

Elmer Sprunger - Wildlife Observer

When the Bigfork Bird Club met in the early 1970s, Elmer Sprunger joined in the first Christmas Bird Count. "There have been some unusual birds that the bird count compilers were reluctant to accept, because they had never been seen here before, or at least during winter. The hawk owl was kind of in doubt for a while." Not in doubt are Elmer's notoriety and productivity as a wildlife artist. Maybe you've chuckled and nodded over one of his famous, or infamous, editorial cartoons in the Bigfork Eagle. One of your children may have attended a cartooning class taught by Elmer and his son, Jerry. Perhaps you've seen some of the 3,062+ wildlife paintings he has created over the past 40 years.

When the Bird Club fledged into the Flathead Audubon Society, Elmer served on the board of directors and led field trips. He even designed the pileated woodpecker logo for Flathead Audubon's newsletter. One memorable outing he led to Gildart Flats, along the upper Swan River, began with a woman falling off the log bridge into the slough. "The water that surrounded the island was only about a foot deep, but no telling how much silt there was." He described her covered with mud from head to toe, as they struggled to haul her back up onto the bridge. Another field trip location near Soup Creek, the Whitney-Sprunger Nature Trail, is now named for Elmer and friend, Jack Whitney.

Elmer's acquaintance with the Swan Valley began at birth. His boyhood was spent at Cedar Bay Lodge on Swan Lake, where his parents were caretakers. It was quite remote, with just a narrow, rutted and unplowed access road. The Sprunger's two sons had to cross frozen Swan Lake during the winter, catching the school bus at the highway. Self entertainment was a way of life. "At night, a generator lighted the one bulb suspended above the table. Mom worked crossword puzzles and Dad, Pete and I copied cartoons out of the paper."

"The root cellar was our grocery store. We

lived on venison, grouse, fish, huckleberries and root crops. Mother was picking huckleberries all summer," he said, remembering jars of succulent berries lining the root cellar shelves.

"Dad knew all about birds, where they nested, how they lived," reflected Elmer. One spring, his dad brought home two goslings from a nearby island, after finding the parents gone and nest destroyed. "They followed Dad all summer, eating worms around his feet as he hoed the garden, splashing and fussing around the boat when he fished. When fall came, they didn't know what to do, so we ate 'em," Elmer recalled, chuckling.

One of his favorite investigations as a nature loving teenager involved sitting patiently until dusk near a marshy creek inlet on Swan Lake, hoping to catch a glimpse of the owls that had been hooting in the area night after night. He discovered that the great horned owls were eating muskrats that lived in the marsh.

His first paid artwork, as a high school student, was a cartoon drawn on the bar-room mirror at the Bigfork Inn. "They frosted the mirror with Epsom salts and beer. I painted a big cartoon of a guy in his red long-johns, with the flap in back flapping in the wind, running through the snow to the outhouse, Monkey Wards Catalog in hand."

(ELMER SPRUNGER, continued on page 9)

FEBRUARY FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

Monday, February 9, 2004: Flathead Audubon presents Henning Stabins, Plum Creek wildlife biologist, who will discuss several of Plum Creek's interesting wildlife projects in Montana. **The meeting will be held at The Summit**, corner of Highway 93 North and Sunnyview Lane. The general meeting begins at 7:30pm, with the program starting around 8.



CHICKADEE CHATTER

Patagonia is still a very wild and untamed place, a place where one can still see condors glide on outstretched wings for miles, a place of fierce winds that can literally sweep you off of your feet and a place where you can see for miles and miles and the sky looms larger than life. There are very few towns and ranching, though still a time-honored way of life here, is on the decline, and many of the sheep and cattle estancias (ranches in a grand style) that once were the lifeblood of the area are being abandoned and falling into disrepair.

