

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS YIELD REMARKABLE RESULTS



From all around Northwest Montana came reports of Christmas Bird Counts this year. We encountered weather of all description and set new records for several species. You will find numerical tallies of all counts on page 4. Following are the special notes sent in for each count:

Bigfork: Thirty people found 7924 individual birds of 81 species (just slightly below our recent average) on the 31st annual Bigfork Christmas Bird Count, in spite of fog, drizzle and some unexpected misses. Highlights included our count-first Snowy Owl (the 142nd species seen on the count since 1974) and a White-crowned Sparrow (third time). New high count totals were set or tied for Double-crested Cormorant (4), Barred Owl (1), Blue Jay (18) and House Finch (352). In general, numbers were down, particularly for waterfowl, ravens, sparrows and finches. The Northern Goshawk was seen during count week, but not on count day. (From Dan Casey)

Kalispell: We had our best turnout ever for the Kalispell count with 41 observers seeing 20,250 birds of 74 species (our previous high was 66). We set or tied new high count totals for 23 species, plus an additional 5 species that were new to the count, bringing our cumulative 6-yr list to 92 species (plus another 6 species seen on our trial year, but not since). Highlights included a Cooper's Hawk north of town (new), a Gyrfalcon along Columbia Falls Stage (new), 853 Mourning Doves, 35 Blue Jays, >5000 waxwings (both species), a Yellow-rumped Warbler (new) along Demersville Road, a White-throated Sparrow (new) at a feeder east of town, and 40 White-winged Crossbills (new). We also more than doubled our highest previous count of House Finches. (From Dan Casey)

Eureka: We set a new record for both species (57) and individuals (3514). This is the 12th year for the Eureka CBC. (From Lewis Young)

Glacier National Park: Nineteen observers recorded 430 birds of 33 species on the annual Glacier National Park Christmas Bird Count on December 19, 2004. This was National Audubon Society's 105th year for the citizen-monitoring of bird populations in the early winter period. The date was the warmest day in December in the count area, which centers at Apgar in the Park. The number of species counted (33) was not unusual; in the last 15 counts the total species has ranged from 26 in 1990 to a high of 38 in 2001. The number of individual birds (430), however, was the 5th lowest in the last 15 counts, with a range of 203 to 1599. Nine routes were traveled by car, foot, snowshoes, or skis, and one participant kept a feeder-watch. Due to the lack of snow, there was a lot of hiking going on! Temperatures ranged from 35 to 47 degrees with mostly cloudy, foggy conditions.

The most abundant species was the Redpoll with 63 individuals sighted, compared to last year's count with only one Redpoll. There were also higher numbers of other flocking birds such as Crossbills and Chickadees, possibly reflecting the episodic nature of flocking birds in general.

The mild weather before the count produced open water conditions, allowing for the presence of waterfowl. Trumpeter Swans were observed in count week, which is the period from three days before through three days after count day. This is a species observed only three times in the last 15 counts. Despite open water, only one Canada Goose was observed, compared to previous counts which ranged from

(Bird Counts, continued on page 5.....)

Note: Because of the large number of activities listed this month, the Flathead Audubon Calendar has temporarily moved to Page 3.

BIRD OF THE MONTH

EAST MEETS WEST

One cold, overcast day last fall when our feeders were mostly filled with the brown and gray winter birds common to the Flathead, we were treated to the arrival of a couple of new birds whose bright feathers and noisy calls were reminiscent of the more tropical birds of the southwest. This welcome splash of color at our feeders marked our first visits by Blue Jays and Steller's Jays. These two colorful Corvids are both year round residents of our area, with the Bigfork CBC recording 38 Steller's and 18 Blue Jays and the Kalispell count recording 2 Steller's and 35 Blue Jays. The interesting transposition of the numbers in the two counts is probably explained by the difference in the habitat preference of the two species.

Steller's prefer to live in the coniferous forests of the mountains, while Blue Jays prefer hardwood thickets and are more commonly found along forest edges and in suburban areas. Both are omnivorous, eating pine nuts, seeds, berries, insects, other invertebrates, small mammals, birds' eggs and carrion.

