections.org	406-754-3137
Eureka	Dec 17 Sat	Ellen Sullivan	kesullivan@interbel.net	406-889-3983
Troy	Dec 31 Sat	Don Jones	don@donaldmjones.com	406-546-3832
Libby	Dec 17 Sat	Gene Reckin	gnreckin@gmail.com	H:406-293-9344 C:406-291-8482

DECEMBER FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

Monday December 5, 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, December 12, 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.

Wednesday, December 21, noon– 3 PM. BIRDING at NORTH SHORE FLATHEAD LAKE WPA on the WINTER SOLSTICE. See page 6.

BIRD OF THE MONTH

The Common Merganser

by Theresa Ciruolo

The Common Merganser, as the name implies, is a common bird. However, their status as common is not a downfall for these adaptive, beautiful animals. In fact, since they are frequently spotted in the Flathead Valley, the Common Merganser was the first bird I encountered in Glacier National Park. I had just

moved here in late April, winter still firmly in place in the valley, and I decided my first introduction to this environment would be the Rocky Point trail on the shores of Lake McDonald. So many people travel to this area to spot the large charismatic animals like grizzly bears or a large moose grazing in the brush. This was my first time in Montana and, unsurprisingly, I was just like the hoard of tourists eager for a glimpse of the

large, exciting animals. However, after walking to the beach near Fish Creek Campground, touching the glacial water of Lake McDonald for the first time, I looked up just in time to see a beautiful bird emerge out from beneath the water approximately two hundred feet away. Trying to get a good look at it before it dove and disappeared under the water again, I found that each dive

brought it a little bit closer. I spotted the bird's vibrant rusted red head, with what looked like a mohawk of feathers on top, and grayish body and quickly pulled up the Merlin Bird ID app. I finally identified that bird as a female

Common Merganser, the first animal I would see in Glacier National Park and the first bird to mark my summer of birding and exploring the Northern Rockies.

Common Mergansers (*Mergus merganser*) are part of the Anatidae family which consist of ducks, geese, and swans. They are found throughout the majority of Montana and throughout most of the United States in northern habitats. In fact, the Flathead Valley is an ideal place to spot these ducks due to the valley being a year-round habitat for them. These birds are found on the coast and in the interior of North America. In fact, the migration patterns of Common Mergansers are different for coastal vs. interior

birds. Interior birds tend to migrate farther, apart from populations that stay in their habitat yearlong like the birds we find here in the Flathead Valley.

Are you intrigued enough by the Common Merganser to go out and try to spot one? If you are, seek out where they reside in freshwater rivers or



lakes, like Lake McDonald, in your area. These birds' nest in large tree cavities in mature forests nestled near a water source. The females can lay an average of ten eggs that they incubate without the help of the male. Hatchlings are out of the nest only a day after birth and are capable of flight about two months after hatching. The females tend to them for several weeks, however, the young feed themselves. Therefore, the

young birds may survive even if they are abandoned early on in life. The Common Merganser is a sexually dimorphic bird. This means there is a systematic difference in form between the male and female. This can include size, color, markings or even behaviors. For the Common Merganser, the males of this species tend to be bigger in size and weight. The male ducks



can be approximately 60 to 70 cm in length and approximately 3.7 lbs. However, the female ducks are slightly smaller at approximately 54 to 68 cm in length and approximately 2.7 lbs. It is sometimes hard for the untrained eye to tell the difference between

birds on the water based on size, but the Common Merganser makes it quite easy for experienced and beginner bird watchers alike because of the drastic differences in female color and markings compared to the males. Males have striking deep green heads, paper-white underbellies plus sides and black backs; females, on the other hand, have gray bodies, a white chest, and a rusted cinnamon-colored head with feathery crests at the top. Common Mergansers have narrow, serrated red beaks with hooked tips that they use for skilled fish catching. In fact, their bills are a unique adaptation that is different from the flat, rounded bills of many

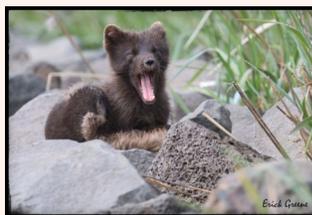
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December Program

The Pribilof Islands: the "Galapagos" of the North

presented by Erick Greene

Erick Greene is Professor Emeritus in the Division of Biological Sciences and in the Wildlife Biology Program at The University of Montana. He grew up in Quebec, Canada, with twin passions for music and nature. Erick dropped out of high school and lived for a year in the Galapagos Islands, working as a researcher on Darwin's Finches. He then worked on seabirds 800 miles north of the Arctic Circle with the Canadian Wildlife Service. He returned for undergraduate studies at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where he studied biology, music and mathematics, and then received a PhD from Princeton University. He was the Director of UM's Bird Ecology Lab, and has broad interests in ecology, evolution and conservation. Erick will be talking about his experiences in the Pribilof Islands during the summer of 2022.