The pampas of southern Chile slowly rise into uplands and finally come up against some of the most spectacular mountains in the world. The six hour drive from Punta Arenas at the southern tip of the South American continent to the national park called Torres Del Paine is etched in my memory. The starkness of the grasslands gives way to deep green hills with short trees and wildflowers and finally the distant mountains come into view and as you draw near to them, they take your breath away.

The mountains of Torres Del Paine defy description. The first time I saw the Paine massif itself, it was standing in all its glory in front of me. So picture this with your mind's eye, if you will: off in the distance, spectacular craggy mountains rise; they are two-toned because the ancient rock they are comprised of is tan colored granite capped by a dark almost black sedimentary rock. Amongst the crags are spires and battlements of tan rock. And between the crags and spires lie hanging valleys filled with snowfields and icy glaciers. There was quite a lot of snow in the mountains last November because it had been snowing for the past week. In front of the mountains are numerous glacial lakes in every color of blue imaginable, each lake a different hue. Lower down, the sides of the mountains are green with several species of southern beech tree and other low bushes. The sky was filled with clouds that raced before the wind, framing the peaks with spectacular formations, and here and there patches of late afternoon sunlight illuminated the mountainsides.

The only other thing I must mention is the *WIND*, the west wind that comes howling in from the southern Pacific Ocean. National Geographic magazine in the January 2004 issue has an article on Patagonia; the title of the article is "Patagonia, Land of the Living Wind." It has some very nice pictures and some good commentary on this very remote place. The living wind is quite descriptive, and it was ever-present every day I was in Patagonia. It blew so hard the first day I was in the Park, I could lean into it and not fall down, a remarkable sensation. I had to keep my eyes half-closed just to see. The wind would howl against the walls of the hotel and kept me company all night. It whipped up immense waves

on the small lakes and then blew the tips off of the waves. There were little droplets of wind-blown water everywhere. The flora in this part of the world has adapted to its ferocious nature and either grows very low to the ground, is very compact or has a stunted, bent look. The trees of the beech forests have thick branches filled with small leaves (1"-3") that are bent at odd angles, very picturesque. A shrub called the notro, which was filled with spiky brilliant red flowers while I was there, grows thick stems and has sleek, slender leaves; it is quite lovely and I found it all over Chile. Another shrub called the fire bush grows mat-like and low to the ground on especially windy hillsides; red flowers cover the bush in spring and the hillsides look like they are on fire, impressive. In protected forest nooks are lovely little cream-colored orchids with three petals and a plant called the boton de oro which is very similar to our buttercup but with more petals. The Park is filled with wildflowers and all of them grow low to the ground to stay as protected from the wind as possible.

I spent four days in the Park that went by far too quickly. Every day I went hiking. On the first day I hiked to a tongue of the Southern Ice Sheet (the largest body of ice outside of the polar regions in the world). The walk to the Grey Glacier passes through some very beautiful country and into thick beech forests where I saw a wonderful bird called the carpintero negro, or the Magellanic Woodpecker. This bird is similar in size to our Pileated and one of only two woodpecker species found in Chile. The male sports a lovely red pointed cap while the female is nearly all black and they both have very long tails. They were in an area of old growth forest, huge ancient beech trees covered with a pale yellow lichen. I watched them for some time.

Nearer to the glacier, the trail comes out into an open area where the wind comes down from the ice sheet and is relentless. High above me are rocky cliffsides and higher still are the snowy peaks of the mountains. The clouds are racing in and out of the peaks and it is here that I saw the only eagle to be found in Chile. It is called the Black-chested Buzzard Eagle and is more closely related to buteos (hawks) than eagles. There were two high in the sky and they were pursuing a condor (which is nearly twice the size of the eagles). The eagles were quite unhappy that the condor was there and some spectacular flying ensued. Surprisingly, the eagles prevailed and soon the condor flew out of sight. I continued on my way to the glacier, properly awed by the remarkable aerial display.

The Grey Glacier is an immense sheet of ice that snakes its way down into a deep glacial lake of the same name. I catch a boat near the glacier and we wend our way through the silt-laden grey water towards the glacier and its turquoise blue pillars of ice. It is the largest glacier I have ever seen. It is riddled with crevasses and melting water pours from its surface.