Steller's Jays were first observed by the German naturalist George Wilhelm Steller in 1741 when, as the first white man to step on the land that eventually became Alaska, he visited Kayak Island near the present-day site of Valdez. Steller was employed as a naturalist by the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg at the time and had accompanied Vitus Bering on his last expedition into the ocean east of Siberia.

The Blue Jay was originally considered an eastern bird and is a more recent arrival in our area. Its migration westward has been driven by loss of habitat in the more urban eastern United States, and the spotting of these colorful birds has become increasingly frequent, especially in more settled areas where they make themselves at home in the hardwoods offered by the urban landscape. In the areas such as ours where the two overlap, hybridization has been known to occur. In our old neighborhood at Happy Valley, it was common to see one or two Blue Jays with a flock of Steller's during the winter and because of those visits, we soon learned to distinguish the calls of the two.

Blue Jays call "jaay, jaay" in alarm and in flock emit a softer "toolool" which has an almost bell-

like quality. They are also skilled imitators of hawks. Steller's most common call is a harsher "shaak, shaak, shaak."

Steller's and Blue Jays are the only North American jays with crests. Both are about 11-12 inches in size with Steller's being slightly larger. With its black hood and dark blue feathers, Steller's is easy to distinguish from the Blue Jay, which has a light grayish chest and white spotting on the wings and tail. If you only get a glimpse of bright blue before the bird takes flight, check out the tail feathers. Blue Jays have a band of white showing there, while Steller's is completely blue.

The Steller's Jay and the Blue Jay are the only North American jays that use mud in the construction of their nests. During courtship, the male Blue Jay chases the female. They prefer to nest in deciduous trees, with cottonwoods being a favorite locally. Both parents incubate the 4-5 brown spotted buff eggs and both share the feeding of the nestlings for 11-17 days after the hatch. Ritual feeding is part of the courtship for Steller's. The male will also circle around the female in display. Both parents build the nest, preferring coniferous forests. The nestlings fledge after two-three weeks of parental care and the juveniles remain with the parents throughout the first winter.

Many people dislike Steller's and Blue Jays because they are known to eat the eggs of other birds. However, in an extensive study of feeding habits, only 1% had evidence of eggs or birds in their stomachs. The largest part of their diet seemed to be composed of seeds and nuts.

I hope you get a chance to observe these colorful birds this winter. For those of you who live in Kalispell, offering a feeder full of those great Audubon oil sunflower seeds is probably the surest way to attract Blue Jays to your area. If you venture up to Glacier for some x-country skiing, keep an eye out for the more reclusive Steller's Jay. We've often spotted them along Lake McDonald.

By Jeannie Marcure



FEBRUARY PROGRAM

The Frogs, Toads, Newts and Salamanders of Glacier Park



The February program of the Flathead Audubon Society features Dr. Steve Corn, research zoologist with the US Geological Service and the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute. Dr. Corn's current research centers in Glacier National Park where he interprets the effects of climate change on mountain amphibians.

Because Montana has a cold and relatively dry climate, the diversity of amphibians is low compared to warmer and wetter locations in the U.S. Nevertheless, Montana's amphibians are of particular interest because they appear to have not suffered as many severe declines as have amphibians in other parts of the West. Protected areas, such as Glacier National Park, provide an excellent location for studying the processes that shape amphibian distributions. Dr. Corn's recent studies in Glacier, and elsewhere in the West, have included the effects of ultraviolet radiation, wildfire and climate change on amphibians, as well as long-term monitoring of population trends.

In addition to his current work with the USGS, Dr. Corn has served as a wildlife biologist and research zoologist with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Biological Survey in Fort Collins, Colorado. He has authored more than 60 papers related to ecology and conservation biology of amphibians and is the editor of a continuing series of papers devoted to reptiles and amphibians: *Herpetological Conservation*.

