



# the Silent Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

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## Habitat for Humanity Resale Store to be Recognized at February Meeting



Flathead Audubon Society is proud to present its second Conservation Achievement Recognition of 2006-7 to the Habitat for Humanity Resale Store. The presentation will be made at the February meeting by FAS Board member Bob Lee.

Many, if not most, people in the Flathead Valley and elsewhere are familiar with Habitat for Humanity. This is the group that builds affordable housing for lower income families through volunteer efforts. Most people, however, do not realize that this same group operates a resale store for new as well as used construction materials. The primary purpose of the Resale Store is to support the building function. However, serendipitously the Resale Store supports social and conservation efforts in the Valley by

keeping usable material out of the landfills, encouraging intelligent recycling and building a strong community atmosphere. It is for these reasons that Flathead Audubon recognizes the Resale Store with a Conservation Award.

The Resale Store has been in Kalispell for several years. It is located in the KME Building on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street behind the Smith's grocery in a space donated by Kalispell Regional Medical Center. Gavin Mooney has been the manager of the Store since July of 2006. He is the only paid member of a staff of about 10. These are different from the volunteers who pound nails to build the Habitat houses.

Gavin can always use more folks and has...  
*CONSERVATION AWARD, continued on page 4*



### FEBRUARY FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

**Monday, February 12, 2007: Flathead Audubon General Meeting**, 7PM, The Summit. Multimedia presentation on Yukon's Three Rivers Project.

**Monday, February 5, 2007: Flathead Audubon Board of Directors Meeting**. 6PM at 295 Third Avenue East North, Kalispell (Jane Lopp & Associates Building) All are welcome.

**Friday-Monday, February 16-19, 2007: Great Backyard Bird Count** (see article, page 3)

**Sunday, February 18, 2007: Field Trip to the Mission Valley**

**Saturday-Sunday, March 31-April 1, 2007: Annual Freezout Lake National Wildlife Management Area Field Trip**, for details, contact Dan Casey, 857-3143 or [dcasey@abcbirds.org](mailto:dcasey@abcbirds.org)

**Wednesdays in April, 2007: Beauty of Birds Classes**, further info in March newsletter, or contact Ansley Ford, 857-6788

**Friday - Monday, June 1-4, 2007: Montana Audubon Bird Festival**, Ennis, MT, hosted by Sacajawea Audubon and Pintler Audubon (details in spring newsletters)

**Friday - Sunday, June 22-24, 2007: Bitterroot Birding & Nature Festival at the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge** (information on page 4)

# BIRD OF THE MONTH

## THEY HAVE EYES IN THE BACK OF THEIR HEADS

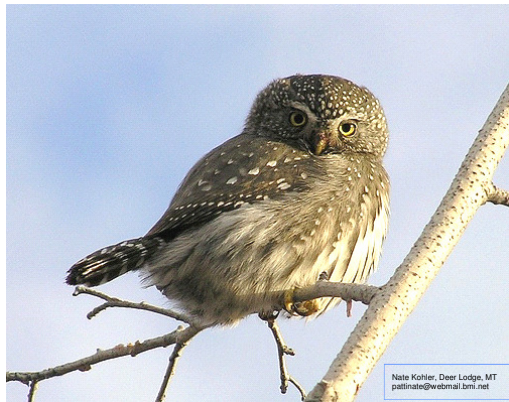
Because most of their activities are nocturnal, owls are more often heard than seen and are often regarded as mysterious and secretive. There's certainly something thrilling and primordial about hearing an owl call in the darkness of the forest. After spending almost two years at Walden Pond, Thoreau described that experience this way: ***"For sounds in winter nights, and often in winter days, I heard the forlorn but melodious note of a hooting owl indefinitely far; such a sound as the frozen earth would yield if struck with a suitable plectrum, the very lingua vernacula of Walden Wood, and quite familiar to me at last, though I never saw the bird while it was making it."***

According to the Owl Research Institute at Ninepipes, there are 20 breeding species of owls in the U.S. and Canada. These owls are divided into two groups: Tytoninai (barn and bay owls) who are easily identified by their heart-shaped faces and Strigidae (all other owls) who have round faces.