(continued on page 3.....)





February 2004 Program



Plum Creek's Wildlife Monitoring Program

Flathead Audubon welcomes Plum Creek wildlife biologist Henning Stabins to its February 9 meeting. Starting at February's meeting, Flathead Audubon will be meeting at The Summit, in conference room #3 (see details below). The meeting begins at 7:30 p.m., with the board meeting beginning at 5:30.

Plum Creek's wildlife monitoring program includes a diverse array of cooperative projects on everything from slugs and snails to eagles and grizzly bears. Stabins' program will describe some of these interesting projects in Montana. Among the species he will discuss are goshawks, forest owls, loons, neotropical migrants, great blue herons, grizzlies, lynx and bats. He will also touch on projects in other parts of the country, including those focusing on red-cockaded woodpeckers, spotted owls and marbled murrelets. Stabins will focus on how science helps to improve sustainable forest management.

Stabins has been a Wildlife Biologist with Plum Creek for nine years, previously in the Washington Cascades and now based in Columbia Falls. Prior to Plum Creek, he worked as a biologist for a Seattle environmental consulting firm, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Alaska, and the Massachusetts Audubon Society on Cape Cod.



FEBRUARY MEETING WE HAVE MIGRATED!



Beginning at the February 9 meeting, Flathead Audubon will be meeting at The Summit, conference room #3. We will begin our meeting, as usual, at 7:30 p.m.

There is ample parking in the north lot of The Summit. Enter through the front entrance of the Summit and turn right. Head down the hall, past the restrooms to the conference rooms. The rooms are easy to locate, but if you get lost, ask for assistance at the front desk

Please Note: Deadline for submitting articles for the March issue of the Pileated Post is February 15th. This is a one-time-only change from our usual deadline of the 20th.



(*CHICKADEE CHATTER*, continued from page 2)

The lake has dozens of mini icebergs, all calved from this enormous sheet of ice. It is riddled with crevasses and melting water pours from its surface. The lake has dozens of mini icebergs, all calved from this enormous sheet of ice. The story of this glacier is the same as many around the world; it is receding rapidly, up to 50 meters per year (about 165 feet). This is true of most of the glaciers of the southern ice sheet.

The sun broke through the shifting clouds and it began to rain. Shimmering droplets of water fell and the boat began the journey back to the

shore. On the way back we talked about Darwin and his trip through the Straits of Magellan, the effects of global warming, bird-watching in southern climes and other esoteric topics. It was a good day and at the very end of the day a flock of green Austral Parakeets flew overhead. I went to sleep that night with a glass of good Chilean wine in my tummy, dreams of condors racing the wind, deep blue icebergs floating on a gray lake and a smile. Oh, and of course, the rush of the wind outside.

By Leslie Kehoe

FROM THE BOARD

Lewis Young

Conservation Committee Chairman



White-tailed Deer, Bird Habitat, and Audubon

How are white-tailed deer, bird habitat, and Audubon related? The relationship of bird habitat and Audubon with its long history of bird conservation is easy but how do white-tailed deer come into this picture? Basically, it has to do with the effects that white-tailed deer can have on bird habitat.

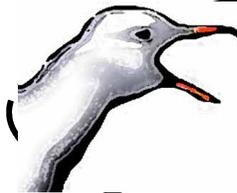
Stated simply, high populations of deer lead to depauperate understories in forested areas. Existing trees and shrubs are browsed to the point where they may die if they are entirely within reach of the deer. In addition, tree and shrub reproduction becomes severely limited or even totally prevented due to intense browsing. Since shrubs and small trees constitute an important segment of bird and other wildlife species habitat, white-tailed deer then indirectly affect birds.