Dr. Stephen Corn's presentation will be of interest to all who enjoy Glacier's diversity of wildlife, and anyone else who is concerned about the "big picture" implications of climate change. The fate of frogs, toads, newts and salamanders may just be a forecast for what our weather could bring in a warmer world.

From Leo Keane

FEBRUARY FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

Monday, February 14, 2005: Flathead Audubon General Meeting begins at 7PM at the Summit, conference room #3.

Monday, February 7, 2005: Flathead Audubon Board of Directors Meeting. 6PM, 295 Third Ave. E.N., Kalispell (Note change of day!)

Saturday, February 19, 2005: February Birding Blast, heading south to the Mission Valley in search of raptors; meet at Park'n'Ride at Hwys 93 and 82 at 0830. Bring lunch, proper clothing, optics, walkie-talkies if you have them. Contact Bob Rost for details (837-2255)

Saturday, March 19, 2005: March Birding Blast, touring Lower Valley for waterfowl; meet at Park'n'Ride at 0800. See instructions above.

Saturday-Sunday, March 26-27, 2005: Annual Freezout Lake trip. Leave Kalispell on Saturday, 26 March, return the next day. Contact Dan Casey at dcasey@abcbirds.org. For accommodation reservations, contact any of the following motels in Choteau: Bella Vista (406-466-5711), Stage Stop Inn (406-466-5900) or Gunther Motel (406-466-5444).

Saturday, April 2, 2005: April Birding Blast, touring Lower Valley for waterfowl. See instructions for March Birding Blast above.

Wednesday evenings, April 2005, 6 pm: Beauty of Birds classes. Flathead High School. \$10 for those in FHS district, \$20 for others. Contact Ansley Ford at aew333@yahoo.com

Saturday, May 14, 2005: Spring Loon Survey. If you can help, please contact one of the following: north and west of Kalispell or the Swan Valley, Jane Ingebretson, 837-5081, or Gael Bissell, 752-3874; Libby/Troy area, Joni Manning, 295-7495.

Saturday-Sunday, May 28-29, 2005: Seeley Lake Loon and Fish Festival. Seeley Lake Elementary School; enjoy loon walks, talks, children's activities.

Friday-Sunday, June 3-5, 2005: Flathead Birding Festival, see article on page 7

Saturday, July 16, 2005: Loon Day, details in future newsletter

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS

B = Bigfork results
K = Kalispell results

E = Eureka results
G = Glacier National Park results

cw = seen during count week
spp = species

Bird Species	B	K	E	G
Pied-billed Grebe	3		2	2
Horned Grebe	4			3
Western Grebe	1		1	
Pacific Loon				cw
Double-crested Cormorant	4			
Great Blue Heron	11	2	2	
Tundra Swan	245			
Trumpeter Swan				cw
Canada Goose	1,807	1,701	335	1
Wood Duck		2		
Green-winged Teal	1			
Mallard	474	5,687	833	23
American Wigeon	10	1		
Redhead	1			2
Ring-necked Duck	15		21	
Lesser Scaup	54			
Common Goldeneye	370	40	74	35
Barrow's Goldeneye	25		6	13
Goldeneye spp				8
Bufflehead	83	9	17	8
Hooded Merganser	52			
Common Merganser	101	12		19
Red-breasted Merganser	1			
Duck spp	300	3		
Bald Eagle	24	39	7	8
Northern Harrier	13	5	cw	
Northern Goshawk	cw	1		1
Sharp-shinned Hawk		5		
Cooper's Hawk		1		
Red-tailed Hawk	12	13	8	
Harlan's (Red-tailed) Hawk	1			
Rough-legged Hawk	20	37	11	
Buteo spp	2	1		
Golden Eagle		2	1	
American Kestrel	1	3		
Merlin	1	5		
Gyrfalcon		1		
Prairie Falcon		1		
Gray Partridge	9	58		
Ring-necked Pheasant	86	123		
Ruffed Grouse	2	1	3	
Wild Turkey	319	115	177	
American Coot	653			