All owls have developed several interesting physical adaptations to help them cope with their nocturnal and solitary lifestyle. First, all owls have large heads to accommodate their large eyes and ears. Also, owls cannot move their eyes up and down or side to side as humans do, so to compensate, they have evolved the ability to rotate their heads approximately 270 degrees. In some species the ears are asymmetrical with the right ear longer and located higher on the skull allowing calculation of flight angles when sounds are heard but the prey cannot be seen. Owl feathers in many species are structured so that flight sound is absorbed. Consequently, these owls cannot be heard by potential prey as they approach. Since most owls take prey items from the ground or from trees and shrubbery, they have powerful feet with outer toes that can rotate so that two toes point forward and two backward. This adaptation permits a strong symmetrical grip on squirming prey. Once prey is captured, owls avoid interaction and competition for this food by

gulping the prey down whole rather than eating in the open as hawks are more likely to do. This rather gluttonous behavior is possible because the digestive system compacts the indigestible materials such as fur and bones into a pellet and one or two of these pellets is ejected through the mouth daily. Owl researchers rely on the pellets to help in location of roost sites, and scientists can also determine the diet of owls from study of the contents of these pellets.

One of the most commonly seen owls in the Flathead is the Northern Pygmy, the only small diurnal (active chiefly in the daytime) owl in our area. In fact if you regularly feed birds in your yard, the chances are quite good that you'll have one at your feeders – not to check out your Audubon black-oiled sunflower seeds but to check out and dine on the other birds that are there. In addition to small birds, the Northern Pygmy-Owls' diet consist of mammals, insects, and probably



Nate Kottler, Deer Lodge, MT  
pattinat@webmail.bmi.net

a few reptiles and amphibians. Small birds may be an important part of its diet, especially in the winter when some of the other food sources are more limited. Because of this, the Northern Pygmy is a favorite target of songbirds and can sometimes be located by watching or hearing a group of small birds cry in alarm and mob the owl.

Despite its petite size (approx 7 inches and 2 to 3 ounces) the Northern Pygmy-Owl is a fierce predator and has been known to attack and kill prey much larger than itself. The Northern Pygmy has a round head and yellow eyes and bill. Its eyebrows are a distinctive white and feathers extending from the back of the eyebrows can be raised like tufts when alarmed. A true facial disk is absent. The head is finely spotted and the dark mottled head and neck give way to a white chest, belly, and sides, with vertical brown streaking. The tail is conspicuously long with dark barring. For protection, the Northern Pygmy Owl has a special protective adaptation that most parents and teachers have often wished for — eyes (actually false eyes) in the back of its head.

*PYGMY OWL, continued on page 11*



## February 2007 Program Three Rivers of the Yukon



Juri Peepre and Sarah Locke from the Yukon Territory will present a multi-media show on the Yukon's ambitious Three Rivers project, part of a national effort to conserve northern boreal forests in the Wind, Snake, and Bonnet Plume watersheds of the Canadian North. Fresh clean water, the boreal ecosystem, woodland caribou, peregrine falcons, critical wetland habitat, and vast wilderness are values worth protecting. This is the goal of the Three Rivers project as it focuses attention on an increasingly vulnerable part of the world.

In 2003, 37 paddlers including artists from across Canada, writers, photographers, conservationists and community members, paddled the Wind, Snake and Bonnet Plume Rivers in the northern Yukon to celebrate and draw public attention to this pristine landscape, sometimes called the Arctic Rockies. The Journey resulted in a national touring art exhibition, "Three Rivers: Wild Waters, Sacred Place."

Many people in U.S. have heard about the Yukon's great rivers and majestic landscapes, and this is an opportunity for Yukoners to tell their story. The Yukon is at a crossroads: to stand by as the wild North is changed forever, or make choices that will allow grizzly bears and woodland caribou to roam free in the Three Rivers country?

The Three Rivers show features an engaging, beautiful new book of photography, stories and art entitled *Three Rivers: the Yukon's Great Boreal Wilderness* (Harbour Publishing, 2005). The book highlights essays from renowned northern authors. Copies will be available for purchase at the show.

Please join us at The Summit on Monday, February 12, at 7p.m. to discover the wild waters and wildlife of the Yukon's stunning Three Rivers wilderness. Also at the meeting, Flathead Audubon's second Conservation Achievement Award of the year will be presented to Habitat for Humanity.

### Sunday, February 18, 2007. Field trip to the Mission Valley

This full day trip follows the west shore of Flathead Lake to the Mission Valley. We will wander the byways of the Mission Valley as we search for several hawk species, eagles, falcons, waterfowl and maybe even an owl. We will end at the National Bison Range near Moiese where we have previously found Townsend's Solitaires and American Robins. This trip will focus on raptor identification. Meet at Park 'n Ride at the intersection of Hwys 93 and 82 near Somers at 8:00 AM. Bring lunch and winter weather gear. Contact Leslie Kehoe in the evenings at 837-4467 to sign up.