December Meeting FAS

We will be continuing our hybrid meetings through the winter for those that may not want to drive in wintry conditions. For those coming to the meeting, on December 12 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.

For those joining virtually, when you use the Zoom link, you will 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, by using the phone number and passcode.

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!

ATTENTION ALL BIRDERS: NEW FIELD TRIP LEADERS NEEDED

Do you have a special place you like to see birds? Please consider leading a field trip in the coming season. Our Audubon bird outings have been very popular, but we need to recruit some new people to lead trips. No need to be an expert, just be willing to facilitate an outing. Leaders and participants can all

learn together.

Please contact Darcy Thomas at 406-407-8263 or darcy@flatheadaudubon.org or Margaret Parodi at 406-837-1371 or margaret@flatheadaudubon.org for more information or to volunteer. Thank you.

Natural Events To See This Month:

Watch for Sharp-shinned Hawks flying fast and low, hunting birds at your feeders.

Conservation Corner

by Bridger Donaldson

Birds and Glass: Preventing Avian Window Collisions

Many of us have at some point come across a deceased bird underneath a window or investigated after hearing the startling noise of a bird hitting a glass pane.

One of the largest anthropogenic causes of avian death in the US, along with habitat destruction and cats, is collisions with glass. It's estimated that up to one billion birds are killed annually after colliding with windows.

This, along with many other factors, is driving massive bird decline across the continent. Denny Olson, in character as Prof. Avian Guano, addresses this fantastically in the video "BIRD TROUBLE". It is the second video in an entertaining three-part series that teaches why birds matter, why they are threatened, and ways we can help.

Birds fly into windows because they can't distinguish the difference between the reflection and nearby sky and habitat. Luckily, there are ways you can help reduce or eliminate these collisions. Two of the best, simplest methods of prevention are shown below.

String Across Window

This window has small nails placed along the bottom and top, spaced about an inch or two apart, and string has been strung between the nails to break

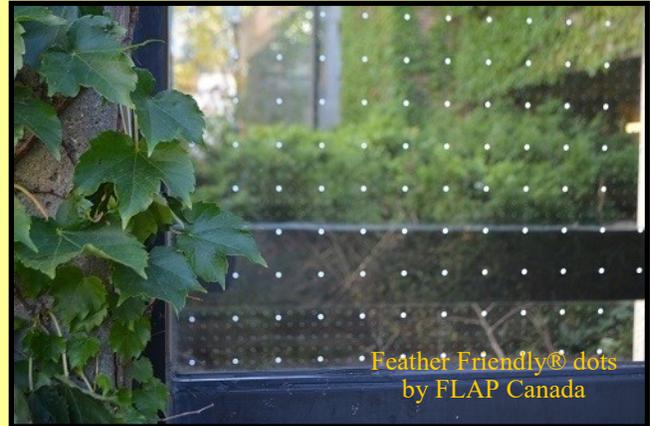


Photo provided by Gael Bissell

up the reflection. You can do this with anything that hangs or crosses over the window, although string is the simplest method. It also looks more "human" and less like an inviting spot of shrubbery.

Stickers/Tape Dots

This method has the same effect as the string to break up the reflection, though might be easier to do or looks better depending on the window and your preference. This can be done with anything that will stick to the window and can be readily seen from the outside. In general, lighter colors work better than



Feather Friendly® dots
by FLAP Canada

darker ones. Ideally, the dots/lines should be spaced less than two inches apart in a grid. This will help dissuade our smallest birds, like hummingbirds, from flying into the glass. If you want an effective solution that takes less time, you can buy strips (Feather Friendly®, as an example) that are easily applied to the window and look great. A major upside of these is they don't need to be removed when cleaning the glass.

You don't necessarily need to apply these solutions to every window in your house. Start by addressing the windows that have had a bird collision before, reflect nearby habitat that birds interact with, or are near feeders and other spaces active with bird life.