Bird Species	B	K	E	G
Ring-billed Gull	181	46		
California Gull	4			
Herring Gull	6	21		
Gull spp	6		4	
Rock Pigeon	168	475	120	
Mourning Dove	83	853	70	
Great Horned Owl	3	3		
Northern Pygmy-Owl	1		1	
Barred Owl	1			
Snowy Owl	1			
Belted Kingfisher	9	6	4	
Downy Woodpecker	19	39	16	4
Hairy Woodpecker	10	11	8	3
Three-toed Woodpecker				3
Northern Flicker	49	152	29	1
Pileated Woodpecker	14	15	9	2
Woodpecker spp				1
Horned Lark	17			
Gray Jay	4	1	23	7
Steller's Jay	38	2	38	9
Blue Jay	18	35	4	
Clark's Nutcracker	1	8	11	
Black-billed Magpie	142	335	18	
American Crow	12	122	28	
Common Raven	62	204	207	22
Black-capped Chickadee	361	406	157	50
Mountain Chickadee	88	71	105	10
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	57		10	19
Chickadee spp				30
Red-breasted Nuthatch	66	46	89	7
White-breasted Nuthatch	2	7	10	2
Pygmy Nuthatch	35	59	4	
Brown Creeper	10	1	cw	8
Marsh Wren	1			
Winter Wren			2	
American Dipper	1	2	3	9
Golden-crowned Kinglet	54	3		7
Townsend's Solitaire	3	5	2	
American Robin		28	1	
Bohemian Waxwing	405	4,635	240	
Cedar Waxwing		344		
Waxwing spp		110		
Northern Shrike	5	2	5	

(BIRD COUNT RESULTS, bottom of page 5)

8th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count Invites Everyone to Go Out and Count Birds!



During the weekend of February 18-21, people across the North American continent are urged to count the birds in their backyards and report them over the Internet as part of the Great Backyard Bird Count, one of the world's largest volunteer efforts of its kind. In addition to its value as a research study, the GBBC allows people of all ages and backgrounds to celebrate birds and provide vital information about North America's birds. This is the eighth year of the popular event, developed and managed by Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, with sponsorship from Wild Birds Unlimited store owners. This year's theme, "North America's Great Backyard," was chosen as a way to celebrate the beauty of birds found across the continent. People are encouraged to en-

joy the birds around them by going out into the "Great Backyard" during any or all of the count days and keeping track of the highest numbers of each bird species they see. This count allows people to celebrate their birds, and whether counters are novices or experts, their participation is vital in helping North America's birds. People then report their sightings over the Internet at www.birdsource.org/gbbc.

"In addition to counting the birds in your own backyard, this remarkable event gives you the opportunity to visit some of our most special places and wild lands," says Bob Perciasepe, Audubon's chief operating officer. "In this way, the Great Backyard Bird Count reminds us that North America's birds consider the whole continent to be one great big backyard; and in a sense, it is our backyard as well."

BIRD FEEDING, IN A NUTSHELL

	Chickadee	Nuthatches	Finches	Grosbeaks	Sparrows	Blackbirds	Jays	Woodpeckers	Doves
Sunflower	P	P	P	P	P	P	R	R	R
Safflower	R	R	R	R					
Corn					R	R	P		P
Millet			R		R	R			
Milo							R		R
Niger			P						
Suet	P	P					R	P	
Peanut Butter	P	P				R	P	P	

P=Preferred R=Readily Eaten

From an article on winter feeding in *Bird Notes*, published by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology

.....**BIRD COUNTS**, continued...
 zero to 435. The rarest birds for the count were two Pacific Loons, making their first entry for this species in Glacier's CBC records. Other unusual species were two Pied-billed Grebes and two Red-heads. For more information, call 892-7406 and check www.audubon.org/bird/cbc (From Susan Sindt)



.....**BIRD COUNT RESULTS**, continued...