Many examples exist in urban and suburban areas throughout the country; additionally, there are also examples in large national parks. Great Smoky Mountains National Park has had essentially no tree and shrub reproduction for years due to the high deer populations. Yellowstone National Park prior to the big wildfires of 1988 had virtually no tree and shrub reproduction for decades due to intense browsing, although elk and moose were the primary browsers in Yellowstone.

In the urban and suburban cases, deer hunting was severely restricted or eliminated in residential areas resulting in high deer populations that caused unacceptable browsing effects to ornamental shrubs, flowers, and native vegetation as well as very high deer/auto collision rates. Many non-lethal approaches have been tried including contraception, physical exclusion by fencing, chemical repellents, and use of frightening devices such as flashing lights. None have had much success over any length of time or over large areas. Fencing can be effective around a small garden but it becomes cost prohibitive to try to exclude deer from large areas as well as inhibiting movements by other wildlife and people. Because of the ineffectiveness of non-lethal approaches, many of the communities have reverted to some type of lethal removal of deer. Some are using contractors to shoot deer over bait and at night to remove as many animals as possible in a short time. Other communities have worked with the state wildlife agencies to use hunters under tightly controlled conditions to remove deer.

Owen Sowerwine Natural Area (OSNA) and the surrounding area is prime white-tailed deer habitat and support an increasing population. It is not unreasonable to think that OSNA may be subject to the unwanted effects of high deer populations in the not too distant future, especially if hunting opportunities are limited. Not only will there be adverse effects on the bird habitats provided by the shrub understories, there will be adverse effects on neighboring properties due to the browsing by deer. Deer in this area have been reported with heavy tick infestations which may be an indicator of the high deer densities that are developing.

Montana has a long tradition of deer hunting and the deer harvests have undoubtedly helped to some degree to maintain deer numbers at levels that allow shrubby vegetation to exist and provide an important segment of bird habitat. Even if individual Audubon members are not hunters, we should support as many hunting opportunities as possible in order to maintain the diversity of bird habitat provided by the shrubby vegetation.



Flathead Audubon received a Happy New Year's gift from Walmart again this year. We were given a \$500 Environmental Grant which will go into the general fund. These extra funds strengthen all of our programs and we are grateful for this generous, no strings attached contribution. Thank you, Walmart and Melody Haynes, who administers these funds!



REEEPORTS!



A BIT OF BIRDWATCHING ON A BRIGHT JANUARY DAY

The field trip on January 11 to the Mission Valley this year was one of the best we have had to date. We started the trip at 8:30AM in the foggy Flathead Valley and by the time we got to the Mission Valley we were greeted by the sun and the

magnificent and very snowy Mission mountains. We stopped briefly along the Flathead Lake and found several large rafts of Redheads, probably a hundred or more birds. In the same bay were Canada Goose, Lesser Scaup, Common Golden-eye, Common Merganser, a group of Bufflehead, some Mallards, several Western Grebes, several gulls and two American Coots.

The Mission Valley this year was very snowy but the number of raptors seemed to be quite high. There were remarkable numbers of Rough-legged Hawks to be seen. In one field alone we counted close to ten. There are some very beautiful birds to be seen this year. There were Red-tailed Hawks present as well but in smaller numbers than in previous years and we saw three of the Harlan's form. We found two American Kestrels, both of which were harassing unfortunate song birds in farmers' backyards and had a quick glimpse of a Prairie Falcon as it flew overhead. We saw Bald Eagles and two magnificent Golden Eagles that posed on telephone poles quite nearby for us while we shamelessly watched them through the spotting scope.

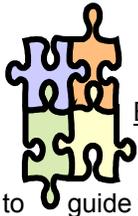
Great-horned Owls were out in numbers on that bright day and we ended up spotting six of them throughout the day sitting serenely in willow and cottonwood trees watching the antics of the humans.

We found one lonesome Mourning Dove, and Gray Partridge seem to have had a bumper crop this past year as we saw them everywhere in small groups. We stopped at Crow Dam and found one lovely American Dipper wading in the icy waters, and just as we were getting into the vehicle to leave a Townsend's Solitaire made an appearance.