Also, in my experience, it doesn't take long to adjust to the slight obstruction to the view. I have fairly big pieces of atrocious bright blue painter's tape on some of my windows, and I don't really notice them anymore. Your eyes will train themselves to look past them, hopefully to spot a new bird out in your yard.

Noteworthy is that Flathead Audubon is doing a study on bird strikes. Operation Bird Collision is ongoing and it's easy to be part of the survey. All members are encouraged to join. Tell us when you start to observe the areas around your windows for dead birds. After a year, we would like to know how many days you recorded information on window mortality (that includes days with no mortality). Contact Dave Manuwal (manuwal2@centurylink.net) to enroll. Tell Dave when you find a bird. If you are not sure of its identity, photograph it and send Dave the photo.

I hope the information in this article helps you in your efforts to make your home safer for birds, thank you for any action you take!



Conservation Educator's Niche by Denny Olson

I love the woods, the changing rivers, the vistas from above tree-line, and of course, the birds that are always there -- everywhere. I can't begin to count the ways that the outdoors

has contributed to my general well-being. But my work as a conservation educator isn't always driven by all those positives. We in my profession have fights to fight as well, and a big worrisome cultural trait is all of the time we spend in front of screens, screens and more screens.

The average American child spends 7.5 hours per day in front of a screen. The average seven-year-old has spent the equivalent of one full year in front of a screen. Fourteen-year-olds have the equivalent higher-order thinking skills that twelve-year-olds had just 30 years ago. People "twitter" their way to "followers" instead of having substantive dialogue. Forty percent of our children are now classified as obese. Screen watching (mostly commercial TV programming, with video games catching up quickly) correlates strongly with poor sleep patterns, increased rates of diabetes, increased heart disease, slower language development, passivity, skyrocketing attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, higher addiction rates throughout life, a lack of empathy with other human beings, and an earlier death.

Since 75% of meals are now eaten in front of a screen, natural relationships between appetite and eating are disrupted, and eating is done for a number of other reasons. The communication skills of screen-watchers are stunted because of lack of dialog with other humans. Speech nuance and body language are unfamiliar concepts, and lack of exposure to vocabulary leads to reading and writing literacy problems by the time children start school. Every hour that a toddler spends in front of a screen corresponds to a decrease in classroom engagement later in the schooling years. Even computer and video-based programs specifically designed to accelerate develop-

ment in babies, have been shown to have exactly the opposite effect. Babies less than 16 months old exposed to "baby Einstein"-type programs have a *smaller* vocabulary than their read-to-by-a-real-human counterparts. Just the simple use of Facebook, aside from the content therein, can trigger depression. And the content carelessly expressed has caused more than a few suicides by sensitive people.

And if all of the above were not disturbing enough, there is strong evidence that we are abandoning reality for "reality shows". As of this writing, there are 146 documentary-style reality shows on American television, 160 different talent searches, 58 dating reality shows, 40 lifestyle-change shows, 35 "real police" shows, 82 celebrity-based shows, 28 makeover shows, and 9 fulfill-your-fantasy shows. Of course, these are not reality shows at all, but concocted shows with people carefully selected for their *divergence* from reality. The net effect, of course, is to get the more naive viewers to believe that if they are lucky enough, or can act outrageously enough, they will be the next rich and famous. Meanwhile, the driving force behind all this passive entertainment are the thousands of ads that pound their sensibilities to a quivering pulp.

I'm fairly sure that some people watch the shows for their own escape from the realities of their working life. But what about those watching whose lack of critical thinking skills assure that they don't have a "grain of salt" to spare? What about young children, in whom critical thinking skills have yet to begin developing?

Busy parents and mentors are extremely careful about who will care for their child in a day-care setting, but planting them in front of screen productions as a substitute care-giver brings to mind the inevitable comparison. Would you take your child to a "day care" whose entire reason for existing is to addict them to advertisements of products every twelve minutes, all day long, every day of the week?

I have a suggested solution. Get them outdoors, as much as is possible, where "reality" is actually real.



FLATHEAD AUDUBON MISSION STATEMENT

THE FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY IS A LOCAL CHAPTER
OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY.



