



Pileated Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

Blue Jay



Photo by BJ Worth

BIRD OF THE MONTH

Birds See It Better

By Linda Fine Hunt

A Blue Jay, whom I named Gigi, visits my backyard from August to April. Peering into my house windows, it recognizes my face, just as one person recognizes another. Birds, long perceived as instinct-driven, possess a remarkable array of visual and cognitive abilities, as demonstrated by Gigi.

Birds utilize their exceptional vision for navigation during migration and for spotting prey. They can employ visual cues from the landscape and celestial bodies and adapt their vision to thrive in various surroundings and atmospheric conditions. For example, eagles can see up to three miles away, thanks to their large eyes and high density of photoreceptors. This enables them to detect small animals from great heights. Peregrine Falcons excel in speed and visual acuity, allowing them to spot and track prey while diving from over a mile in the air. Owls benefit from densely packed light-sensitive rod cells and a reflective tissue layer (the *tapetum lucidum*) behind the retina that enhances low-light vision, enabling them to track prey silently through dark woods.



Photo by Elliott Ress

Chickadees use color vision to determine the ripeness of fruit, helping them select the most nutritious options. Hummingbirds can perceive intricate details within a few feet, which is vital for locating flowers filled with nectar.

Many foragers use vision to hunt from a perch by waiting for an insect to fly past and then catching it in mid-air. Catching small flying insects requires well-developed eyesight and extreme maneuverability.

Clark's Nutcrackers remember the location of thousands of individual caches made over a wide geographical area. Researchers suggest the birds form visual snapshots of every cache location. To retrieve their food, they orient themselves in precisely the same direction as when the

visual snapshot was formed during caching, even if the site was approached from a different direction.

Birds use different postures as visual communication, conveying aggression, submission, or courtship. Erect feathers characterize a defensive posture. Wing displays, such as flapping or spreading wings, signal aggression or a territorial boundary. Wing drooping may indicate submission or relaxation. Different feather colors and patterns can indicate age, sex, or dominance level among birds of the same species.

During mating displays, males may puff up their feathers and show off their colors to attract females. Birds also may use visual cues to alert others to danger. For instance, a bird might freeze or change its posture to signal a predator's presence. When one species reacts to a threat, others may observe and respond accordingly, enhancing their chances of survival.



Courtesy of BLM, public domain, Wikimedia Commons

Photo by BJ Worth



American Crows are known to use eye movements and signals to communicate with their young. They maintain social networks with facial recognition and read body language that indicates threats, mating, and territory.

A bird's vision is integral to every aspect of life, influencing social interactions, feeding behavior, migration, and more. Far from being solely instinct-driven, birds use their highly developed sense of sight to process the world around them and enhance their capabilities for survival.

NOVEMBER PROGRAM

Birding in Brazil's Diverse Southeast

Presented by Joshua Covill

Come join us as we welcome Joshua Covill to our November 10 general meeting. Josh will share stories about his three-week road trip across Brazil last year in the company of friends. The southeast of Brazil is a global biodiversity hotspot, full of colorful endemic species that inhabit some of the most imperiled ecosystems in the New World. Enjoy Josh's photographs and videos of this extraordinary landscape and its inhabitants.



Photo by Joshua Covill

Josh started birding with the Flathead Audubon Society at thirteen years old, and has since made birds a centerpiece of his life. He owns his own guiding company, Glacier Birding Adventures, based in the Flathead Valley, and leads tours internationally for Hillstar Nature. No matter where he travels, his love and fascination of the natural world is still rooted in those early days of Flathead Audubon bird walks with fabulous teachers and friends.

NOVEMBER MEETING FAS

We will continue our hybrid meetings this month and continue through the fall/winter for the remainder of the year. For those coming to the meeting on November 10, 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 Drive in Kalispell. Look for our banner outside.

For those joining virtually, when you use the link, you will eventually be let into a "waiting room" where you will then be added to the meeting by the host. Please sign in with your name when you enter the room so we know to admit you. You will be muted when you first join the meeting. You can use your computer's microphone and speakers (most computers have both), 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 your phone.

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

Videos of previous FAS meeting programs are available at

<https://flatheadaudubon.org/videos>.