There was more snow at the National Bison Range than I have seen in years and it was pretty quiet except for a Northern Shrike that insisted on leading us down the road at the end of the day.

It was a lovely day, and in the end we saw 38 species of birds and spent an entire day in the middle of January surrounded by sunshine and good company. I hope you will consider joining me next year for another exploration of the Mission Valley.

By Leslie Kehoe



Robert & Wedge Fire Post-Fire Collaboration

Editors Note: Flathead Audubon board member Jane Adams took part in an unusual Forest Service planning process to guide the agency on salvaging timber and restoring the forest in the areas burned by the Robert and Wedge fires up the North Fork last summer.

About 86 individuals participated in the collaboration process. There was a wide spectrum of participants, and many of the valley's most vocal conservationists, multiple-users, and loggers attended. We were divided into 8 smaller groups, each with a facilitator. Each group's task was to reach consensus on what we'd like to see happen in the areas of restoration, rehabilitation, and salvage, or anything else pertinent to the burns that the group wanted to address.

The agreements reached by most groups were pretty general, common sense stuff that the Forest Service probably would have done anyway. For example, most groups felt that weeds needed to be dealt with proactively, that soils and water quality were a high priority and must be protected, and that

salvage should occur in a timely manner. Many of the groups agreed to stay out of inventoried roadless areas. The most controversial topics, such as road obliteration and old growth, either were not even approached by most groups, since agreement was almost impossible, or they were discussed but no agreement was reached. Only one group agreed to stay out of areas that were inventoried old growth before the burn, but conversely, only one group agreed to salvage the majority of burned timber.

The major benefit of this process is that it brought together individuals to talk who normally just yell at each other with closed ears. One good thing about the process is that, since no statement could be brought to the larger group for consideration until all members of the smaller group agreed, there was an incentive to try to educate and convince others of one's viewpoint. Whether or not any entrenched opinions actually budged is anyone's guess. Many seemed to feel the process was at least somewhat valuable, and many were interested in some kind of ongoing dialogue.

Submitted by Jane Adams



Count for the Birds during the 7th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count

New York, NY and Ithaca, NY-

From February 13-16, 2004, bird enthusiasts are invited to take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, a project developed and managed by the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, with sponsorship from Wild Birds Unlimited store owners and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, a division of the USDA. During the event, everyone who enjoys birds will be able to submit their observations through BirdSource <http://www.birdsource.org>. GBBC participants will help conservationists, ornithologists, and the rest of the world determine the status of bird populations continent-wide. At the same time, the project will teach participants how to turn their backyards into habitat for birds.



The purpose of the GBBC is to track the abundance and distribution of North America's winter birds, as a means to ensure that common birds remain common, especially during a time when birds face many environmental hurdles. "The Great Backyard Bird Count is a terrific way for individuals, families, schools, and community groups to contribute to a better understanding of birds," says Audubon's Frank Gill, Audubon's Director of Science. "Another way is to create healthy backyard habitat, especially during this time of environmental challenges that includes habitat loss and degradation."

In the United States, an average of 2.1 million acres of land is converted to residential use every year. Eighty percent of U.S. households have private lawns. This enormous habitat must not be overlooked in efforts to conserve North American birds and other natural resources, especially since it can be easily managed by the millions of bird and nature lovers as healthy havens for wild-life-and not-so-wild life.

"Backyards are an important way to create greenways for birds between parks and wild areas," said Gill, "They allow for the cultivation of native plants and provide essential sanctuary to migratory and resident birds. Participating in projects such as the GBBC gives people a first-hand view of how important bird-friendly backyards are to many bird species."

In preparation for the GBBC, bird enthusiasts are invited to visit the web site for suggestions on how to become a bird-friendly family. Complementing that, they are also invited to explore the "Audubon At Home" site to learn the best ways to improve the health and increase the diversity of their backyards with native plants, water and other wildlife-friendly elements. By promoting the basic message: reduce pesticide use; conserve water; protect water quality; plant native species; and remove exotic pests, Audubon At Home seeks to involve everyone in creating healthier habitat for birds, other wildlife, and people, too.