- ⇒ OUR MISSION IS TO CONSERVE BIRDS, WILDLIFE HABITAT, AND ECOSYSTEM DIVERSITY.
- ⇒ WE PROMOTE AWARENESS AND APPRECIATION OF THE NATURAL WORLD THROUGH EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND ADVOCACY PROGRAMS.
- ⇒ WE WORK WITH DIVERSE GROUPS AND AGENCIES TO ACHIEVE SOUND DECISIONS ON NATURAL RESOURCE ISSUES.
- ⇒ WHILE FOCUSING OUR EFFORTS IN NORTHWEST MONTANA, WE BELIEVE IN THE PROTECTION OF THE EARTH AND ALL OF ITS INHABITANTS.

Flathead River in Paint Auction Supports Owen Sowerwine Conservation Project

On November 9, the Flathead Land Trust, with its partners Flathead Lakers and Flathead Audubon Society, hosted the "Flathead River in Paint" auction event at Montana Modern Fine Art on Main Street in Kalispell. The event featured outstanding original "plein air" paintings by 14 local artists of iconic river, farm, and wetland landscapes of the Flathead River from Bad Rock Canyon to the North Shore of Flathead Lake. These originals were painted on lands conserved over the last 20 years as part of the Flathead River to Lake Initiative. They were on display for the first week after the event but are now being auctioned off through an online silent auction through December 7 to raise funds for the proposed Owen Sowerwine conservation project. The paintings will be on display from November 21 through December 7 at Parkside Credit Union locations throughout the valley.

We encourage you to view and bid on these amazing artworks. Half of the proceeds will provide funding to permanently conserve Owen Sowerwine, a beautiful river bottom parcel of state school trust land near Kalispell, with the other half going to these amazing community-minded artists!

If you prefer, you can donate directly to the Owen Sowerwine Conservation project through Flathead Audubon, Flathead Land Trust, or Flathead River to Lake websites. You will receive a tax deductible letter within a few days. Thank you so much! For more project or auction information, contact Flathead Land Trust (406-752-8293) <http://auctria.events/FlatheadRiverInPaint> or go to Flathead Audubon website <https://flatheadaudubon.org>.

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.



BIRDING at NORTH SHORE FLATHEAD LAKE WPA on the WINTER SOLSTICE, Wednesday, December 21, noon– 3 PM. Join Shannon and Bridger Donaldson on the winter solstice for an afternoon of birding along Flathead Lake's north shore. We will meet at the Flathead Waterfowl Production Area. Encompassing over 1800 acres, the WPA is a wonderful mix of habitats and we will have a chance to see numerous species of birds. We are likely to see eagles as well as both Rough-legged and Red-tailed Hawks. Song Sparrows and American Tree Sparrows are probable in the thickets and you never know who might pop up in or around the frozen marsh areas. Closer to the lake, there is a great mix of Ponderosa pine, aspen stands, birch, and larch trees where it is possible to find three types of nuthatches, a variety of woodpecker species and chickadees. The denser thickets along the sloughs provide great cover for birds such as Long-eared Owls. We should be able to make it out to the lake shore, in which case a spotting scope would be handy if you feel like packing one along. We will be walking a minimum of 2.5 to 3 miles. It is mostly level, however, there are some slopes and boardwalks that may be slick and we will venture off-trail a bit. Bring ice cleats or hiking poles, tall waterproof boots and a small pack with extra layers, water and snacks is encouraged. There are no restrooms available. To sign up, please contact Shannon at shannon@flatheadaudubon.org or 406-261-3466.

Common Merganser continued from page 2
other species of ducks which allows them to specialize in catching and eating fish. Other than a wide variety of fish, the Common Merganser can also be seen feeding on mussels, shrimp, salamanders, and sometimes even small mammals.

Common Mergansers populations are steady at an estimated global breeding population of 1.9 million individuals. However, climate change has already

affected their habitat range, with increased temperatures in the spring endangering young in the nest and increased recurrence of fire preventing their habitats from recovering. The Common Merganser is an important species at the top of the aquatic food chain; therefore, we can use their population's health as an indicator to measure our surrounding environment's health and learn from our common neighbor.

Flathead Valley Bird Report

by Dan Casey

Rare and Notables – Oct/Nov 2022

Well, the unseasonably warm weather came to a rather abrupt halt in mid-October. By mid-November, the Sandhill Cranes had left, Tundra Swans and Snow Geese were passing through, and Rough-legged Hawks were here in good numbers. White-winged and Surf Scoters graced Foy’s Lake and scattered individual Harris’s Sparrows and Anna’s Hummingbirds graced local yards. A Glaucous Gull at the landfill was the first this winter in the western U.S. outside Alaska. See also: <https://ebird.org/region/US-MT-029?yr=all>

- 10/19 – **Short-billed Dowitcher** (1) West Valley Ponds (Craig H.)
- 10/19 – **Dunlin** (1) West Valley Ponds (Craig H.); also Polson 11/16 (Shawn R.)
- 10/23 – **Surf Scoter** (3) Foy’s Lake (Leslie K.); 1-6 present through 11/16 (CRAIG F.)
- 10/28 – **White-winged Scoter** (1) Foy’s Lake (Darcy T.) Still present 11/01 (Dan C.)
- 11/02 – **Northern Saw-whet Owl** (1) Somers (Dan C.)
- 11/02 – **Short-billed (Mew) Gull** (1) Flathead County landfill (Dan C.); Bigfork 11/12 (Craig H.)
- 11/03 – **Anna’s Hummingbird** (1) Somers (Alan J.);

- also (2) Bigfork, 11/06 (Paula S.)
- 11/08 – **Harris’s Sparrow** (1) Columbia Falls (thru 11/14; Bridger D.) Also Creston, Kalispell
- 11/08 – **Rusty Blackbird** (1) Whitefish (Scott F.); Also (1) Polson, 11/15 (Braydon L.)
- 11/09 – **Glaucous Gull** (1 ad.) Flathead County landfill (Dan C.)
- 11/12 – **Pacific Loon** (1) Wayfarer’s State Park (Craig H.)
- 11/16 – **Varied Thrush** (1) Kila (Dan C.); (1) Bigfork (Margaret P.)

What to Expect – December 2022

While the first Christmas Bird Counts always help to uncover a diversity of lingering out-of-season birds, our winter resident birds will be settling into place. Watch for large flocks of Bohemian Waxwings to start gathering (with attendant Merlins), Harlan’s Red-tailed and Rough-legged Hawks on poles watching for unwary voles, and perhaps the first Common Redpolls. Early winter is still a good time to look for rare gulls, loons or diving ducks. And watch your feeders for the occasional odd visitor among the usual suspects!

Jewel Basin Hawk Watch Season Wrap-Up

The 2022 migration season at the Jewel Basin Hawk Watch concluded 20 October, as a dramatic shift in the weather dropped enough snow to make safe access to the site no longer possible. A season characterized by sunny skies and consistent coverage led to above average numbers across almost all species, but record numbers for none. Our final survey 20 October was the 49th survey of the season, our third highest survey effort in 15 seasons. Nine primary observers conducted 1-23 surveys each, averaging 6.6 hours and 58 birds counted (88 birds/100hr). We tallied 2,851 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 have now counted more than 40,000 raptors at the site since 2007. Our season totals have exceeded our 14-yr mean counts for 15 species, with only Northern Goshawks (23) and Peregrine Falcons (10) recorded in below average numbers. Our season totals were as follows; thank you to our stalwart technician, Josh Covill, and to all the volunteers made this season a success. A full report summarizing this year’s data and 15-yr trends, will be produced this winter. *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 - 71	Red-tailed Hawk - 234	Prairie Falcon – 12
Northern Harrier - 48	Ferruginous Hawk - 2	Unidentified Eagle – 3
Sharp-shinned Hawk - 1,333	Rough-legged Hawk - 27	Unidentified Raptor – 10
Cooper’s Hawk - 392	Unidentified Buteo - 13	
Northern Goshawk - 23	Golden Eagle - 444	TOTAL – 2,851
Unidentified Accipiter - 62	American Kestrel - 78	

Natural Events To See This Month:

Northern Harriers are hunting very low over fields, showing white rumps when they tilt in flight

CHIRPS & SQUAWKS

Highlights from the November 7, 2022 Board of Directors Meeting

Nov 7th was snowy and cold so the in-person board meeting was changed to a Zoom meeting. Some of the items under discussion are highlighted below:

- ◆ Fundraising is now underway to protect Owen Sowerwine area and fund K-12 education in Montana with the purchase of a conservation easement. A River in Paint Event at the Montana Modern Fine Art gallery in Kalispell and on-line bidding for the paintings will raise money for the easement. Other fundraising events will be announced in the coming months.
- ◆ Christmas Bird Counts will take place in Dec and January in Kalispell and Bigfork and nearby towns.
- ◆ The Education Committee is likely see a significant increase in the number of requested field trips for SD5 in the upcoming months that will most likely need more volunteers.
- ◆ The Field Trip Committee said it is recruiting new field trip leaders.
- ◆ The Board unanimously voted to appoint Linda DuLac as the Membership Chair and as a new member of the Board of Directors. Among other things, Linda plans to greet members as they arrive at meetings and make sure everyone has a nametag.
- ◆ The Conservation Committee as well as the Program Committee are each in need of a Chairmanship.
- ◆ The Board is planning to develop a strategic plan in the upcoming months

November Birding at West Valley Ponds

Six participants, along with Darcy Thomas, joined Shannon and Bridger Donaldson at the West Valley Wildlife Viewing Area on Thursday, November 3. The valley was blanketed in white from the early season snowfall the day before. Soon enough, the sun was shining which made for a great afternoon of birding. As soon as we pulled in, about a dozen Tundra Swans flew right above us. There was a lot of open water and hundreds of waterfowl, predominantly Mallards, along with dozens of Northern Pintails, Buffleheads, and Wigeons. Northern Shovelers, Canvasbacks and a few Gadwalls were also present. There were numerous Bonaparte's Gulls on the water. A few

pipits could be seen bobbing their tails on the far pond, which was frozen. We enjoyed seeing well over 100 Sandhill Cranes, many flying right overhead. One crane, in particular, was making a high-pitched, squeaky juvenile call, although it appeared to have adult plumage. Rough-legged Hawks were present, and we saw a harrier land near the edge of the pond in the rushes. There was a large flock of Horned Larks that kept returning to an open patch of ground in the field nearby. We found a Kestrel and a few Snow Buntings as well. In all, 32 species were observed. Thanks for joining us, everyone!

Report documents wolf attacks around the world

"The overall message is that most people in North American and Europe can live very close to wolves and be perfectly OK in 99.99999% of cases," said John Linnell, senior research scientist with the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research and the lead author on the recent report. "But it's never 100%. Things can happen. We need to be prepared for that."

It's hard to imagine a more polarizing species than wolves, revered by some, demonized by others and driven to the edge of extinction in many areas. As wolf populations began to rebound in the 1990s in both Europe and North America, two opposing pictures of the species emerged, Linnell said. On the one hand, historical records and stories on both continents suggested a history of wolf attacks. On the other, 20th century research found that modern attacks were

extremely rare. They found reliable reports between 2002 and 2020 involving 489 victims of wolf attacks. Most of those related to rabid wolves, though. Forty-two others were attacked after provoking wolves, three of them fatally. About 13% of the attacks appeared predatory in nature, though. Sixty-seven people were victims of predatory attacks, including nine who were killed.

The findings suggest people should view wolves much as Americans view black bears (*Ursus americanus*) or even the neighbor's dog — animals that rarely pose a threat but can be dangerous, Linnell said.

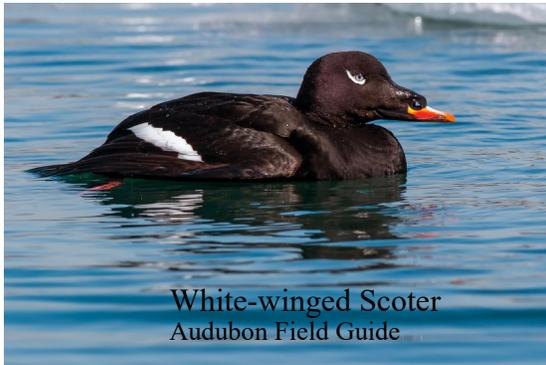
"Wolves are wildlife," he said. "They're wild animals. Not devils. Not saints." *condensed from The Wildlife Society News*

Apologies

In last months Bird of the Month article we omitted the statement "From Montana Outdoors, the magazine of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks. Used with permission. References provided upon request." We apologize for the omission.

Frogs change sex even in natural settings

Frogs can change their sex even in pristine, pollution free settings. Past research suggested that male-to-female sex changes happening in frogs in suburban ponds may be caused by increased levels of estrogen released into the water. They found more female frogs than males in suburban areas. But now a new study by the same scientists finds that green frogs (*Rana clamitans*) change sex even in natural, unadulterated settings relatively free from human-caused pollution. The authors of the study speculate that the frogs are instead reacting to local changes in temperature or other environmental factors. As far as they know, frogs can only change sex during their tadpole phase. *From The Wildlife Society News*



White-winged Scoter
Audubon Field Guide



SPECIAL GIFTS

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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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