NOVEMBER AUDUBON CALENDAR

Monday, Nov 3, 5:30pm. FAS Board of Directors Meeting. Gateway Community Center, Room 26, US Hwy. 2 West, Kalispell. You may bring your dinner.

Friday, Nov 7, 9am-about noon. Creston Raptor Quest Field Trip. See page 5.

Friday, Nov 7, 4:30-5:30pm. Fall Bird Speaker Series: Audubon Christmas Bird Count. See page 4.

Monday, Nov 10, 7pm. Flathead Audubon General Meeting. Gateway Community Center, US Hwy. 2 West, Kalispell. East side of Gateway Mall, along Glenwood Dr. All are welcome. For presentation information and/or to join remotely, see above.

Tuesday, Nov 11, 10am-noon. Creston Fish Hatchery Field Trip. See page 5.

Thursday, Nov 13, 5-8pm. Flathead Audubon's Pint Night at Bias Brewing, 412 S Main St, Kalispell. See page 4.

Monday, Nov 17, 6-7pm. Flathead Audubon Open House, Gateway Community Center, Suite 36, US Hwy. 2 West, Kalispell. See page 7.



Illustration by Tonda Rae Silinsky

Buckthorn Warriors!

By Pam Willison



Photo by Pam Willison

On September 20 seven volunteers stepped forward for Fall Work Day to help make a dent in the invasive common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) located in Owen Sowerwine. A huge thank you to those who joined me: Denny, Rod, Ronda, Jess, Barbara, and Pat.

Over the past six years we have focused our removal efforts on eliminating the large seed-producing trees and dense stands of buckthorn in order to allow native shrubs to thrive in those spaces. The bank of buckthorn seeds already on the ground also responded in those open spaces, creating a blanket of small seedlings and saplings.

Six members of the work crew settled in along the education trail to snip off small buckthorn and treat the cut stems with a glyphosate solution applied with a dauber bottle. In the end we each had a small cleared space with only native plants remaining, mostly snowberry and chokecherry.

While the nipper and dauber crew worked, Denny continued working on a mature stand of buckthorn located off the main trail. Using the injection lance, he placed glyphosate capsules into the cambium layer of the mature trees. The glyphosate is drawn down into the root systems, and by next spring the majority of those trees will be dead.

Our work eliminating the invasive buckthorn (among several other invasives) is an ongoing process and can sometimes seem overwhelming. However, every bit of progress is still progress, and we are gratified to see the positive effect we have had.

Membership News

By Linda Du Lac

Not sure when your Flathead Audubon Society membership expires? Linda Du Lac, our Membership Chair, would be happy to check your expiration date. Contact her at lindadulac@flatheadaudubon.org.

In 2022, a change was made to the type of memberships we offer. In addition to the \$25 Basic membership for an individual or family and the \$40 Supporting membership for an individual or family, we decided to recognize anyone donating \$25 or more with a complimentary Flathead Audubon Society (FAS) membership. This means if you donated \$25 or more to FAS this year your membership was established, or if you are a returning member, it was renewed.

Your membership makes a huge impact on the many important education and conservation programs FAS offers. It also supports our monthly *Pileated Post* newsletter.

Should you need to renew, please include your email address with your renewal so we can send you our *Pileated Post* e-newsletter and periodic *Flathead Audubon Fly-by* emails, which bring you occasional FAS updates, notifications, and reminders.
THANK YOU!



Highlights from the October 6, 2025 Board of Directors Meeting

By Michele Tohtz, Secretary

- ✚ Rod reviewed the current financial report, which was passed and approved by the Board.
- ✚ Wings 2026 planning is successfully moving forward.
- ✚ Linda Du Lac will fill the vacant Vice President position.
- ✚ During September, Jess connected with 204 students and over 100 community members.
- ✚ The Great Fish fundraiser was a tremendous success.
- ✚ Ongoing buckthorn treatment was accomplished at the recent Owen Sowerwine work day.



Photo by Will Laurie

Nest Notes November 2025

By Jess Garby, Flathead Audubon Education Coordinator



Illustration by Jess Garby

The signs of fall are truly showing these past few weeks. One of my favorite fall traditions is hawk watching. Although this is my first fall in four years in which I am not a hired professional hawk counter, I was able to often find my way up the ridge.

I am so excited to say that my goal of bringing students up to the Jewel Basin Hawk Watch became a reality! Both Glacier High School's and Columbia Falls High School's environmental science clubs joined me on two separate days to learn how to survey migrating raptors. After an in-class presentation on the protocols and species we were likely to observe, the students were ready to head up the mountain. To my surprise, it was the first time for some of them up in Jewel Basin. While leading the group to the ridge, I heard one student behind me exclaim, "I've never seen anything like this." This reminded me why sharing these experiences is so important. Once we reached the survey site, everyone settled into their camp chairs to scan the skies. By the end of the field trip, students were calling out, "Sharp-shinned Hawk, adult!" as birds flew over our heads. I was so impressed with their eagerness to learn about raptors and how quickly they picked up the survey protocols.



Many students are excited to return next fall!

Because of my love for crafting, I have been incorporating art into Flathead Audubon (FAS) education programs. A huge hit has been a lesson on corvids, the bird family that includes crows, ravens, magpies, and jays.

After students learn about the extraordinary abilities of corvids, we craft our own Blue Jay. Kindergarten through fifth grade students especially love this activity, which focuses on fine-tuning motor skills while learning about the birds in their backyards. I continued this idea with a homeschool art class at the Glacier Art Museum, where we created bird sculptures using recycled cardboard. Each student got to pick their own species to create and paint, using field guides as inspiration. I look forward to expanding our bird lessons to include more art, as the two often go hand in hand!



Coming up, let's celebrate the success of the Great Fish Fundraiser together by sharing a beer (or two) at the Pint Night hosted at Bias Brewing, details below. If you can't make it to that, I hope to see some of you at the FAS Open House on November 17, details on page 7. A comfy, cozy office space that feels like home is very important to me, and I can't wait to show you all the inviting space we have created!

Photos by Jess Garby

Raise a Pint for Birds Flathead Audubon's Pint Night at Bias Brewing



Thursday, November 13
5-8pm • Bias Brewing,
412 S Main St, Kalispell

Bird lovers and beer fans, mark your calendars! On Thursday, November 13, the Flathead Audubon Society will host a Pint Night at Bias Brewing. It's a chance to support local conservation, socialize with fellow nature enthusiasts, and enjoy craft brews. A donation of \$1 will be made to Flathead Audubon Society for each pint sold.



AUDUBON CHRISTMAS
BIRD COUNT PRESENTATION

WITH DENNY OLSON

Bigfork Arnlund Community Room:
Friday, November 7th, 4:30-5:30pm

Join us for the final presentation of our Audubon collaboration with Denny Olson, a retired bird educator with a long history in conservation and education.

Denny will explain how the Christmas Bird Count works, why it matters for birds and bird watchers alike, and how you can participate.



Bigfork Library
186 Bridge St, Bigfork, MT
406-637-6976

NOVEMBER 2025 FIELD TRIPS

CRESTON RAPTOR QUEST, Friday, November 7, 9 am-about noon.

Please join Flathead Audubon leader Michell De Leon Tyler to look for winter-resident raptors as we travel the roads around Creston. Migration, with its large numbers of raptors passing through on their way south, is nearing an end, but many birds overwinter in the Flathead Valley. We will focus on roadside identification of Red-tailed and Rough-legged Hawks in various plumages and will also look for resident owls. We should see a few Bald Eagles, as the route takes us along the Flathead River. Other raptors, such as accipiters and falcons, are also possible. If weather permits, we will take a short walk around Jessup Pond. Wear sturdy boots and layers suitable for possible wet conditions, and bring binoculars and water. Meet at the Creston Fish Hatchery parking lot across from Jessup Pond. To sign up, please contact Michell at 406-250-5238 or michell@flatheadaudubon.org.



CRESTON FISH HATCHERY, Tuesday, November 11, 10am-noon.

Join Flathead Audubon Educator, Jess Garby, for a morning exploring our resident birds and ducks at the Creston Fish Hatchery. This will involve easy walking at the hatchery grounds and along the shore of Jessup Pond. Locals, such as dippers, nuthatches, chickadees, and a variety of woodpeckers, can be expected. Kingfishers and a variety of ducks are also likely. Wear boots and layers for possible wet conditions. To sign up, please contact Jess at 406-250-8293 or jess@flatheadaudubon.org.

Meet Linda Du Lac, Flathead Audubon VP & Membership Chair

By Linda Winnie

Linda Du Lac's life has always centered around nature and natural resources. Three generations of her family have worked in the natural resource field. Linda earned her degree in Resource and Recreation Management with a minor in Environmental Education in 1974 from Oregon State University, then worked for 35 years for the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. She worked mostly in the Pacific Northwest but also served in Alaska and Washington D.C. During her career, she garnered national recognition for technical manuals she wrote and information systems she developed.



Photo by Darcy Thomas

Linda loves people and technical challenges. This has made her an extremely successful Flathead Audubon (FAS) Membership Chair, since it is a job that involves both working one-on-one with FAS members and managing the large FAS database.

In October 2025, the FAS Board appointed Linda to fill the vacant vice president position until elections are held in May 2026, at which time it is hoped she will be

elected to a two-year term. She will continue to serve as Membership Chair, as she has for three years. Linda has also served as FAS Great Fish Fund Advisor for two years, was on last year's Hiring Committee, and joined the FAS History Committee in 2024. Throughout this period, she has also been a valuable FAS Board Director. One FAS Board Director said it best when she told Linda after the last Board meeting, "You have been such a great addition to the Board with your delightful and welcoming personality, strong skill set, willingness to learn, and high level of enthusiasm and optimism."

Linda always carries a variety of bird identification books with her on her frequent outdoor birdwatching adventures, many along the Swan River near her home in Ferndale. She is also very involved in watching her grandkids compete in soccer and ski racing, and enjoys receiving reports from her 12-year old granddaughter on the birds she sees from her school bus. To learn more about Linda, you can chat with her when she hands you your name tag at FAS general meetings or when you meet up with her on one of the many FAS field trips she takes part in.

FLATHEAD AUDUBON MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Flathead Audubon Society is to conserve birds, wildlife habitat, and ecosystem diversity in northwest Montana through education and conservation programs.

Sandhill Crane Viewing Field Trip Report By Darcy Thomas

Fourteen enthusiastic birders gathered at the West Valley Wildlife Viewing Area on October 2 to witness the annual Sandhill Crane migration. Throughout the evening, approximately 500 cranes filled the sky, circling gracefully before settling down to roost at the ponds. Their calls echoed across the valley, providing a spectacular and memorable experience for all who attended.



Wetland ponds like those at the West Valley Wildlife Viewing Area are crucial stopover habitats for migrating birds. They provide safe roosting areas and vital resting spots for cranes and other waterfowl making long migratory journeys.

Photos by Linda Du Lac

Jewel Basin Hawk Watch: Season Update

By Dan Casey



Golden Eagle, Photo by BJ Worth

Snow is falling from the valley floor to the ridgetop as I prepare this update, and I am hoping that our 18th season is not coming to a premature end. But, should that be the case, it has been a highly successful season by all measures. Our 292 hours of surveys over 41 days thus far have recorded 3,156 raptors of 17 species, our fifth-highest season total in 18 years. We have recorded above-average numbers of 13 species (indicated in bold below), including record numbers of Broad-winged Hawks (79) and Peregrine Falcons (24). Along the way we recorded our 24,000th Sharp-shinned Hawk and 50,000th raptor over the history of the count. Whether or not we are done for the season, many thanks to all who have served as primary counters and support observers, helping to tally the following totals:

Turkey Vulture – 8	Accipiter, species – 43	Golden Eagle – 209
Osprey – 17	Broad-winged Hawk – 79	American Kestrel – 106
Bald Eagle – 46	Swainson's Hawk – 3	Merlin – 33
Northern Harrier – 94	Red-tailed Hawk – 246	Peregrine Falcon – 24
Sharp-shinned Hawk – 1,777	Ferruginous Hawk - 1	Prairie Falcon – 15
Cooper's Hawk – 408	Rough-legged Hawk - 7	Falcon, species – 5
American Goshawk – 15	Buteo, species – 4	Raptor, species – 16

TOTAL: 3,156 birds of 17 species

Flathead Valley Bird Report By Dan Casey

Rare and Notables – September/October 2025

See also: <https://ebird.org/region/US-MT-029?yr=all>.

Remarkably like a year ago, we had continued warm and dry weather throughout the period. A lack of cold fronts made for a relatively mundane migration period. Lingered birds in the region included **White-faced Ibis, Lazuli Bunting, Willow Flycatcher, Cassin’s Vireo, Western Tanager, Northern House Wren, and Eastern Kingbird.**

Good numbers of **Broad-winged Hawks** were seen both at Mt. Brown and the Jewel Basin Hawk Watch. “Winter” gulls were slow to arrive, with few records of **American Herring Gull** and just one record of a **Short-billed Gull**. The first **Rough-legged Hawks** and **Northern Shrikes** arrived late in the period.



Photo of Short-billed Gull
By Dan Casey

09/13 – **White-faced Ibis** (1) Creston (Craig H)

09/14 – **Lazuli Bunting** (1) Somers Beach State Park (Dan C)

09/16 – **Willow Flycatcher** (late) Creston (Craig H)

09/16 – **Rock Wren** (1) Highline Trail, Glacier NP (Spencer G)

09/18 – **Broad-winged Hawk** (40) Jewel Basin Hawk Watch (Dan S)

09/22 – **“Harlan’s” Red-tailed Hawk** (first of season) Jewel Basin (Josh C)

09/27 – **Western Tanager** (late) South of Columbia Falls (Steve G)

09/27 – **Rough-legged Hawk** (first of season) Jewel Basin Hawk Watch (Josh C)

09/29 – **Common Tern** (1) Pablo Reservoir (Luis R)

09/29 – **Cassin’s Vireo** (1) St Ignatius (Anon)

09/30 – **Northern House Wren** (late) St Ignatius (Anon)

10/01 – **Say’s Phoebe** (1) West of Ronan (James M)

10/02 – **Townsend’s Warbler** (late) South of Columbia Falls (Steve G)

10/10 – **Red-naped Sapsucker** (1) St Ignatius (Anon)

10/11 – **Eastern Kingbird** (late) Polson (Shawn R)

10/12 – **Short-billed Gull** (1) Lakeside Marina (Dan C)

What to Expect - November 2025

Late October and early November is the best time of the year for the three scoter species (especially **Surf Scoter**) on our larger bodies of water. **Rough-legged Hawk** numbers will continue to build through the period, and **“Harlan’s” Red-tailed Hawks** become regular throughout the Valley. Flocks of **Bohemian Waxwings** should arrive and thrive on this year’s berry crop. Perhaps the first **Snow Buntings** or even a **Snowy Owl** will show up in the open farmlands of West and Lower Valleys. **American Herring, Iceland, and Glaucous Gulls** should join the Valley flock, alternating between the landfill and Flathead Lake WPA.

FLATHEAD AUDUBON

Office Open House

CELEBRATE OUR NEW OFFICE SPACE!

TOUR THE NEW SPACE, MEET THE FAS TEAM. LEARN ABOUT UPCOMING PROGRAMS & EVENTS!

PLUS WINE • CHEESE

GATEWAY COMMUNITY CENTER
1203 U.S. HWY 2 W STE 36, KALISPELL, MT 59901
LOOK FOR FAS SIGNS

NOVEMBER 17, 6-7PM

Email jess@flatheadaudubon.org for more info

Jill and Mike Fanning need a ride to the monthly meetings from the West Valley area off Farm to Market Road.

If you can help them out please call at 406-862-8070.

Project FeederWatch

By Jess Garby

Do you enjoy watching birds at your feeders? Are you looking for a fun and meaningful winter project? Project FeederWatch is a wonderful way to turn your backyard observations into real science, and to connect with other bird enthusiasts across the Flathead Valley and beyond.

Project FeederWatch began in Ontario, Canada, in the 1970s and partnered with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in the mid-1980s. Each year from November through mid-April, participants across North America count the birds that visit their feeders, birdbaths, or natural areas. The data help researchers track winter bird movements and monitor long-term trends in species distribution and abundance, knowledge that becomes more valuable as our climate continues to change.

No experience is necessary to join, and no bird feeder or bird bath is required. When you sign up, you will receive a research kit, bird identification resources, and access

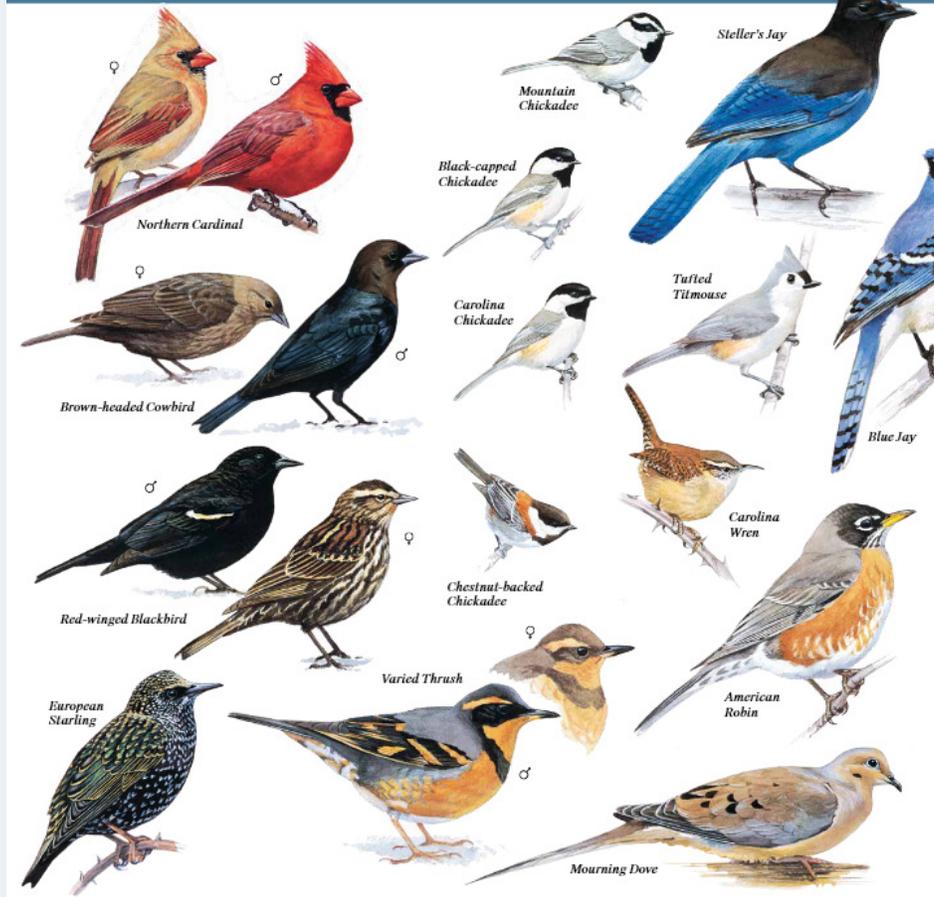
to an interactive online tool that shows which foods and feeders attract nearly 100 common winter species. You can count birds as often or as infrequently as you like. There's a small participation fee of \$18 for U.S. residents (\$15 for Cornell Lab members), which supports the project's data analysis. Participants also receive a year-end report and digital access to *Living Bird*, Cornell's award-winning magazine.

Here in the Flathead, Project FeederWatch is a great way to stay connected with nature throughout the winter months and to contribute valuable information about the birds that share our snowy landscape. To learn more or sign up, visit www.FeederWatch.org.

So set up your feeders, grab your binoculars, and join fellow Flathead birders in this fun and meaningful winter tradition!

Project FeederWatch

Common Feeder Birds



Join Project FeederWatch

and learn about the birds in your own backyard while helping scientists study bird populations.

FeederWatching is as easy as...

1. Choosing an area to watch birds
2. Counting the birds that visit
3. Submitting your counts through our website or mobile app

www.feederwatch.org

New participants receive

- Tools to track your birds over time
- Project instructions and information about birds and bird feeding
- Double-sided 17" x 22" poster of common feeder birds (optional)
- FeederWatch calendar (optional)
- *Winter Bird Highlights*, our annual summary
- Access to the digital version of the Cornell Lab's *Living Bird* magazine (U.S.) or Birds Canada's eNews (Canada)



Sign up today!

Participation fee is \$18 in the U.S. or a donation of any amount in Canada.

Illustrations of birds commonly found at feeders in winter by Larry McQueen for Project FeederWatch. © Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Birds shown in winter plumage at approximately one-fourth life size. Project FeederWatch is a joint research and education project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Birds Canada.

Trumpeter Swans At Risk

By Louis Bruno & Steve Gniadek

The Trumpeter Swan recovery story is one of the most incredible conservation stories in American history. By the 1930s, due to market and subsistence hunting, only 69 Trumpeter Swans were thought to be in existence. These birds survived in the Yellowstone area because of the protection afforded by Yellowstone National Park and because they did not migrate. Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge was designated in 1933 specifically for the protection of these swans. At the time, it was thought they were the only ones in existence. Later, populations were discovered in Alaska and northern Alberta, mostly migratory birds.



Photo by Elliott Ress

the Yellowstone and Red Rock Lakes areas (the Tri-State Flock). These swans are part of what is known as the Rocky Mountain Population.

Of particular concern is that, despite the Waterton population just to the north, there have been only sporadic records of nesting swans along the Rocky Mountain Front, and there is no population of breeding swans there.

The Waterton population has been holding at six to eight nesting pairs for the past forty years. Based on cygnet survival in that flock one would expect an increase in numbers. Yet suitable habitat remains unoccupied. What is keeping the population from thriving?

In the 1960s, the states of Minnesota and South Dakota began an ambitious effort to restore Trumpeters, and the Trumpeter Swan Society was founded. In the 1980s, the states of Wisconsin and Michigan came onboard, followed by Iowa, Ohio, and Missouri. As a result of their efforts, the Interior Population of Trumpeter Swans now numbers over 27,000 birds. Closer to home, there was an ambitious, successful effort by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the Blackfoot Challenge to introduce Trumpeters back into the landscape. The Rocky Mountain Population, which includes Greater Yellowstone and Alberta, now numbers 11,700. The Pacific Coast Population now numbers 24,000, adding up to a continent-wide total of 63,000 birds.

However, this remarkable recovery story is marred by challenges. Despite their growth in some areas, Trumpeter Swans are still absent from a large part of their historic breeding range, and some populations have stagnated, particularly in parts of Alberta, including the Waterton Biosphere Region of southwest Alberta and

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) issues 500 annual Tundra Swan hunting permits in Toole, Liberty, Hill, Pondera, Choteau, Cascade, and Teton counties. Our concern focuses primarily on Freezout Lake, where FWP data indicates an uptick in the incidental take of Trumpeters in the past decade. Rumor has it that some hunters are deliberately targeting Trumpeters as trophies, particularly since there is no resulting penalty. The birds are not confiscated and there are no associated fines.

Other western states assess penalties for killing Trumpeters, and FWP should do the same. Additionally, FWP should identify the source of harvested Trumpeters to allow for better protection of impacted populations.

You can support efforts to protect these beautiful birds by spreading the word and raising awareness of this unregulated incidental take. For more information contact Lou at wilderlou1@gmail.com or Steve at grayjaybro@yahoo.com.

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GO GREEN!

with
Pileated Post!

Receive our newsletter directly in your inbox! You'll get the same great content with beautiful color photos and clickable links, all while helping us dedicate more of our resources to bird conservation and reduce our environmental footprint.

To switch to the email version, simply contact us at info@flatheadaudubon.org.

Thank you!

The History Corner: Jack Whitney & Elmer Sprunger Bigfork Birding Brothers

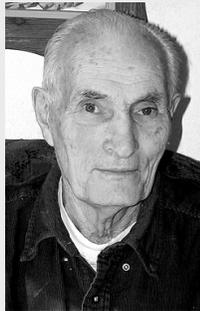
By Ben Long



Two names emerge over and over in the genesis of Flathead Audubon, two friends who were jocular, mischievous, and above all, champions of birds, nature, and

the Flathead Valley: Jack Whitney and Elmer Sprunger. Both men grew up in the Bigfork area in the early twentieth century. Both were World War II veterans, Jack serving in the Navy in the Aleutian Islands, and Elmer serving in the Army in the Hawaiian Islands. After the war, both returned to their beloved Bigfork and the Flathead Valley in the midst of a post-war economic boom. True patriots, they worked to protect the America they had defended by speaking out as conservationists. That included organizing the Bigfork Bird Club, the predecessor of the Flathead Audubon Society.

Each man was an artist in his own right. Jack worked in the woods and built fine log homes. He had big, strong hands that mastered creating items out of wood. He was also a consummate outdoorsman, hunting with bows and arrows he crafted from scratch. He had more mountain goats in the Pope & Young Records (a record book for archers) than anyone else. He would hunt them with simple, homemade tools, hiking from his home in Bigfork to the goat rocks "with only a sandwich and a book of matches," hauling his prize home on his back.



Jack Whitney 2004
Photo by Leo Keane

Parks authorities when he thought they had failed their conservation missions, often testing the limits of their official senses of humor.

Elmer designed the original Pileated Woodpecker logo that long served as the emblem of the Flathead Audubon Society. Its first public appearance was on the masthead of the May 1979 *Accipiter Express* newsletter. Elmer's artwork also gained national recognition, including being honored at the Cowboy Hall of Fame.

Jack and his wife, Ursula, and Elmer and his wife, Marie, loved birds. According to a 2003 *Pileated Post* article by Robin Maggadino, the Whitneys had a blue grouse so tame it would peck sunflower seeds from Jack's lips. Together, Jack and Elmer were a team that goaded and encouraged each other. While they both knew tragedy, having each lost a young daughter, they were also known for their laughter and good humor. Jack often crafted the frames for Elmer's paintings, which can still be found for sale on the internet.

Jack and Elmer helped champion many causes, including the creation of the Jewel Basin Hiking Area. They were stalwart conservationists, especially committed to defending wild country in the Swan Valley. In 1995, Friends of the Wild Swan created a hiking trail to honor the two men near Point Pleasant campground in the Swan Valley. The Sprunger-Whitney Nature Trail is a two-mile interpretive hiking trail that is an excellent place to bird and explore the old-growth, riparian forest along the Swan River.

Jack and Elmer's conservation achievements and dedication to each other and the natural wonders of the Flathead Valley are a reminder of the power of friendship.

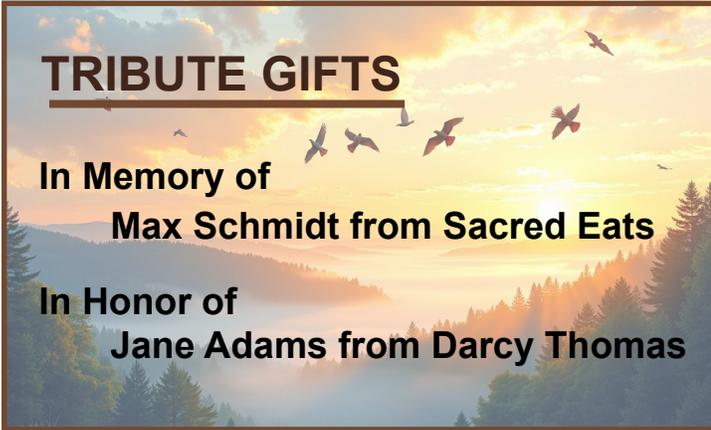


Elmer Sprunger
Courtesy of
swanrange.com

Elmer was an artist with pen and paints. For much of his career, he worked for the Columbia Falls Aluminum Co. as a resident graphic designer, painting signs and creating safety posters. Eventually, he traded that job to work as a fine artist, painting wildlife scenes inspired by his beloved Swan Range. Elmer produced twenty years of political cartoons for the weekly *Bigfork Eagle* newspaper. He loved needling U.S. Forest Service or Montana Fish, Wildlife &



FAS logo 1979, designed by Elmer Sprunger



A SPECIAL GIFT is a way to honor or commemorate someone special to you by supporting Flathead Audubon's local projects in their name. Special gifts are acknowledged in this space each month with the name of the donor and the person honored.

FAS Endowment Fund

Are you estate planning, looking to leave a legacy, or just want to make a contribution towards conservation? FAS has a permanent endowment fund through the Whitefish Community Foundation. Donating to the endowment fund will qualify you for part or all of the Montana Qualified Endowment Credit. For more information, contact Alan Davis at the Whitefish Community Foundation or visit their website at whitefishcommunityfoundation.org.

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