Last winter, as part of the GBBC, bird enthusiasts across North America submitted almost 50,000 checklists totaling more than four million birds of 512 species during the February count. The event, one of the largest citizen-science projects in the world, documented a regional decline of the American Crow that may be the result of West Nile virus in those regions. Crows are particularly vulnerable to the virus. Species in the west that showed increases last year during the GBBC included mountain bluebirds, which were reported farther south than the year before, and rosy finches, which were documented farther north.

The Great Backyard Bird Count has become an important means of gathering data to help birds, but it can't happen unless people take part," says Gill. "Whether you're a novice or an expert, we need you to help us help birds."



{Know the ways of the natural world, and you will receive rewards far beyond money.}



Beauty of Birds

Flathead Audubon is pleased to offer its popular Beauty of Birds class on Wednesday evenings this April at Flathead High School. Over the course of four Wednesdays, we will explore bird identification and behavior, as well as locating productive birding areas. Several guest speakers will spice up the already lively presentations with discussions on bird rehabilitation, owls of the Flathead and bird songs. The classes, coordinated this year by Bob Lee and Ansley Ford, will run from 6 – 8 p.m. every Wednesday in April at the auditorium in Flathead High School. There will also be an optional field trip to a local birding hotspot on a weekend day. The cost is a mere \$10 for people living in School District 5 and \$20 for those outside the district, payable anytime before the class at the Flathead High School office. For more information, contact Bob at 758-6879 (work), 257-0363 (home) or e-mail at Robert.Lee@fws.gov. So, keep Wednesdays in April open and come join the fun.

by Bob Lee

With so many spectacular colors in the world, it's a shame to make everything black and white.
Dennis R. Little



Bird Tubing?

What the heck is this? At least one person thought that the announcement in the January newsletter was inviting folks to slide down Big Mountain on inner tubes. We can do that, and it's fun; but not as fun as tubing birds! Tubing the birds is a way for us to protect our teaching collection by placing the specimens in protective plastic tubes.

On Saturday, 7 February, everyone is invited to Bob Lee's place at 1 PM to tube the birds. Bob lives at 730 Creston Hatchery Rd, actually on the fish hatchery. Be aware – there is some construction underway at the hatchery. Just disregard the "Closed for Repairs" sign and come right on through to the back of the hatchery. Bob's is the only place that looks like a house – everything else is shop buildings.

If you need more information, please contact Bob at 758-6879 (work), 257-0363 (home) or email Robert.Lee@fws.gov.



AUDUBON ADVENTURES RECOGNIZED BY NEETF AS ONE OF TEN MOST POPULAR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN AMERICA

PROGRAM ALSO RECEIVES \$55,000 ANONYMOUS GRANT

Washington, DC, Friday, January 16, 2004

Audubon Adventures, Audubon's in-school education program, has been named one of the top ten most popular environmental education programs by the National Environmental Education Training Foundation, it was announced today. Audubon Adventures, which just received an anonymous \$55,000 grant, placed second on the NEETF list.

The list of programs most popular with teachers is viewable at NEETF's "Classroom Earth" at www.classroomearth.org, a new, free website on how educators can obtain the best and most usable environmental education programs available today. It amounts to a "best of the best" collection of environmental education programs and resources for K-12 teachers, parents, and students.

On a side note, the \$55,000 grant will enable Audubon Adventures to explore expanding pilot after-school projects, coordination with state offices' programs, and integrating Audubon Adventures with Centers' operations.



THANKS TO BRENT!!

After 11 years of serving as our conservation chair, Flathead Audubon board member and past president Brent Mitchell is taking a well-deserved break. New board member Lewis Young has graciously stepped forward to take on the position. After serving also as Flathead Audubon's representative to the Montana Audubon Board for 12 years, Brent is handing the baton off to our vice-president Bob Lopp.

We are glad that Brent will continue to work tirelessly as co-chair for the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area. We want to thank Brent for all the passion and energy he has dedicated to conservation and state board issues through the years. Let's not forget that Brent was named by Montana Audubon as the 2003 Conservationist of the Year for his "constant devotion to the Montana's wildlife, wilderness, water and land."

Our hat's off to you, Brent! Enjoy a little well-deserved rest and "recreation."

AUDUBON COMMUNITY NATURALIST PROGRAM

Bird Education Workshop

What: Common Birds of the Flathead Workshop for K-8 Teachers
Explore the diversity of birds in the Flathead
Learn teaching techniques for identifying birds
Discuss methods for incorporating the study of birds into a classroom unit.



When: March 13 & 14, 2004; 8:30am – 4:30pm

Where: Kalispell Montessori School

Cost: \$30

Credit: 2 UM Graduate Credits for \$115 (requires additional field trips)

Enrollment: Limited

Deadline: Register by March 1, 2004

Questions: Sonja Hartmann 387-4150 prather@digisys.net OR
Vonnie McDonald 756-1556 svmcDonald@centurytel.net

To Register: Send completed registration form below with

\$30

to: Vonnie McDonald
1300 Lost Creek Drive
Kalispell, MT 59901

2004 Registration – Bird Education Workshop

Name:		School:	
Grade Level:		Subject area:	
School Address:		School Phone:	
Home Address:		Home Phone:	
School & Home email:			

2004 Teacher Workshop Common Birds of the Flathead: Education and Conservation

Have you ever wanted to explore the topic of birds with your students, but have not felt comfortable diving into this subject without assistance? Join Montana Audubon and the Flathead Audubon Society for a two-part workshop exploring the diversity of Montana's birds. Learn teaching techniques for identifying birds by sight and sound and methods for incorporating the study of birds into a classroom unit. Participants will be introduced to many teaching materials available to teachers free of cost from Flathead Audubon, including a bird costume, a Common Birds of the Flathead box, a Hummingbird box, and the Songbird Blues kit. Programs such as Birds Beyond Borders, an educational exchange program linking schools in MT with schools in Oaxaca, Mexico, and Project FeederWatch, a curriculum focused on collecting data from your own birdfeeder outside your classroom will be highlighted. Flathead Audubon will also work to support teachers in their classrooms as they initiate a bird curriculum unit, by connecting Teachers with trained Community Naturalist Volunteers, also involved in the workshop and willing to assist with classroom activities or field trips.

What: Teacher Workshop, K-8

Where: Kalispell Montessori School

When: March 13 & 14, 2004; 8:30 – 4:30

Cost: \$30 (OPI credits included)

Credits: 2 UM credits available for \$115

Enrollment: Limited to 30 participants

Deadline: Please register by March 1, 2004

For More Information: Sonja Hartmann 387-4150 prather@digisys.net

or Vonnie McDonald 756-1556 svmcdonald@centurytel.net

To register: Check the Flathead County Superintendent's PIR Website for registration information or contact Sonja or Vonnie



(ELMER SPRUNGER, continued)

Upon graduation, Elmer, with his young wife, Marie, moved to Polson, where he worked for Montana Power cleaning up dead trees that resulted from Kerr Dam. The bombing of Pearl Harbor brought him employment in the Seattle Shipyard and also as a logger on the Olympic Peninsula.

"Women were just coming into the shipyard as welders," Elmer noted. The shipyard union paper, The 104 Reporter, enlisted his skills as a cartoonist. "Sometimes the cartoons poked fun and, at other times, showed that women could be better welders than men." Returning the family to Bigfork in 1950 brought him a variety of work experiences and kindled an interest in landscape and wildlife painting.