On the last weekend of March, Dan Casey will lead his annual overnight trip to **Freezout Lake Wildlife Management Area**. Mark your calendar for Saturday, March 31 and Sunday, April 1. Details are forthcoming in the March newsletter or contact Dan at 857-3143 or email at

[dcasey@abcbirds.org](mailto:dcasey@abcbirds.org)



### COUNT FOR THE RECORD!

Become a citizen scientist by participating in the 2007 GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT (GBBC) February 16-19. The 10<sup>th</sup> annual GBBC is sponsored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, and in part by Wild Birds Unlimited. Citizen science doesn't get any more user friendly than this. **"Observers simply count the highest number of each species they see during an outing or a sitting, and enter their tally on the GBBC web site."** You can participate for FREE:

- \*Whatever your age,
- \*Whatever your birding skill level,
- \*Wherever you live in the United States or Canada,
- \*Wherever you want to count (home, school, park, wildlife refuge), and
- \*For whatever length of time you want to count (15 minutes? No problem!)



When you submit your count(s) online, you put a dot on the GBBC map. You may then compare your observations with those of other participants in the US and Canada, and with prior years. The GBBC tells scientists and us where birds are in mid-winter. It helps document routes of migratory birds, expanded ranges of introduced species, and declining species. More than 7.5 million birds of 623 species were counted in 2006.

Visit [www.birdsource.org/gbbc](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc) to learn more about why birds are counted and how to participate. You will also find aids for learning more about 600 bird species, including ID tips, photos, sounds and maps. You may also wish to compete in the photo contest.

(This information was synthesized from the GBBC website.)

From Paula Smith

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

*From time to time there are exceptional learning opportunities. Although Flathead Audubon is not sponsoring this program, I highly recommend it and present their article in place of my President's report. Enjoy!!*

*Bob Lopp, FAS President*



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A wildlife course titled "Winter Birds of Prey" is offered by The Glacier Institute on February 3 and 4. This two day program includes field trips to learn about the habitats, adaptations, hunting, breeding and life histories of hawks, eagles, owls and falcons. Field excursions involve traveling on back roads to spot and identify a variety of raptors. Course attendees will stay at the Ninepipes Lodge for this overnight excursion. The course will be led by celebrated owl expert Denver Holt, the founder and president of the Owl Research Institute. He is a field researcher and has studied birds of prey and their ecology since 1978 in the United States, Mexico and Costa Rica. In addition to countless publications, his snowy owl research has been featured in National Geographic. The Glacier Institute serves adults and children as an educational leader in the Crown of the Continent ecosystem with Glacier National Park at its center. Emphasizing outreach and field-based learning experiences, the non-profit Institute provides an objective and science-based understanding of the area's ecology and its interaction with people. Marking its 24th year of educational programs, The Glacier Institute is a long-time partner with Glacier National Park and the Flathead National Forest. The Institute offers family programs, youth science adventure camps, Discovery School at the Big Creek Outdoor Education Center and adult educational programs. Register for the "Winter Birds of Prey" course or request complete catalog by calling (406) 755-1211 or online at [www.glacierinstitute.org](http://www.glacierinstitute.org). Courses are rated for skill level; the "Winter Birds of Prey" course is rated at "easy." This course is suitable for beginner and/or senior hikers and may include hikes up to one mile with mild elevation gains. The \$260 fee includes lodging, transportation, materials and some meals.



**HABITAT FOR HUMANITY** (continued...) just recently published the first newsletter from the Store. The annual income from the Store is currently able to finance about 2/3 of a house. Gavin's goal is to be able to finance 2-3 houses per year.

Currently, the Store inventory includes appliances, lighting, doors, windows, cabinets, paint, plumbing and electrical supplies. Many donations come from local businesses, especially small contractors, but they are happy to accept almost any usable construction material. They particularly like newer and rarer items.

Retail hours are Wednesday through Saturday from 10 AM to 4 PM. Please call ahead before bringing in donations, to ensure that someone is there to receive them. Dropping off items outside the building can jeopardize the arrangement with the hospital. For large or numerous items, a pick-up can be arranged -- usually on a Tuesday.

Drop in, visit with Gavin and see what might improve your home.



By Bob Lee



*Until he extends the circle of his compassion to all living things, man will not himself find peace.*

*.Albert Schweitzer*



## Bitterroot Birding & Nature Festival

June 22, 23 & 24, 2007

Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge.

In addition to providing opportunities to bird in Lewis & Clark Country, the Festival will include: juried art show, BioThon, family activities, golf tournament, live raptors and snakes, activities featuring western culture, and the Montana Junior Duck Stamp Award Ceremony. Proceeds from the Festival will assist the Friends of the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge in supporting the Lee Metcalf Refuge and its mission of wildlife and habitat conservation. For details and registration go to [www.bitterrootbirdfestival.com](http://www.bitterrootbirdfestival.com) or call 406-777-5552.



**BOARD MEMBER VIEW: LESLIE KEHOE****FAS BOARD MEMBER****A COLD DAY IN JANUARY**

It was cold again today but the sun was shining. It was a beautiful day, not one of those remarkable days that I will remember until the end of time, but a lovely day. It is all one can ask for in the midst of January. The bright sunshine has me grinning happily and makes me think of the warm days to come. The pure blue of the sky can only be found on these cold clear days that we get at this time of the year; it is so astonishing it hurts my eyes and invigorates my soul. A skiff of snow (what the weatherman would call a trace; skiff is a word my father used to use. I can't find it in the dictionary but I like the word) sparkles in the sunlight, thousands of tiny sparkles because it fell as tiny sparkling snowflakes one very cold night. I love clear cold days like this because it gives me an excuse to make hot chocolate and sit near a sunny window and watch the birds.

The Flathead River, just a little over a mile from the lake, has frozen over for the second time this winter. The ice is quite pretty, all white and glistening with large interconnecting cracks that travel in a fascinating pattern the length and breadth of the frozen surface. It always makes me a little sad when the river freezes solid as the bird population in my neighborhood declines. The dozens of ducks and geese that have called the river home for the last few weeks have found open water elsewhere; the Bald Eagles that haunt the waterfowl from the fir trees beside my home have followed their prey; the pair of Great Blue Herons that stalk the river banks will not return until the thaw, and I will miss the chitter-chatter of the Belted Kingfisher as he too has had to find open water.

Regardless of the freeze, there are still lots of chirps and peeps in my backyard and I listen with great pleasure each day for these familiar sounds. The feeders are very busy today. There are several dozen House Finches vying for a place at the feeder, the only bright color in the yard this time of the year, their beautiful red breasts a lovely contrast to the leafless branches where they perch. A few American Goldfinches mix in with the house finches, not yet golden but very hungry. This year was apparently a banner year for chickadees; the family of Black-capped Chickadees this winter is the largest I have ever seen here, numbering over twenty diminutive black and cream feathered balls of energy. There are six or seven Mountain Chickadees, as well. I never tire of their antics and the quality my life would diminish if I could not hear their calls and songs.

Half a dozen Dark-eyed Juncos flit under the evergreen limbs of a Western Cedar next to the house. They come to glean seeds dropped from the feeder and flutter about the yard, white and brown tails flashing on a quest for sustenance. Song Sparrows creep under the brush as well, their rich browns and grays blending with the undergrowth. They come to find seeds under the feeders, too, but they are more cautious than the juncos and will flee at any hint of movement. I think about their beautiful songs of spring and imagine for just a few moments that a cold day in January has become a balmy day in May and my sparrows brazenly perch on fence posts and sing their age-old songs of love.

A small horde Pygmy Nuthatches has been here off and on; today they are gone; I miss their cheerful beeps and amusing acrobatics. Watching these minute feathered creatures certainly makes for a more joyful day. Today I must be satisfied watching the activities of several Red-breasted Nuthatches; it is enough and I am content.

A pair of Downy Woodpeckers and a pair of Hairy Woodpeckers come in to the suet feeder. A cold, fluffy Red-shafted Flicker is sitting in the apple tree eyeing the suet; watching him try to get suet from the feeder is comical. He is always successful but getting into the perfect position seems to be a challenge; I always feel dreadful when I walk by the window and scare him away. He is a lovely bird, all gray and spots and red. The Pileated Woodpecker also put in an appearance today; he sits high on the power pole and announces himself every few days. I always have to take a peek and watch him for a few moments, such a remarkable bird - - our mascot.

These are the common birds many of us see daily all year round, so common that sometimes we forget to take a second look. Our resident birds may not take epic journeys and they may not be as colorful nor sing as enigmatic songs as our summer visitors but they are just as remarkable. Remember to take a few moments this winter to watch the antics of nuthatches, listen to the quiet peeps of chickadees, look at the red feathers of finches or watch the flight of woodpeckers. Our resident birds are really quite wonderful. I had a wonderful time watching familiar birds and drinking hot cocoa on a very cold day in January.



# CHRISTMAS BIRD

*In the interest of saving some space in your newsletter, this year we are printing a summary of highlights of each Christmas Bird Count and listing the count tallies on the Flathead Audubon website, [www.FlatheadAudubon.org](http://www.FlatheadAudubon.org).*

## BIGFORK CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT - 2006

By Dan Casey

The 33rd annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count at Bigfork was held Saturday, December 16, 2006. Thirty-nine people enjoyed a day of remarkably nice weather, with temperatures hovering around 30 F, sun, and little or no wind. They found 12,974 individual birds of 76 species on count day, and one additional species (Killdeer) during count week. No new species were found, leaving our cumulative list at 142 species; it was just the second time that a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** was seen on the count, and the fourth time we have found a **Mew Gull**. We also found one **Snowy Owl** for a third straight year. We set new high count totals for another five species (**Pied-billed Grebe**, **Hooded Merganser**, **Bald Eagle**, **Red-tailed Hawk**, **Song Sparrow**), and tied our previous high for **Cooper's Hawk** (2). Diminished waterfowl species diversity was the biggest reason our totals were well below our recent average; no one found any Northern Pintails, Green-winged Teal, Gadwalls or Canvasbacks this year. This was also only the second year in the last ten that we found neither a Winter Wren nor a Marsh Wren.



## KALISPELL CHRISTMAS (NEW YEAR'S) BIRD COUNT - 2006

By Dan Casey

TOTALS: **74** species (plus 2 count week); **12,694** individuals. We had 38 people in 13 parties in the field on an overcast but calm day, with temperatures in the upper teens and twenties, plus another 7 watching feeders. **Lesser Scaup**, **California Gull**, **Thayer's Gull**, **Western Screech Owl** and **American Three-toed Woodpecker** were all new species for this count, bringing our 8-yr total to 101 species. We tied or set new high counts for an additional 28 species, quite an accomplishment for even this "young" a count. These included all 3 species of chickadees, all three Accipiter species, and **Merlin**. We had a **Glaucous Gull** at the landfill for the second year in a row. Three **White-crowned Sparrows**, three **Western Meadowlarks**, and a count week **Snowy Owl** were also notable.



## EUREKA CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT - 2006

By Lewis Young

The 14<sup>th</sup> annual Eureka Christmas Bird Count was held December 16, 2006. Thirteen field observers and 21 feeder watchers counted 66 species of birds and 1660 individual birds. Over the 14 years of the Eureka Christmas Count, the number of species sighted in any one year has ranged from a low of 42 in 1993 to this year's high of 66. A total of 102 species have been sighted in the 14 years.

Five species new to the count this year were **horned grebe**, **American coot**, **blue grouse**, **varied thrush**, and **curve-billed thrasher**. A 6<sup>th</sup> new species, **tundra swan**, was seen during count week. The sighting of the curve-billed thrasher is especially noteworthy. Their normal range is in Arizona and Texas where they live in very dry, desert-like habitat. This sighting is only the second ever reported in Montana and both occurred in 2006.

## UPPER SWAN VALLEY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT - 2006

Information from Steve Lamar

The 13<sup>th</sup> annual Upper Swan Valley Christmas Bird Count was held on Wednesday, December 20, 2006. Thirteen observers enjoyed a beautiful, clear day of birding, with temperatures ranging from 6-32F. We sighted 35 species and a total of 864 individual birds, both numbers significantly higher than our 13-year averages. No new species were found. The one Great Blue Heron we recorded represents an unusual species for the Swan CBC.

For many years, the Upper Swan Valley CBC was organized and its results tallied by Rod Ash, with the cheerful and capable help of June Ash. We sorely missed Rod this year. Many thanks to June for her cheerful encouragement to the new organizers and for her participation in this year's Count.



Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better. - Albert Einstein

# COUNT RESULTS



## GLACIER NATIONAL PARK CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT - 2006

By Susan Sindt

Seventeen observers recorded 449 birds of 34 species on the annual Glacier National Park Christmas Bird Count (CBC) on December 17, 2006. Though not in high numbers, Horned Grebes with a total of 5 had their highest tally in over 20 years. Owls made a bigger showing than usual even with just two, a Northern Pygmy Owl and a Northern Hawk Owl. This first observation of a Hawk Owl in Glacier's CBC history occurred along the edge of the Robert Fire. Another "first" for count day was the sighting of 8 American Goldfinches. Crossbills and Evening Grosbeaks were "conspicuously absent." The 21 Bald Eagles, 16 adults and 5 subadults, is the highest on the CBC routes in over 20 years. Only two Dippers were observed on the count, the lowest since before 1987.

## NINEPIPE NWR CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT - 2006

By Jim Rogers

A cold but sunny day welcomed birders for the 29th Annual Ninepipe National Wildlife Refuge Audubon Christmas Count on Sunday, December 27, 2006. Twenty-five observers identified 66 species and counted 12,038 individual birds. A well-documented Bewick's wren appeared on the count for the 2nd time in 3 years; this year's observation was in the same creek drainage as the wren discovered in 2004 and both locations are less than 1/2 mile apart. Also unusual was a very handsome Harris' sparrow representing only the 2<sup>nd</sup> time this species has been recorded on this count. The 1,964 European starlings and the 480 Rock pigeons represent high counts for each species.



## *LOOKING BACK 30 YEARS*

By Linda Winnie

As you might expect, birds were the primary focus of the new Flathead Audubon Society when it formed in 1977. In the first newsletter, members were asked to help determine migratory species arrival dates in the Valley by keeping a checklist recording their bird sightings. "Please use 8 1/2" by 11" notebook or graph paper," the members were instructed, and "Try to keep all the days of the month on one side of the paper." "At month's end," the instructions continued, "mail your checklist to Wanda Jamieson, or turn it in at the next meeting." In addition to being the bird-report tabulator, Wanda was also the Secretary of the new Audubon chapter. The early FAS newsletter also had a special column, "Out and About," that reported recent bird sightings in the Valley. Below is how that column appeared in the first issue of the newsletter.



**OUT AND ABOUT:** The aerial survey of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the Flathead Valley (from Columbia Falls to Noxon) December 10<sup>th</sup> counted 2,422 Canada Geese and 34,240 ducks. Ninepipe NWR had 28,655 ducks of which 27,300 were Mallards. The January 5<sup>th</sup> census showed 1,740 Canada Geese and 36,424 ducks. Ninepipe had 25,430 ducks. Due to the mild winter weather, the duck and geese numbers are above normal. (Figures furnished by Gary Hagadorn, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.)

Dan Sullivan observed 10,000 Mallards on the Flathead River above Kerr Dam February 7<sup>th</sup>. One Adult Bald Eagle was harassing the Mallards but no capture was observed.

Walter Robbin of Creston has been feeding 90-100 pheasants. He reports eagles occasionally preying on them.

There is also an important predator-prey relationship between the Bald Eagles and the coots. (There have been 3 reports of this relationship. Wanda Jamieson).

Dan Sullivan reports 3 separate sightings of the American Kestrel February 7<sup>th</sup> at Kerr Dam. Ursula Whitney reports seeing a kestrel on a power line south of Ronan, December 3rd.

As Mae Sudan was driving north on Main Street in downtown Kalispell January 12<sup>th</sup>, a Pileated Woodpecker flew across the street in front of her!!!!

Betty Rose on the Flathead River near Kalispell saw 12 Mourning Doves Jan. 17<sup>th</sup>. She reports 2 Harris' Sparrows on Feb. 15<sup>th</sup>, also that a Killdeer has been wintering there.

*\*\*From The Accipiter Express, Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society, Volume 1, Number 1 (March 1977). \*\**

## Shirley Harrison Receives Flathead Basin Commission 2006 Stewardship Award



Shirley Harrison, member of the Flathead Audubon Board of Directors, was one of two Flathead area educators chosen by the Flathead Basin Commission (FBC) to receive its 2006 Stewardship Awards. The second recipient was Chris Ruffatto, science teacher at Whitefish High School.

The FBC Stewardship Award was created in the early 1990s to recognize area citizens, organizations and businesses who demonstrate an exceptional awareness of water quality issues and take extraordinary means to address them.

Shirley and Chris received the 2006 awards at the FBC's December meeting in Whitefish, in recognition of "their activities outside of the classroom to foster a high level of understanding among hundreds of their students of local water quality issues."

Shirley recently retired from her post as science instructor for Kalispell School District 5, where she used local water quality issues effectively and often as part of her classroom routine. Among other things, her students at the H. E. Robinson Vo-Ag Center worked with the Flathead Conservation District and other partner groups to carry out a major stream bank restoration project on the Stillwater River adjacent to the center, and also over the years conducted extensive water quality monitoring in that rapidly growing neighborhood. Shirley continues her water quality education efforts today as an associate supervisor of the Flathead Conservation District.

Chris was one of the primary architects of "Project Free Flow," an activity designed to get students out of the classroom and into a watershed setting to learn first hand about water quality issues. The project became the model for what evolved into a state-wide program that has involved thousands of students. Locally, Chris's students completed a comprehensive watershed survey of the Haskill Creek Watershed, a tributary of the Whitefish River, and have done water quality monitoring on Whitefish Lake, among many other water quality-related projects.

Both Shirley and Chris have been involved in Flathead Basin Commission volunteer monitor projects, and Chris has served as a volunteer trainer.

From FBC Press Release, December 2006.

*Editor's Note: Shirley Harrison has been investigating the effects of logging methods on water quality in the Flathead Valley and offers the following article in support of a local business using environmentally friendly practices.)*

### F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber Company Timber Lands Protect Watersheds in the Flathead Valley



Water can often be in the wrong place at the wrong time, but wherever it is, all life needs water to be clean and healthy. As we increase knowledge of the water cycle, we recognize that water, whether it runs off the land, percolates underground, or evaporates, is cleanest where the land is least disturbed.

The concept of watersheds, the land between divides that sheds water into a common water way, was recognized by John Wesley Powell as he explored Montana in the late 1800's. He knew that all vegetation, wildlife, and humans who live in a watershed share the same water and problems. Flathead Valley residents are sharing in some successes due to land management practices in our watersheds.

The Flathead River receives water from six major watersheds surrounding the Flathead Valley. Most of the land in these watersheds lies in Glacier National Park, the U.S. Forest Service, wilderness areas, and private lands.

F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber Company is the oldest family-owned lumber company in Montana. They own 36,500 acres of the 587,431 acres of private land in Flathead County. Stoltze manages their forests for productivity, but the way they do it results in diversity of habitat and protection of watersheds. "Our primary goal is to manage these lands to provide wood fiber for our sawmill at Half Moon." A company whose goal is to extract timber each year must be sustainable. Stoltze adheres to Stewardship Forestry in managing their timber lands.

Since 1960, F.H. Stoltze has been a member of the Certified Tree Farm which is defined as "a privately owned forest dedicated to producing renewable and sustainable crops of forest products while protecting the soil, water, range, aesthetic, recreation, wood, fish and wildlife resources. A Certified Tree Farm must maintain standards set by the American Forest Foundation and is decertified if it fails to continue to meet standards."

*F.H. Stoltze, continued...*

Stoltze has planted and cultivated over a million seedlings since 1988 and they manage their forests so that there are trees available to cut each year. They leave the larger healthy trees for seed generators. As they selectively remove timber for their mill, the surviving trees grow better in an opened canopy. They harvest for commercial thinning and individual tree selection using a "soft touch." This minimizes soil disruption and protective coverings of mulch and wildlife protection. A landscape of several layers of diverse ages slows runoff, promotes evaporation and soil penetration. The sum effect of these healthy forests protects water quality for downstream users.

The public is allowed to use most of Stoltze's land for recreation such as bicycle, motorcycle, and ORV use, horseback riding, fishing, hunting, berry picking, hiking, and of course, bird watching. Some roads are off limits to preserve the pristine watersheds that are critical for water quality for downstream communities. Stoltze actively pursues knapweed invasion spending \$21,292 in 2006. Spreading of weeds, erosion and forest destruction from inconsiderate users forces them to close more of their roads. Thus this company is very protective of the forests and the watersheds in their charge, while still managing to provide wood fiber for their sawmill.

F. H. Stoltze participates and provides educational events in the community about stewardship forestry. They established the 40 acre Trumbull Creek Educational Forest where the Family Forestry Expo is held each May. Over 1200 local fifth graders and 1500 adults gathered in 2006 to learn about stewardship forestry. Popular events include logging, forest tours and practices, back country camping, wildlife and birding workshops. This popular event is sponsored by several organizations (including Flathead Audubon), businesses, and individuals. Teachers, tourists, local Chambers of Commerce, and

Tree Farm program participants benefit from workshops and programs by Stoltze. Mr. Buentemeier, General Manager, was one of the first instructors for the Forest Stewardship and Best Management Practices programs. One Forest Stewardship Program is offered annually at Yellow Bay Biological Station for private landowners to learn how to best manage their own forests for health and sustainability.



Mr. Buentemeier and Stoltze take care of their 120 employees with full benefits and education. They provide annually over \$26 million to the Flathead Valley for payroll, taxes, private contracts, health care, supplies and

services, and log purchases. Employees are educated in stewardship forestry and safety. Loggers are encouraged to become Accredited Logging Professionals and attend yearly courses to update their skills.

This company is always looking forward to providing sawlogs for their sawmill. How they do this is what makes the difference. F. H. Stoltze Land and Lumber Company is a good neighbor and plans on supporting healthy forests and the local economy another 84 years using their successful philosophy. They are a private timber company that takes forest stewardship seriously. They contribute to the local economy by managing and paying for forests and at the same time protect 36,500 acres of land in watersheds, wildlife habitat, and water quality for all Flathead Valley residents.

Keep a green tree in your heart  
And perhaps a singing bird will come.  
~Chinese Proverb~



## BEAUTY OF BIRDS

If a bird sings in the forest, will you hear it? And will you recognize which bird it is?

Whether you are a seasoned birder or just starting your birding career, a great opportunity awaits you! Flathead Audubon is sponsoring a class to help you identify, appreciate, and learn more about birds of the Flathead Valley. Held on Wednesday evenings in April, this class is a terrific bargain - all the knowledge you can pack into your brain for only \$10!

In just a few short evenings, you can get your eyes and ears ready for the summer season ahead. Learn steps to identify birds, discover where you are likely to find different species, get insider tips on recent special bird sightings, and hear expert birders tell how they do it and even how they got started. Materials and supplies are provided, along with lots of inspiration. Instructor Ansley Ford is an elementary teacher by day, so you know that she will be gentle with beginners!

To find out more about this fun class, call Ansley at 857-6788. To sign up, go to the Flathead High School main office during business hours.



## Sign Up for 2007 Legislative Alerts

The 2007 Montana Legislative session has begun!!

Members of local Audubon Chapters can play an important part during the legislative session by participating in Montana Audubon's **Legislative Alert Network**.

When a key issue is at stake, Montana Audubon will contact members of the Network to explain the issue and why we need to take action on it, and then ask members to contact their legislators. Generally, the alerts will be sent by email, but you can also sign up to be contacted by phone if you wish.

Alerts will be sent out only a few times during the session, but they are a powerful way to lobby legislators on top-priority bills. They serve as an effective way for your voice to be heard on the conservation issues you care about. By signing up, you will be among the first to know what is going on in the legislature. You will also receive periodic progress reports during the session (no more than once a month).

You may sign up by contacting Molly Immen, this year's Montana Audubon Legislative Intern, at [mtmagpie@mtaudubon.org](mailto:mtmagpie@mtaudubon.org) or (406) 443-3949. Please provide Molly with your name, home address, phone, and email address, and indicate whether you prefer to be contacted by email or phone.

Those who were signed up for the 2005 alerts should sign up again this year.

### Montana Audubon 2007 Legislative Priorities

**Stream and River Setbacks** – Legislation for a streamside setback of 150 feet from streams, and 250 feet from rivers for any new structures.

**Protecting Public Health and Safety, Fish and Wildlife** – Legislation to reinstate provisions to protect public health and safety and fish and wildlife under the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). (These protections were removed by the 2001 Montana Legislature.)

**Allowing Conservation Easements on any and all School Trust Land** – Legislation that would allow conservation easements on all school trust land, regardless of the location (and manager) of the property. (The 2001 Legislature passed a bill that restricts where conservation easements can be placed on school trust lands.)



### 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.

The entire feather coat of a bird consists of thousands of feathers. It typically weighs two or three times more than the bird's skeleton.

Roughly 100,000 species of birds have lived on this earth in the last 60 million years. Only about 10,000 of those species are living today.

A group of Owls is called a parliament

Use the talents you have. The woods would be quiet if only the best song-birds chose to sing.

"A species must be saved in many places if it is to be saved at all."  
Aldo Leopold,  
A Sand Country Almanac.

When ice turns your sidewalk into a skating rink, try scattering birdseed instead of deicing salt. It's nontoxic to plants, and the birds will do the cleanup for you!

Like music and art, love of nature is a common language that can transcend political or social boundaries. -- Jimmy Carter

### PHACTS & PHILOSOPHIES

## Fencing Finally Finished!

A major teamwork effort has resulted in the first section of Owen Sowerwine Natural Area fence being completed. The fence is approximately 2,000 feet long and sports 2 pass-through gates, one near the beginning of the Greenridge Trail and one near the southwest corner at Howard Drive.

Smith Surveying delineated the property line with a survey; the Montana Conservation Corps, Fish, Wildlife & Parks and other volunteers (Bill Marcure and Tony Anderson) cut the brush in a 6-foot corridor along the fence line; