



the Flatheaded Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

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SCIENCE EDUCATION GETS A BOOST FROM F.A.S.



NEW FAS EDUCATION COORDINATOR HIRED

A new Flathead Audubon Education Coordinator has been hired for the year 2006 – and she is a they. Sonja Hartmann and Lisa Discoe, two familiar FAS members, have been hired to fill the position on a job-sharing basis.

Sonja Hartmann has worked for more than 8 years on the FAS Education Committee, and until accepting this position, was Chair of that Committee. Sonja has worked for many years in the area of nature education, most recently at the Glacier National Park Native Plant Nursery.

Lisa Discoe has been Chair of the FAS Sales Committee for the three years, and this year stepped in to serve on the Education Committee as temporary Education Coordinator after Rochelle Pope, last year's Coordinator, moved to Reno. Lisa is studying for her degree in education, with a specialty in nature education, in the Adult Distance Learning Program at Prescott College, with FVCC instructors and other local educators serving as the local mentors for her courses. She will be integrating her activities as Education Coordinator with her course curriculum as she continues her studies. *(continued on page 3)*

COME JOIN THE CHALLENGE!

Flathead Audubon has been challenged by Lex Blood and the Sustainability Fund to raise matching funds to hire a new Flathead Audubon Education Coordinator for 2006.

Like last year's Coordinator, this year's Coordinators will help promote and upgrade the educational materials that Flathead Audubon makes available to educators, organize/oversee the check-out of the materials, and network with science educators in the Flathead to promote nature education.

The new Coordinators will also have new duties: align the FAS educational materials to the state educational curriculum standards; present information about the FAS materials to gatherings of educators, such as the Early Education Conference in April; provide educational presentations about birds for school classrooms and for other groups of youngsters, such as after-school programs or home-school students; and organize and help develop materials for a 2-day teacher's workshop, designed to teach the teachers about birds, and to provide ideas for lessons and student activities they can use to teach *(continued on page 3)*

APRIL FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

Monday, April 10, 2006: Flathead Audubon General Meeting begins at 7PM at The Summit, conference room #3. Photographer Gene Grove will present a slide show. More details on page 3.

Monday, April 3, 2006: Flathead Audubon Board of Directors meeting, 6PM at 295 3rd Ave. East North, Kalispell.

Saturday, April 22, 2006: Earth Day. Celebrate our living natural heritage! Story, page 8

Monday, May 8, 2006: Flathead Audubon Potluck & Silent Auction - Save the Date!

June 2-4, 2006: Montana Audubon Bird Festival in Glasgow. Watch your mailbox for details!

SPRING FIELD TRIPS - See full descriptions on page 9

BIRD OF THE MONTH

Bald Eagle or Golden Eagle?



Flathead County is fortunate to host both of North America's eagles. Both are majestic, but they are unique and not even closely related species: the bald eagle and the golden eagle.

Both birds are roughly the same size—about three feet long, a wing-span of about six feet and weighing roughly 10-12 pounds. They both have sharp eyes, strong talons and sharp



beaks and cover vast distances by soaring. Individuals of both species have lived upwards of 50 years in captivity.

The bald eagle is one of the most widely recognized wild birds in America and is the symbol of the United States. It's remarkable that the bald eagle was at risk of extinction only 30 years ago because of habitat loss, pesticide poisoning and illegal killing. The bald eagle's ongoing recovery is a success story of the Endangered Species Act.

The two eagles prefer different habitats and have different habits. Both species will scavenge carrion, and thus they can both be seen feeding on carcasses of road-killed deer, particularly in the winter. Of the two, bald eagles seem somewhat more inclined toward scavenging.

Bald eagles are closely associated with water, be it inland lakes and rivers or the ocean coast. Wherever it lives, waterfowl and fish are among its favorite prey. Bald eagles frequent the shore of Flathead Lake, keeping careful watch on the rafting flocks of coots resting on the open water. Glacier National Park's lower McDonald Creek was once famous for its eagle congregations during the spawning runs of kokanee salmon. Those congregations disappeared when the kokanee crashed in the late 1980s. Resident bald eagle numbers have remained strong in the Flathead Basin and their massive nests of sticks are distributed along our waterways.

Golden eagles are the creature of prairies and alpine. They are more strictly hunters of small mammals. Favorite prey includes marmots in the alpine and jackrabbits and ground squirrels in the prairies and steppes, although they have been seen taking animals as large as small deer and mountain goats. Golden eagles stage dramatic annual migrations, between the tundra of the far north and warmer climates of the desert southwest and Mexico. They follow the Continental Divide and Rocky Mountain Trench from north to south in the autumn. This route funnels thousands of golden eagles over the Flathead, soaring south along the Whitefish Divide, the Continental Divide and the Swan Crest in the autumn.

Where the bald eagle is almost entirely a creature of North America, golden eagles soar over much of the northern hemisphere, nesting in North America, Europe, Asia and even portions of northern Africa.

When viewing mature birds, it's a relatively simple matter to distinguish between golden and bald eagles. Mature bald eagles have bold white heads and tails, contrasting with nearly black plumage of the body and wings, a pattern that stands out at great distance. Golden eagles are duller overall, but distinguished by a bronze-to-gold colored wash, particularly over the head and nape.

Identification becomes more challenging when examining immature birds. Bald eagles do not obtain their distinctive white heads and tails until they are four or five years old. However, immature golden eagles have white bands in the arc of the tail and a white spot in their "armpit" or underwing. Immature bald eagles tend to show an overall white mottling in otherwise dark plumage of their torso and underwings.

One more fine point: Bald eagles have unfeathered legs, while golden eagle have legs protected by feathers. When one considers their individual lifestyles, this adaptation makes sense. Fish-hunters benefit from keeping their feet dry, while birds of the tundra and mountains can use additional insulation.

By Ben Long, FAS Member



The greatest use of a life is to spend it on something that outlasts it.

William James





April 2006 Program

PHOTOGRAPHING BIRDS, ANIMALS AND SCENIC TREASURES OF MONTANA AND THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST



Dr. Gene Grove returns to Flathead Audubon in April with an encore slide show that focuses on subjects close to home. We will see beautiful wildlife photographs of Arctic visitors, such as the Snowy Owl and the Great Gray Owl. We will also see unusual photographs of Bald Eagles, Polar Bears and a Rhinoceros Auklet with Herring. Viewers will enjoy the challenge of figuring out what nature is camouflaging in certain Glacier National Park slides. And there's MORE! Dr. Grove's "painless teaching of photographic principles" will inspire birders to take their cameras on their next field trips.

Flathead Audubon members were first introduced to Dr. Grove and his remarkable photography at our May 2005 annual potluck. He and his wife Barbara have made Whitefish their full-time home for the last two years. Dr. Grove is retired from a medical career in neuropsychiatry and psychopharmacology in Austin, Texas. He has been photographing for 60 years. He is the author of THE JOY OF BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY. His photographs have appeared on the covers of AUDUBON and SMITHSONIAN magazines, as well as in other nature and wildlife books and publications.

The meeting will also include a presentation by Paula Smith of Conservation Achievement Recognitions to Kalispell City Parks and Recreation and to Whitefish Parks and Recreation. Please join us on Monday, April 10, at 7 p.m. at The Summit.



ITEMS NEEDED FOR SILENT AUCTION



Do you have a great bird house, quality piece of art, nature book, or gift item that you can donate to help make Flathead Audubon's annual silent auction a huge success? Or do you make a to-die-for batch of cookies or grow house-plants like a pro? Plan to offer anything that you think would interest others. The FAS silent auction is held during the May general meeting, which is a potluck. Dates, time, and location will be announced in the May Pileated Post.



(Education Coordinator, continued...)

In order to accept this position, Sonja and Lisa have resigned from the FAS Board of Directors. But as our Education Coordinators they will continue to participate in FAS projects, and continue attend our Board meetings.

Sonja and Lisa are enthusiastic about working together to carry forward our local Bird Education Program. Sonja lives in Columbia Falls and Lisa in Bigfork, so they will coordinate FAS educational activities throughout the Valley.

Our new dynamic education duo has already begun taking on some new projects that we



anticipate being able to offer with this doubling of our Coordinator staff. They organized and will present a workshop entitled 'Let's Bird! With the Flathead Audubon Society' at the Early Education Conference held at the West Coast Hotel in Kalispell April 8. The Conference is sponsored by the Nurturing Center; its theme is "Outdoors In and Indoors Out."

If you would like to know more about the activities planned by the new Educational Coordinator team, please contact Lisa Discoe at 837-1456 or ldiscoe@hotmail.com.

By Linda Winnie

(Challenge Grant, continued...) their students about birds.

This expansion of the Coordinator's job is possible because we have been able to double the Coordinator's stipend – from \$2500 last year to \$5000 this year.

The increase is made possible by the generous Challenge Grant offered to us by the Sustainability Fund. The Sustainability Fund will provide \$3000 toward the increased stipend if Flathead Audubon can provide a matching \$2000.

We now face the big challenge of coming up with this \$2000 in matching funds. Can you help? If you wish to donate to the challenge, please send checks to Bruce Tannehill, FAS Treasurer, 239 Deer Trail, Whitefish, MT 59937.

By Sonja Hartmann and Linda Winnie

BIRDING ETHICS

The best of the birding season is just beginning. The Robins, Starlings and Blue Birds are back. The Ducks, Geese and Swans are on the Flathead River Sloughs. The field trip to Freezout has taken place and there are many more field trips planned.

How should birders behave when observing birds? After surveying 14 birding websites and finding little or no discussion of birding ethics, it's time to review the basic rules. "Audubon At Home" at least had good articles on "Keeping Wildlife Safe."

DON'T DISTURB! Do not approach birds and nests so closely as to disturb them. Moving quietly and slowly until you are in good binocular distance will help. It is amazing how quickly birds notice that someone is looking at them. Each species has its own "safe distance" before alarm and flight occurs. Even when I am birding from a car, the hawks tend to fly at about 100 feet. However, a Marsh Wren I had not noticed surprised me by starting to sing and it was less than 5 feet away! I could see its tongue fluttering!

DON'T PLAY RECORDINGS! It might seem logical to play a recording of the bird you are looking for in order to have it sing back and help you locate it. Actually, you are challenging the male on his territory! That may be fine when Turkey hunting but not for song birds. They have enough stress defending territory from other males of their species! Recording songs that you are hearing while birding is a great way to learn to identify birds by sound. Back home, play what you recorded and compare it with Peterson's Guide CDs or other known recordings.

BE COURTEOUS! Group birding can be very rewarding. More eyes and ears help locate and identify birds. You can really learn if there is an expert in the group! Don't be the loud one! Talking at the appropriate time is great but keep the sound level down. Remember you are intruding into the bird's home and yard. Not everyone, however, can be right in front! Do not walk in front of scopes on tripods! When you want to move to a better position, walk around behind the group. Vice President Dick Cheney is probably not in your group but the principle is the same!

GO OFTEN! The more you go bird watching, the more pleasure and knowledge you will develop. Drive your neighborhood at different times of day and observe when and where birds are active. Soon you will develop a birding trail for yourself. Another way is to pick a certain habitat and visit it several weeks in a row to see which birds like that habitat and where in particular certain birds hang out. Find a comfortable spot to sit and just watch the show.

GOOD BIRDING!

Bob Lopp, FAS President



Audubon License Plate Available

Montana is once again issuing new license plates this year. Why not take this opportunity to purchase the beautiful Montana Audubon Bird Habitat plate? By doing this, you can show your support for birds and donate to Montana Audubon!

The image features an American Avocet, Ruddy Duck, Lewis's Woodpecker, and a trio of Black-billed Magpies, all set against the Rocky Mountain Front near Bynum.

As with all specialty plates, the cost of the plate is added to your current vehicle registration fee. The initial cost for the Bird Habitat plate is \$35, and annual renewal is \$20. Your \$20 is tax deductible and goes directly to support bird conservation through Audubon's Education, Science, and Policy programs. Thanks for your support!

From Janet Ellis, MT Audubon



FEEDBACK FROM OUR READERS!

In response to the Exploring in Winter article in the Feb. 2006 Pileated Post, we would like to invite you to check out the birding content on our website www.birdwatchersdigest.com. We are sure that it will become another favorite for you readers. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Happy Birding,
Amy Wells, Editorial Assistant
Bird Watcher's Digest
P.O. Box 110
Marietta, Ohio 45750
800.879.2473 phone



Two Black-chinned Hummingbirds were reported near Boise, Idaho, the morning of March 17 by an Idaho hummingbird bander. Happy Spring!

From Ned and Gigi Batchelder

FAS CONSERVATION COMMITTEE AT WORK FOR YOU

DELISTING OF BALD EAGLE PROPOSED

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has reopened the public comment period on its original 1999 proposal to remove the Bald Eagle from the federal list of threatened and endangered species, to give the public time to comment on the proposed delisting, in light of the new draft voluntary guidelines and a regulatory definition designed to help landowners and others understand how they can help ensure that Bald Eagles continue to be protected, consistent with existing law.

The Bald Eagle once ranged throughout every state except Hawaii. It first gained federal protection in 1940, when Congress passed the predecessor to the Bald Eagle Protection Act. This Act, later amended to include Golden Eagles, increased public awareness of the Bald Eagle. By 1963, only 417 nesting pairs were found in the lower 48. The Bald Eagle was protected in 1967 under a federal law that preceded the current Endangered Species Act. A crucial decision by the Environmental Protection Agency to ban the use of DDT in 1972 provided the springboard for the Service to accelerate the pace of recovery through captive breeding programs, reintroduction, law enforcement efforts, protection of habitat around nest sites during the breeding season and land purchase and preservation. The success of these efforts resulted in recovery of the species to the point that in 1995 its listing status was changed from endangered to threatened in most states. Since a delisting proposal in 1999, recovery of the Bald Eagle has continued at an impressive rate. In 2000, there were an estimated 6471 nesting pairs of Bald Eagles including more



Photo by Dave Menke, USFWS

than 200 in Montana. Today, this number has risen to an estimated 7,066 nesting pairs. See eagles nesting at <http://training.fws.gov/eagle/>.

If delisted from the Endangered Species Act, Bald Eagles will continue to be protected by the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). Both acts protect Bald Eagles by prohibiting killing, selling or otherwise harming eagles, their nests or eggs. The draft voluntary National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines are not Federal regulations but are intended to provide information for people who engage in recreation or land use activities on how to avoid impacts to eagles. They reflect the way that federal and state managers interpret BGEPA and MBTA.

The Service is also proposing a regulation to clarify the term "disturb" under BGEPA that is consistent with existing federal and state interpretation. Under the clarification, "disturb" would be defined as actions that disrupt breeding, feeding or sheltering practices of an eagle, causing injury, death or nest abandonment. This is the working definition that the Service has used over the years and is how states have interpreted the statute. The definition will provide clarity to the public, while continuing protection for Bald Eagles, which will help ensure an almost seamless transition from ESA listing to delisting. If the Bald Eagle is delisted, the Service will work with state agencies to monitor the status of the eagles for a minimum of five years, as required by the Endangered Species Act.

Comments on the proposed delisting, the draft National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines, and the draft definition of the term "disturb" must be received by May 17, 2006. The Draft Bald Eagle Management Guidelines can be viewed at:

<http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/issues/BaldEagle/Mgmt.Guidelines.2006.pdf>

Comments on the proposed delisting should be sent to Michelle Morgan, Chief, Branch of Recovery and Delisting, Endangered Species Program, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Headquarters Office, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Room 420, Arlington, Virginia 22203. These comments may be transmitted electronically to BaldEagledelisting@fws.gov.

Comments on the draft National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines or on the draft definition of the term "disturb" should be sent to Brian Millsap, Chief, Division of Migratory Bird Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, MBSP-4107, Arlington, Virginia 22203. Comments on the guidelines may be transmitted electronically to BaldEagle_managementguidelines@fws.gov. Comments on the definition of "disturb" may be transmitted electronically to BaldEagle_proposedrule@fws.gov.

By Bob Lee and Lewis Young, Chairman

Sibley Challenges Reports of Ivory-billed Woodpecker

David A. Sibley, author of "The Sibley Guide to Birds," says in an article in the March, 2006, issue of *Science* that a blurry videotape, the strongest evidence of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker's continued existence, does not show an Ivory-billed at all. In the article, Sibley, along with co-authors L. R. Bevier, M. A. Patten, and C. S. Elphik, claim the bird on the tape is almost certainly a Pileated Woodpecker. They conclude that there exists no conclusive evidence that the Ivory-billed has escaped extinction.

The videotape in question was made April 25, 2004, by M. David Luneau, Jr. of the University of Arkansas, Little Rock. Luneau had joined a search led by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to gather more evidence, after two serious birders reported seeing an Ivory-billed fly in front of their canoe. Along with the sightings, the tape was the centerpiece of a 2005 paper in *Science* that caused jubilation among conservationists and birders, and prompted the federal government to commit \$10 million for Ivory-billed conservation.

Sibley said he went public with his critique reluctantly. But, he added: "I think that this identification is wrong, and I feel that I'm obligated to correct that. Conservation has to be based on science."

John W. Fitzpatrick, director of the Cornell Lab, says he could not agree more about the importance of scientific evidence. He continues to believe that the video clearly shows an Ivory-billed. He claims that the accumulated evidence of sightings, sound recordings and the tape are enough to show that at least one Ivory-billed Woodpecker was in Cache River National Wildlife Refuge in the winter of 2004.

The paper by Sibley and his team comes after they spent nearly two years of extensive searching for a clear photograph or videotape of an Ivory-billed. In that time, disagreement has been bubbling among birders and ornithologists.

Kenn Kaufman, author of "Birds of North America" and other nature guides, says his initial doubts about the conclusiveness of the video have given way to a conviction that the bird is a Pileated Woodpecker. "My best guess is that Gallagher and

Harrison made a mistake," Kaufman said. "They made an honest mistake. And everything just sort of cascaded on from that."

The issue is whether the blurry white patches visible in the Cornell Lab tape are on the upper side of Ivory-billed wings or the lower side of Pileated wings. Sibley and his co-authors, along with Kaufman and others, say the viewer is likely seeing the underside of Pileated wings on the upstroke. They do not claim the Pileated case is airtight, but argue that the images cannot be counted as proof of an Ivory-billed. The Ivory-billed is a larger bird, almost 21 inches long; but the lowest estimate of its length and the upper limit of Pileated length overlap at about 19 inches.

A rebuttal in the same issue of *Science* by Fitzpatrick and colleagues presents evidence that the viewer is indeed looking at the back of an Ivory-billed as it flies away.

Reactions of other ornithologists not involved with either paper are mixed. Among the general public, the rediscovery has gained broad acceptance. In fact, the men who first reported the sighting, Eugene Sparling, Bobby Harrison and Tim Gallagher, have been honored by the Explorers Club.

All parties are united in the hope that the bird, whether or not it has been captured on videotape, is alive somewhere in the swamps. As Kaufman said, "If somebody came up with decent video of an Ivory-billed tomorrow, I would go out and dance in the streets."

You can read more about this debate. Sibley's paper and supporting materials are at www.eswr.com/106/ibwsibleyscience.pdf and www.eswr.com/106/ibwsibleysupp.pdf. The response paper and supporting materials are at www.eswr.com/106/ibwsibleyscienceresp.pdf and www.eswr.com/106/ibwfitzsupp.pdf. A general interest article from the New York Times is available at www.nytimes.com/2006/03/17/science/17bird.html?hp&ex=1142571600&en=ca7dfff7c9f1077a&ei=5094&partner=homepage.



Welcome to the "Travel Issue" of the Pileated Post! With spring opening its petals on the calendar but Ol' Man Winter still taunting us in Montana, we invite you to join us in the following pages in a bit of armchair travel, along with a little dreaming, and even put a few of these destinations on your calendar. Whether winging to Australia with Leslie, watching cranes on your computer, touring Bowdoin NWR during the MT Bird Festival, or polishing up your binocs for one of a great selection of Flathead Audubon field trips, you'll chase the doldrums away and greet summer with a smile. But be sure to come back - there's more Audubon year left and you know how great Flathead Valley summers are!

FROM THE BOARD:**LESLIE KEHOE****FAS BOARD MEMBER & FIELD TRIPS CHAIR**

Australia, the name is synonymous with wide-open countryside; it is, after all, the sixth largest country in the world with a population of just over 20 million people. The largest island in the world, it is about the size of the contiguous 48 states here in the USA. It is a three day train trip from east to west or a six hour plane trip; the distances here are vast. The climate varies from the dry desert interior and west to tropical rainforest along the northern coastal areas (the Great Barrier Reef and Kakadu National Park) to the temperate south (from Sydney to Melbourne); there are even alpine areas (Tasmania and the Great Dividing Range of the east coast) that see significant amounts of snow in the winter months. The seasons are opposite what we experience here in the northern hemisphere; spring begins in September and fall begins in March.

The flora and fauna of this country are truly unique. It has had nearly 50 million years of isolation from the rest of the world, and some very unique plants and animals have evolved. There are wonderful animals such as kangaroos, echidnas, platypus and wombats. The plants are equally wonderful; there are more than 500 species of eucalypts, or gum, trees unique to Australia, which have been transplanted all over the world because of their drought resistance and quick growth, the beautiful red-flowered waratah shrubs and the immense and ancient King Billy pines, which are a type of Cypress and can live up to 1500 years. Not to mention the 155 species of snakes, of which 93 are venomous and the many small lizards that seem to be everywhere. Best of all, over 750 species of birds can be found in Australia; over half of these species can be found only there. The birds are fantastic; they range from the Emu, which is a very large bird indeed, to the diminutive and flashy Superb Fairy Wren, from Glossy Black Cockatoos to the colorful and majestic Australian King-Parrot. There are also Superb Lyrebirds with long exquisite tail feathers and curve-billed honeyeaters of many types. The Laughing Kookaburra truly can be seen sitting in the old gum tree and, much to my delight, the smallest penguin in the world - the Little Penguin - lives and breeds along the southern coast.

And so, with all of this in mind, I set off for a grand adventure in the land down under. The most difficult part was deciding where to spend two short weeks in a place of such incredible natural diversity. I started in Sydney, Australia's largest and most cosmopolitan city. I spent a few days wandering through fascinating museums, took a cruise on Darling Harbour, one of the most vibrant harbors in the world and posed for a picture in front of the Sydney Opera House, one of the most widely recognized buildings in the world. I spent part of an afternoon at the Sydney Aquarium watching giant manta rays, sharks and a multitude of colorful tropical fish swim over my head. I did a little shopping. I shared my days with Silver Gulls and Welcome Swallows. Flocks of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos soared on the breezes between the tall buildings, and cormorants and Australian Pelicans glided over the waters of the harbor.

Just south of Sydney is a wonderful place called Royal National Park. Said to be the oldest national park in the world, it was founded in 1879. It was here in this park that I would get my first taste of the Australian bush, as the wild lands in Australia are called. Much of the park is recovering from fires of 2001 and 2005. Fire in the Australian bush is quite a common event and most trees and shrubs in Australia have evolved with it. The flora takes a fraction of the time to rejuvenate there than in Montana; in some areas, the forest can be completely restored in as little 18 months. As I traveled through the park, evidence of fire could be seen, but the eucalypts had already sprouted profuse new growth and the forest floor was lush



with all kinds of vegetation. It was here at this wonderful park that one of my heart's desires was fulfilled. I have wanted to see a kookaburra since I was very small and there on a gum tree beside a small dammed stream, I saw one. The Laughing Kookaburra, the largest kingfisher in

the world (up to 18 inches), is found in open forests. They eat mostly snakes, lizards and insects. The bird has a thick dark bill, pale breast, and head with dark eye stripe; the back is dark and the wings are black mottled with a pale blue. It has a long black-barred rufous tail, simply splendid.

(Australia, continued on page 8)

(*Australia, continued...*) Their laughing call can be heard for long distances, a sound that one never forgets. I would have the good fortune of seeing many more of these extraordinary birds before my adventures were over and I enjoyed seeing them each and every time.

The eucalypt forest is a fascinating place; nearly everything one experiences here is new and surprising. As I looked through the forest, the bark of the trees held my interest; it is unlike any I am familiar with; some of the boles are smooth and mottled with color, some have a stringy bark that hangs on the trees and sways in a breeze or falls to the ground, some are deeply fissured. The faint smell of eucalyptus oil was pervasive, as well as the smell of tannin from all of the leaf litter on the forest floor. The exotic sounds of birds and insects were everywhere. One of the most remarkable sounds came from the Eastern Whipbird, a shy olive green bird with a long tail and a black crest which is about the size of our Gray Jay. The Whipbird sounded just like a whip-crack, a sound so loud it echoed through the trees and in my ears for many seconds afterward, quite shocking when the bird was only yards away. The raucous calls of parrots could be heard occasionally and I saw six

colorful and loud species that day in the park. Another bird I saw that day was the Satin Bowerbird, a glossy blue black bird that builds a remarkable bower of twigs and bits of bright plastic that it uses to entice female birds. The Bowerbird I saw had an affinity for blue and all of the bits of plastic and paper strewn about its foot-tall bower were blue. The bower is only used as an enticement, and once mating has occurred, the female bird builds a nest elsewhere and raises the young on her own. There were other birds that day, diminutive Sacred and Azure Kingfishers, a large wonderful pigeon called a Wonga Pigeon, various cuckoos, a Superb Lyrebird, Magpie Larks and Australian Magpie, both of which are black and white and neither of which is related to our magpie. It was a good day of birding and, with a little help from a guide, I saw 91 species of birds and had some experiences that will stay with me the rest of my life. Part II of *Birding in a Land Down Under* will tell the tale of a few of my experiences in Tasmania.



Image from: John Gould (1804-81) The birds of Australia 1840-48. 7 vols. 600 plates Artists: J. Gould and E. Gould; Lithographer: E. Gould

EARTH DAY, EVERY DAY

It's a rare holiday these days that doesn't have its protesters and dissenters. Maybe it's a sign of progress that Earth Day is now one of our least controversial celebrations throughout the year. Very few folks are against what Earth Day stands for. From its beginning as a "teach-in" day in 1970, Earth Day has been inclusive of every group and category of Americans. It's not the holiday of any specific religious group, race, age group, part of the country, or economic level. It's not about male or female, educated, uneducated, urban or rural. Everyone can participate in some way, and everything that gets accomplished helps the "cause." The founder of Earth Day was a congressman, Senator Gaylord Nelson. Did you know that in 1995, President Clinton awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, our nation's highest civilian honor, to Senator Nelson? Gaylord Nelson passed away this past July,

leaving us with a well-established tradition and a lot of work still to do.

Without a doubt, the best Earth Day celebrators are kids. They instinctively understand the concepts of nature and environment and they see Earth Day activities as fun, not work. Kids aren't burdened by current events, media, politics and financial concerns, all that remind us how "bad" things are in the environmental world. They use "alternate transportation" every day, carrying their school supplies in their "reusable" backpacks, and love nothing better than getting out of school to get dirty planting trees and picking up interesting trash. When there's Earth Day activity, there's usually a kid involved!

So, on April 22, grab a rake, a garbage bag, a bicycle, or pen and paper. Do your part by doing whatever you do best. And try to spend the day with or around children. You'll be inspired and well on your way to making "Every Day Earth Day."

Kay Mitchell



Speaking of "inspired," Flathead Audubon members are an inspiration for the entire community. With many more people contributing this year, we have recycled our way past last year's record 2 tons and still going! We will give you a final report in next month's newsletter, but meantime, start your spring cleaning early and bring as much as you can to the April FAS meeting. The Recycling Wagon will not be at the May potluck, so April is your last chance to "pile it on!"

2006 APRIL AND MAY FIELD TRIPS



SATURDAY, APRIL 8: LOWER VALLEY WATERFOWL TOUR, PART TWO. Join FAS for a 3-4 hour guided tour of wetland areas around Somers and the north shore of Flathead Lake. We will search for resident and migrating waterfowl, mostly, but we should also see a wide variety of raptors and early songbirds. This is a great time to bone up on your ducks and get into the spirit of spring. Meet at Park n' Ride at the intersection of Hwys 93 and 82 at 9:00AM. For more information contact Dan Casey, 857-3143 or dcasey@abcbirds.org

SUNDAY, APRIL 23: BIRDING AROUND SMITH LAKE. A morning of bird watching at the Smith Lake Waterfowl Production Area should get us up close and personal with a wide variety of waterfowl, such as Sandhill Cranes, an assortment of grebes and lots of ducks. We might spot a bluebird or two and meadowlarks. Bald Eagles, Osprey and Marsh Harriers can be seen soaring in the sky or perched on prominent trees by Smith Lake. Join Bob Lopp and FAS for a pleasant morning of birding. Meet at the Fish, Wildlife & Parks building on Meridian at 8:00AM. Contact Bob at 257-6886 to sign up for the trip.

SATURDAY, MAY 13: INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY AT THE NATIONAL BISON RANGE. The National Bison Range near Moiese celebrates this day in a big way, with the Red Sleep Mountain drive opening for the summer. This splendid drive through the range travels through a variety of habitats and is a wonderful place to see a broad spectrum of birds, from Yellow-headed Blackbirds to Mountain Bluebirds, from Western Meadowlarks to Bald Eagles. A guided Birding Adventure along Mission Creek starts at 8:30AM; pre-register by calling the Bison Range at (406)644-2211, Ext. 207. There will also be a talk at noon about bluebird habitat and nest boxes by Erv Davis and Rod Wamsley, and wildlife photographer Donald Jones will be on hand to sign his newest book *Wings Over Montana: A Celebration of Montana Birds*. The National Bison Range will open at 6:00AM just for International Bird Day.

SATURDAY, MAY 13: SPRING LOON CENSUS DAY. The Montana Loon Society and the Montana Common Loon Working Group need volunteers to help look for and count loons on the lakes throughout north-west Montana on this day. Please contact Gael Bissell at 752-3874 if you would like to help.

SUNDAY, MAY 14: SEARCHING FOR HARLEQUIN DUCKS AND DIPPERS IN GLACIER NATIONAL PARK. Join John Ashley for a Mother's Day walk in Glacier National Park in search of one of Montana's most enigmatic birds, the Harlequin Duck. These rare ducks return from the Pacific coast year after year to the streams of their birth, where they breed. The males stay only a short time and leave the females to raise the young in the rushing waters of GNP. There will be short easy walks all morning. A Glacier National Park entrance fee or pass is required. Please contact John at 892-3828 or Ashley@bigsky.net to sign up for the trip; the number of participants is limited to minimize disturbance to these shy ducks.

SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, MAY 20 & 21: GLACIER INSTITUTE VOLUNTEER WORK WEEKEND. Come help Glacier Institute get ready for its 22nd year of educational activities. Volunteers are needed for cleaning, painting, light carpentry, and outdoor work such as tree cutting and planting. Work will be done at both the Field Camp in the Park and at the Big Creek Outdoor Education Center. Interested volunteers may call Glacier Institute at 755-1211 or register@glacierinstitute.org.

SUNDAY, MAY 21: A WANDER THROUGH THE LOST TRAIL NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE. Lost Trail is located in the beautiful Pleasant Valley and is a great place to see grassland and riparian birds at close range. The road on the Refuge wanders through wet meadows where Wilson's Snipe, Brewer's Blackbirds and Vesper Sparrows sit on fence posts next to the road. The enticing songs of warblers and flycatchers come from thickets beside the road. Dahl Lake, a large shallow lake on the Refuge has breeding populations of Black Terns, Ruddy Ducks, Red-necked, Pied-billed, Horned and Eared Grebes and Sandhill Cranes. Overhead, we may see Golden and Bald Eagles soaring on the wind, as both species breed here. Meet at the Fish, Wildlife and Parks building in Kalispell at 6:00AM for a day of exciting spring birding. Please contact Leslie Kehoe to sign up for the trip or for more information at 837-4467.

BOB ROST'S BIRDING BLASTS FOR APRIL AND MAY. Bob will choose weekend days in April and May to go bird watching in some of the Flathead's best bird hotspots. Because of the nature of birds and nature, one never knows where or when the birds will show up and Bob would like to make the birding trips more spontaneous, depending on where the best birds are to be found. You may give him a call at 837-2255 to find out when the Birding Blasts will take place.



Montana Audubon's Panama Birding Tour

January 2 - 13, 2007

Join Montana Audubon board member, professor Jack Kirkley for this 12-day Panama Birding Tour. Serious birders may tally 300-400 species of birds with the help of our excellent native guide, Guido Berguido of Advantage Panama Tours, as we explore habitats from coastal marshes to high elevation cloud forests. We will visit world famous birding sites such as Barro Colorado Island, Pipeline Road, and Baru Volcano National Park. Interesting side excursions include visits to Chagres National Park, Old Panama City, and an historical tour of the Panama Canal itself at the Miraflores Locks. For complete itinerary, contact Jack Kirkley at j_kirkley@umwestern.edu, 406-683-7321, or c/o UM-Western, 710 South Atlantic, Dillon, MT 59725). Deposit of \$1000 by 10/1/06 is required to secure your spot on the tour.

Field Trips for Disabled Birders in Maine

The American Birding Association has become aware of the need for modified field trips designed for birders with limited mobility or limited endurance. Therefore, for the first time ever, the 2006 convention in Bangor, Maine, through the Physical Limitations Track, will offer three such trips. Two of these trips will focus on land birds that can be found in accessible "hot spots" near Bangor, and in the stunning Acadia National Park. The disabled birders will join the rest of the ABA group for the third trip, which will be a boat trip to the waters surrounding Petit Manan, a breeding island used by Atlantic Puffins and other seabirds. During this trip, we will have the expertise of Wayne Peterson of Field Guides Incorporated and Massachusetts Audubon, to guide our smaller group.

For details about this June 19-25, 2006, Bangor, Maine, convention, visit the official website at www.americanbirding.org or contact Darlene Smyth at smythd@comcast.net or 1-520-297-2315.



Scholarships Available to Audubon Members to Attend Residential Maine Island Audubon Camp

BREMEN, Maine, March 2, 2006—Scholarships are available for Audubon chapter members to attend residential sessions this summer at Hog Island Audubon Camp in Bremen. Those interested can get an application by e-mailing camps@maineaudubon.org, calling (207) 781-2330, ext. 215, or downloading from www.maineaudubon.org.

Accessible only by boat, Hog Island Audubon Camp is located on a 330-acre coastal wildlife sanctuary in midcoast Maine. Since 1936, its summer sessions for adults, educators, young people and families have been led by some of the most respected naturalists and environmental educators in the nation. Campers awake to the sound of woodland birds and lobster boats and spend the day exploring the island's spruce forests, fern-filled meadows, and rocky tide pools. Evenings feature presentations by special guests. Sessions include gourmet meals and lodging in rustic 19th-century buildings. Sessions in 2006 include a Hog Island Reunion for alumni to relax, reflect and reconnect with nature and old friends (July 24-26) as well as an Audubon Leadership Workshop for Audubon chapter or center leaders to network with peers and learn how to raise funds, energize volunteers, incorporate Audubon initiatives and offer compelling nature programs (August 13-19). Hog Island Audubon Camp's other 2006 offerings include:

For Adults:

- **Field Ornithology**, June 25-July 1
- **Natural History of the Maine Coast**, July 2-8
- **Workshop for Educators**, July 9-15
- **Cultural and Natural History of Coastal Maine**, July 16-22
- **Naturalizing by Kayak**, July 16-22 or August 28-31
- **A Maine Island Experience**, August 20-26
- **Om on the Island Yoga Retreat**, August 28-31
- **Bird Migration and Conservation**, September 10-16

For Teens and Youth

- **Bird Studies for Teens**, June 25-July 1
- **Natural History for Teens**, July 2-8
- **Coastal Kayaking Adventure**, July 10-15 or July 25-29
- **Youth Camp**, July 30-August 5





BEAUTY OF BIRDS



Have you been spotting robins on fence posts lately? Been hearing the watery song of red-winged blackbirds in the cattails? And what little spring arrival was singing that beautiful song in my backyard this evening? Spring is the perfect time to brush up on birding skills, and Beauty of Birds is the perfect place to do it! Join Flathead Audubon Wednesday evenings in April to learn more about the birds of the Flathead Valley. The first class will include useful information on bird identification, songs and calls, binocular and field guide use, and more. The following classes will feature lessons and slides by area experts, as well as common bird iden-

tification review. We will also take a Saturday morning fieldtrip to local birding hotspot Owen Sowerwine Natural Area.

Whether you're new to birding, new to the Flathead, or just want to brush up on your skills before summer arrives, please join us for Beauty of Birds. For more information, please call Ansley Ford at 857-6788. To register call Flathead High School at 751-3500. Classes will be held in the lecture room at Flathead High on April 5th, 12th, 19th, and 26th from 6-8 PM. Hope to see you there!

Ansley Ford

THE MAGIC OF WATERFOWL MIGRATION



YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK -- Loren Easley once wrote, "If there is magic on this planet, it is contained in water." The Yellowstone Association Institute will be presenting a seminar exploring Yellowstone's aquatic environments and the birds that inhabit them during the season that waterfowl are most abundant and colorful. Participants will learn the nuances of waterfowl identification and also discover the differences among common to extremely rare species of ducks, geese, and swans. The seminar, taught by Terry McEneaney, begins on April 28, 2006, at 7:30 PM, and ends on April 30, 2006, at 3:00 PM. Terry is Yellowstone National Park's ornithologist and first began birding in Yellowstone in 1968. He teaches field ornithology throughout Montana and Wyoming, and wrote *Birds of Yellowstone*, *The Uncommon Loon*, and *Birding Montana*. He is

writing a book on the ecology of Yellowstone birds and a scientific monograph on the Yellowstone trumpeter swan.

The program entails easy walking with hikes of 1 to 3 miles per day, with climbs up to 250 feet and some off-trail walking. The class will be based out of the Institute's North Entrance Education Center in Gardiner, Montana.

The fee for the course is \$180. (Yellowstone Association members get a \$10 discount.) Lodging is available in Gardiner.

To enroll in the seminar, contact the Yellowstone Association Institute at PO Box 117, Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190, or call 307-344-2294. Course information is available at www.yellowstoneassociation.org/institute.

"Learn as if you were going to live forever. Live as if you were going to die tomorrow." - Mahatma Gandhi



Glasgow to Host 2006 Bird Festival

June 2 - 4, 2006



The 2006 Montana Audubon Bird Festival will be held June 2 - 4, 2006, in Glasgow, in northeastern Montana. The Festival will focus on the rich assortment of Montana prairie birds found in the area's wetlands, rivers, and grasslands. Field trips to Bowdoin National Wildlife Refuge, Medicine Lake National Wildlife Refuge, and the Missouri River will be featured. Look for the festival brochure by mid-April.



"CraneCam" Now Live

Again this year, the Audubon Society and National Geographic Magazine will allow you to witness the largest concentration of Sandhill Cranes in the world from a unique "crane's-eye view" through National Geographic's CraneCam. Through April 9, a camera placed on an island in Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary on the Platte River in Nebraska will provide outstanding views of Sandhill Cranes roosting by the thousands in the shallow water of the Platte. Images from the CraneCam can be seen on National Geographic Magazine's site - <http://magma.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/cranecam/> along with great information about cranes. You may have to install RealPlayer to load the images. It can be downloaded free from the CraneCam website.

From Bob Lee



Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

P.O. Box 9173
Kalispell, MT 59904-9173

APRIL, 2006



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The Flathead Audubon Society is affiliated with Montana Audubon and the National Audubon Society. Flathead Audubon meets on the second Monday of each month from September through May. The meeting starts at 7:00PM and includes a featured guest who presents a conservation or nature program. The Board of Directors meet 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 Flathead Audubon Society as a membership benefit. For membership information or address change, please call Mike Fanning at 862-8070. To receive this newsletter in electronic format, please email your request to:

lindawin@centurytel.net. **Deadline for newsletter copy is the 18th of each month. Contact newsletter editor at 755-1406; email submissions to: pileatedpost@hotmail.com**

FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY DIRECTORY

OFFICERS

President	Bob Lopp	52 West View Drive, Kalispell, MT 59901	257-6886
Vice-President	Vacant		
Secretary	Gail Sullivan	932 Columbia Ave., Whitefish, MT 59937	862-5775
Treasurer	Bruce Tannehill	239 Deer Trail, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-4548
Past-President	Linda deKort	(dekort@montanasky.com)	755-3704

DIRECTORS

2003-2006	Lewis Young	50 Garrison Dr., Eureka, MT 59917	889-3492
2004-2007	Dan Casey	(dcasey@abcbirds.org)	857-3143
2004-2007	Bob Lee	(rml3@centurytel.net)	257-0363
2004-2007	Ansley Ford	(aew333@yahoo.com)	857-6788
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2005-2006	Linda Winnie	(lindawin@centurytel.net)	755-1406
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2005-2006	Leslie Kehoe	(ljkheoe@digisys.net)	837-4467
2005-2006	Leo Keane	514 Pine Place, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-5807

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Birdseed Sales	June & Rod Ash	754-2289	Owen Sowerwine	Brent Mitchell	756-8130
Christmas Bird Count	Dan Casey	857-3143	Natural Area	Linda Winnie	755-1406
Conservation	Lewis Young	889-3492	Newsletter Editor	Linda Winnie	755-1406
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	Sonja Hartmann	387-4150	Publicity	Paula Smith	837-0181
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Hospitality	Lois Drobish	756-7405	Sales	Lisa Discoe	837-1456
	Jill Fanning	862-8070	Wetlands/Waterfowl	Neal Brown	837-5018
Membership	Mike Fanning	862-8070			

MONTANA AUDUBON

Montana Audubon, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624 443-3949 www.mtaudubon.org
 Temp. Executive Director: Janet Ellis jellis@mtaudubon.org
 Board President: Betsy Griffing e_griffing@hotmail.com



FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY

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