"I painted mostly bear, moose, elk and squirrels in the beginning, but also did a lot of 8"x 10" birds," said Elmer, remembering what it was like to work all day at Anaconda Aluminum in Columbia Falls and paint wildlife portraits at night. He kept this schedule for 15 years before deciding to make his living as a wildlife artist. More time went toward sketching and photographing landscapes and wildlife for later use in his paintings. On one reference gathering trip, he found an osprey nest with piles of empty turtle shells underneath, attesting to the fish-loving birds' adaptability. A more flexible schedule let him pursue his other passion, fly-fishing, with Jack and other friends along the upper Swan River.

After fishing and hunting for years, he can see how the environment has deteriorated. There are more boaters and tubers floating down the Swan River now, leaving beer cans and other garbage in their wake. Kerr Dam has had a detrimental effect on Flathead Lake. Elmer points out the acres of soil eroded from both the north lake shore and the Flathead River. "I don't claim to be a scientist, but I do know what I've seen." Recommending Yellow Bay Biological Station as a good resource for the curious, he advises people to read some of the station's reports concerning our environmental quality.

You can find Elmer in his home-based studio every day, filling orders for wildlife paintings of all sizes and turning out the weekly cartoon. His love and enthusiasm for painting and the natural landscape of Montana are as great as ever. Jerry likes to keep the bird feeders outside the studio brimming with seeds, creating a Mecca for nuthatches, finches and just about every other bird passing through Bigfork. Chickadees mob a peanut butter-covered pinecone hanging outside the kitchen window. A lifetime of friends, art collectors and budding artists seeking advice share companionship at his dining room table. The chickadees are an added bonus.

Written by Robin Magaddino

AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP FORM

FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY

Support local programs and receive the Pileated Post

Flathead Audubon Member \$15
(Individual or Family)

NATIONAL AUDUBON

Support nationwide programs, receive the Audubon magazine and the Pileated Post

First Time Member	\$20	<input type="checkbox"/>
Senior/Student	\$15	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual Renewal	\$35	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family Renewal	\$38	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Check here if you do NOT want your name shared with other organizations.

Mail this form with your check to:
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Whitefish, MT 59937



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DIRECTORS

2001-2004	Dan Casey, P.O. Box 355, Somers, MT 59932	857-3143
2001-2004	Jane Adams (jadams@digisys.net)	257-4527
2003-2004	Leo Keane, 514 Pine Place, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-5807
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2003-2004	Jill Fanning (shrdlu@centurytel.net)	862-8070
2003-2004	Mike Fanning (shrdlu@centurytel.net)	862-8070
2003-2004	Bob Lee (Robert_Lee@fws.gov)	758-6879
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2002-2005	Sonja Hartmann, P.O. Box 316, West Glacier, MT 59936	387-4150
2002-2005	Leslie Kehoe (ljkehoe@digisys.net)	837-4467
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2003-2006	Lewis Young, 50 Garrison Dr., Eureka, MT 59917	889-3492
2003-2006	Andrea Goff (bigfork@digisys.net)	837-1530

CHAIRS

Audubon Adventures	Kim Davis	755-1311	Membership	Mike Fanning	862-8070
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	Judy Spence	857-2599	Wetlands/Waterfowl	Neal Brown	837-5018
Librarian	Gail Leonard	862-5807			

MONTANA AUDUBON

State Office	Ray Johnson, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624	443-3949
Western Montana Office	Bob Petty, P.O. Box 831, Stevensville, MT 59870	777-0780
Board President	Jim Brown, 1504 Woods Gulch Rd., Missoula, MT 59802	549-8052



FEBRUARY, 2004

The Flathead Audubon Society is affiliated with the National Audubon Society and meets on the second Monday of each month from September through May. The regular meeting starts at 7:30 p.m. and includes a featured guest who presents a conservation or nature program. The regular monthly meeting is preceded by the Executive Board meeting. Both meetings are open to all those interested.

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Contact newsletter editor at 756-5763; email submissions to pileatedpost@hotmail.com