Bird Species	B	K	E	G
European Starling	157	418	32	
Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler		1		
American Tree Sparrow	1	37	2	
Song Sparrow	9	22	6	
White-crowned Sparrow	1			
White-throated Sparrow		1		
Harris's Sparrow		1		
Sparrow spp	2			
Dark-eyed Junco	35	97	31	2
Snow Bunting	2	35	200	
Red-winged Blackbird	220	256	75	

Bird Species	B	K	E	G
Western Meadowlark		5		
Brewer's Blackbird	80	46	7	
Pine Grosbeak	2	28	58	
Cassin's Finch		12		
House Finch	352	2,145	60	1
Red Crossbill	30	105	27	30
White-winged Crossbill		40		10
Crossbill spp				3
Common Redpoll	37	171	153	63
Pine Siskin	6	7	15	4
American Goldfinch	9	204	48	
Evening Grosbeak	22		63	cw
House Sparrow	317	69		

BIRD FEEDING

by Bob Rost



Winter is here, the bears are in bed - it's time to keep the bird feeders full. In winter, the days are short and the nights long and cold; any help we can give birds to survive this time is needed - both for the birds and the personal satisfaction of providing help for needy critters. The diets and needs of the various types of birds vary greatly. Most songbirds use insects, spiders and larvae during nesting and young rearing. During fall and winter, much of that food source is not available, and resident birds must shift their diets to seeds and fruits. That is where we come in. If you feed birds, you are part of a good crowd: there are estimates that about 65 million people provide food for wild birds.

There are three main things to consider when feeding birds: food, water and cover. As you might guess food, though essential, may not be the most important. If the food is located in such a way that the bird must take extreme risk, the food will go unused. Birds won't expose themselves to danger from predators just to get a bite to eat. A bird that provides breakfast to a Merlin or Sharp-shinned Hawk doesn't come to the feeder anymore. But if a bird can feel secure as it feeds, you can't keep him away. Security is provided by trees, shrubs, grass, brush, and buildings that are close to the food and provide an avenue for escape. Ponderosa, aspen, cottonwood, dogwood and snowberry are great for sparrows, Pygmy Nuthatches, Chickadees and the like. Grouse, Pine Grosbeaks and Golden-crowned Kinglets will prefer a dense forest of fir and larch. Evergreens provide maximum protection from the elements as well as predators. Everyone should plant plenty of mountain ash, flowering crab and apple trees along with chokecherry, serviceberry and other fruit-producing shrubs - both for beauty and food and cover for birds.

A supply of dripping water will always be used. In winter a heater is needed to keep it thawed. The water must also be near cover with adequate perches so the bird can land and then hop to the water from cover. Think about placing a bath under lilacs or shrub roses with junipers and evergreens nearby.

The grocery shelves are stocked with all kinds of bags, buckets, cakes and other bird food of all sorts. Most of it is designed for the people feeding birds rather than for the birds. Most of the stuff on the shelf is inappropriate and consequently rejected by the birds. One key to attracting a variety of birds

is to provide a variety of food types. The seed that attracts the greatest number of species is the black-oil sunflower which can be considered the "universal birdseed" in our area. These are high energy, highly nutritious and highly sought after by the birds. They are thin shelled which makes them easy for the birds to use. Juncos, sparrows, doves and finches all prefer to be fed on or near the ground in heavy cover; others from a suspended feeder. The cheapest way to buy sunflower seed is by the 50-pound bag from Flathead Audubon or at a local feed store. The striped sunflower seeds are not used much by birds. Peanuts are bigger and tougher, but are utilized by some species that would not touch a striped sunflower seed. Whole kernel corn is used by some birds and cracked corn also works.



Peanut butter is a food often overlooked. Many birds like it, from chickadees to woodpeckers to jays. Smear it along the edges of your tray feeders. Don't forget table scraps - leftover bread and many of our table scraps will be greatly appreciated.

There are as many types of feeders as there are manufacturers. They come in plastic, metal, wood and other materials. They come as trays, bins, hopper and tube feeders. Place your feeder for the birds - free of disturbances, where it is easy to fill, close to natural shelter (cover) such as trees and shrubs. Some birds prefer to feed in large flocks, like Evening Grosbeaks and Pine Siskins. For these birds, you need tray type feeders and lots of space. Bins and hoppers are readily used by all - chickadees, woodpeckers, nuthatches, as well as the overflow of Grosbeaks and Crossbills. Tube feeders (put up several) are great for finches and others. A tray feeder that works well is a half sheet of plywood placed close to cover near the ground for juncos, sparrows and towhees. Be sure it is close to a brush pile or dense shrubs such as lilacs, shrub roses, spireas, etc.

Bird feeding is a responsibility once begun, so don't neglect it. An empty feeder is an unkept promise. Once birds are attracted, we should keep our promise and keep at it, especially when the going gets tough - such as during and after blizzards and storms. A reliable food supply means a lot to the critters. Don't worry about bird feeding changing migration habits - change in day length is the key for most migration, but also weather. Most migration has happened before our feeding season anyway.

The February 2005 issue of National Geographic features Great Gray Owls as the cover story. Most of the photographs were taken in Montana.

ANNOUNCEMENTS!

Welcome to Rochelle Pope Conservation Education Coordinator

Rochelle Pope was selected from a group of very bright and dedicated applicants for this position funded by the Sustainability Fund. Rochelle's duties will include: promoting the use of and maintaining the check out procedure for the FAS educational materials, presenting conservation lessons to class rooms or other groups such as 4H, nursing homes etc., helping coordinate volunteer efforts in conservation education outreach, advising and assisting the education committee. We feel very fortunate that Rochelle accepted this new position; her talents, experience and good nature are already appreciated.

She was born in Littleton, Colorado, and used to work on Alcatraz Island in San Francisco, which is now a bird sanctuary; ask her about her stint there! She received her Bachelor's Degree from Colorado State University and is a member of the National Association of Interpretation. She is presently the interpretive specialist for Lone Pine and has increased the student visits there by 85%. She also works part time for the Forest Service helping with field trips. Any one who has seen her in action with students, teachers or volunteers raves about her energy and enthusiasm; she is already known fondly around the valley as "Ranger Rochelle".

Rochelle is finally taking a honeymoon to New Zealand when Skip graduates! Rochelle and Skip have two dogs Griffin and Sabine, and they all enjoy hiking, and sea kayaking when they get the time.

Rochelle typically wasted no time getting to work; she was notified that she was selected for this position on Jan 18 and on Jan 19, she was attending the Conservation Core Group meeting and checking out the FAS educational materials. On January 20 she was meeting with the education committee and helping plan the February 5 workday. Welcome Rochelle!

By Linda DeKort

FAS Awards Scholarships



Bud Gaiser of the Swan River School in Bigfork recently approached the Flathead Audubon Society for help which we were pleased to be able to provide. He had two boys in his class that he thought could really benefit from attending the Winter Camping session being offered by Ravenwood Nature Center School, also in Bigfork. The boys' families could not pay the tuition of \$195 each, so he was looking for monies from various places to fund their participation. FAS awarded a \$100 scholarship for each boy, and Bud found the remaining funding from another group. In the end, these boys and two others from Bud's class attended the session together. The Winter Camping session includes 4 excursions, 2 of which are 2 days long with an over-nighter, and 2 are a single day in the field. The kids learn winter survival skills and tracking, among other things. The boys operated out of a teepee, and that is where they sleep on the overnights.

Elections for new officers for Flathead Audubon will be coming up in May. That's not too far off and we need a slate of enthusiastic people to fill those coveted spots. If you, or anyone you know, is interested, contact Mike Fanning at shrdlu@centurytel.net. If you nominate someone, Mike will contact them.



If you would be interested in helping out at the general meetings by donating treats or a raffle item, please call Linda de Kort at 755-3704.



Put it on your calendar! The **Flathead Birding Festival** will be June 3 – 4 –5, 2005, at Marina Cay Resort in Bigfork. Sponsored by Montana Audubon, Flathead Audubon, Mission Mountain Audubon and the Bigfork Bird Festival, there will be three days of fun, learning and sharing the wonders of birding. Friday night will feature Dennis Olson, better known as "Crittman." Saturday and Sunday there will be guided birding field trips. Educational classes will be Saturday afternoon and the banquet on Saturday night. Plan for an exciting weekend in the Flathead!

The Education Committee is hosting another **Extravaganza Afternoon** to complete tubing the birds in our collection and to put finishing touches on some of the education trunks that we have for loan. This is leading up to moving our educational materials to a more easily accessible site - come find out where! This monumental event will take place at Bob Lee's on 5 February beginning at 1 PM. Skills of all types are welcome; come when you can, stay as long as you can and bring a potluck dish. For information, contact Bob at 257-0363 or RML3@centurytel.net

BLUE JAY INVASION - 2004



Last fall there appeared to be abnormally high numbers of Blue Jays appearing throughout the Northwest. This species is an expected annual visitor in limited numbers, and reports from various parts are no surprise. But the number of birds reported from virtually every corner and habitat has been phenomenal. As with some of the other species (i.e. Mountain Chickadee, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Pine Grosbeak, Evening Grosbeak) that have been noted to have made dramatic movements, often referred to as "irruptions," Blue Jays are appearing in previously "uncharted territory" for their species.

Currently, there are three recognized subspecies of Blue Jay in North America. Considering the range and normal movements of *Cyanocitta cristata bromia*, it would seem that this is the expected visitor, if not occasional breeder. This subspecies normally breeds from central Alberta and north-central British Columbia, through northeast Nebraska to Newfoundland, and down into south-central Virginia. A somewhat migratory subspecies, it winters from Louisiana through northern Florida.

Historically, the range of the Blue Jay expanded, beginning in Canada in the 1940's and continuing in dramatic fashion in the 1970's, with successful nesting reported from New Mexico, Wyoming, Montana, Oregon, and British Columbia. Blue Jays have been documented in all areas bordering those states. The Blue Jay is now occurring in western Montana, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia, but there is little to report from western Wyoming, Nevada and Utah, which are places we might expect them to occur. The number of sightings from Washington, Oregon, and Montana continue to increase, although apparently not at the same overall rate as in Idaho. Note that there are places, such as Kalispell, MT, that have seen a consistent and steady increase of birds over the past decade. Look-

ing farther east, South Dakota is actually experiencing fewer Blue Jay reports than usual, while along the East Coast there is a huge movement being noted in places like Cape May, New Jersey, and the Carolinas.

By mid-December, Idaho had at least 319 individual Blue Jays from a wide variety of habitats and geophysical areas, in 191 locations. Montana continues to be a bit more unclear when it comes to the magnitude of the Blue Jay incursion. A major difference with Idaho is that there are locations in Montana that report having Blue Jays in all seasons (i.e., Kalispell and Whitefish), while still experiencing a noticeable increase in numbers since the latter portion of September this year. Some localities such as Glendive reported the species "all over town" in October, and places such as upper Yellowstone stated their birds to be the "first in several years." Because there are areas of the state which host Blue Jays year round, including areas in the western mountains, observing them, even if in above average numbers, might not be deemed "report worthy." But even a veteran and knowledgeable observer, who previously just could not get excited about the species' incursion into the state, was led to remark after seeing 8 birds at his feeder, "...I'm on board now regarding the influx." Utilizing figures supplied by birders who considered the presence of Blue Jays worthy of listing on the state listserv or a private e-mail, 198 birds from 56 separate locations. For reasons already enumerated, Montana birders' "acceptance" of Blue Jays as unusual or rare is not always forthcoming; therefore these figures are probably somewhat higher at the very least. Based on these reports, however, it seems the Blue Jay is here to stay.

Taken from a report by Harry Krueger and posted on <http://www.IdahoBirds.net>. All data compiled and maintained by Harry Krueger. Please notify Harry at hkrueger@cableone.net about Blue Jays you encounter.

RECYCLING NEWS

People must be burning their recyclables for heat this winter! Attendance at January's meeting was light, so of course, our recycling efforts matched. We did take in 127 pounds of recyclables and cashed out with a whopping \$4.38! We received lots of very lightweight items (milk jugs and plastic bags) and many things that can be recycled but aren't paid for at the recycling centers. That's OK, though. We had expected less in the winter months

and our landfill is still better off for even these smaller efforts.

Here's a pre-cycling tip for February 14: How about a blooming potted plant instead of cut flowers for your sweetie? A plant gives pleasure for so much longer, pumps that good oxygen into the air, and there's nothing to throw away a week later!

OK, now everybody start thinking about Spring Cleaning!
Kay Mitchell



ON THE AUDUBON CAPITOL BEAT

Montana Audubon has a legislative intern for the 2005 legislative session. He is Derek Goldman. An important role local Audubon chapters play during the legislative session is to participate in statewide legislative alerts, so this year we are once again asking members to volunteer for the Legislative Alert Network. It is important to sign up for alerts early. Interested members may email their sign-up information to Derek directly at: mtmagpie@montana.com, or call him at (406) 443-3949.

How the Legislative Alert Network functions: When crucial issues are at stake, Montana Audubon will contact interested members, explain the issue and why we need to take action on it, and then ask members to contact their legislators. In general, the alerts will be by email, although, a chapter could alternatively set up a phone tree. Alerts will be sent out only a few times during the session, but they provide a powerful way to lobby legislators on crucial bills and issues. They also offer you a good way to ensure your voice is heard on important conservation issues. By signing up, you will be one of the first to know what is going on at the legislature. You will also receive periodic progress reports during the session (no more than once a month). Thank you for your help with this important work! Please contact Derek if you have any questions.

Montana Audubon 2005 Legislative Priorities

Montana Audubon has made the following list of bills a priority for the 2005 Montana Legislature:

Stream and River Setbacks – As Montana continues to grow, it makes sense to protect its clean water, rivers and streams. Legislation for “Waterside Management Corridors” of 100 feet from streams, and 300 feet from rivers for any new structures.

Protecting Public Health and Safety, Fish and Wildlife – In 2001, the Montana Legislature passed a bill that tied the hands of state agencies to place protective conditions on state permits or other activities to safeguard public health and safety, and fish and wildlife under the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). Legislation to reinstate provisions to protect public health and safety and fish and wildlife under MEPA will be introduced in 2005.

Reauthorization of Habitat Montana program – The Habitat Montana program, which allows Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) to buy critical wildlife habitat, is scheduled to end in 2006 unless reauthorized during the 2005 Legislature. FWP has the authority to purchase land in fee title and to acquire conservation easements, and has done both over the last 15 years, conserving over 213,000 acres through conservation easement and purchasing nearly 34,000 acres. This is a great program for wildlife habitat.

Allowing conservation easements on any and all school trust land – Legislation passed in 2001 restricts where conservation easements can be placed on school trust lands. This legislation would allow conservation easements on all school trust land, regardless of the location (and manager) of the property.

Janet H. Ellis, Montana Audubon Executive Director
P.O. Box 595
Helena, MT 59624
Phone: (406) 443-3949
Fax: (406) 443-7144
Email: jellis@audubon.org

It were not best that we should all think alike; it is difference of opinion that makes horse races. Thomas Paine

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.

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FEBRUARY, 2005



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 7:00 p.m. and includes a featured guest who presents a conservation or nature program. The Board of Directors meets the Monday preceding the general meeting, at 6PM at 295 3rd Ave. EN, in Kalispell. Both meetings are open to all those interested.

THE PILEATED POST is published September through May and is sent to members of the Flathead Audubon Society as a membership benefit. For membership information or address change, please call Mike Fanning at 862-8070.

Deadline for newsletter copy is the 20th of each month. Contact newsletter editor at 257-0363; email submissions to pileatedpost@hotmail.com

FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY DIRECTORY

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MONTANA AUDUBON

State Office	Janet Ellis, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624	443-3949
Western MT Office	Bob Petty, P.O. Box 831, Stevensville, MT 59870	777-0780
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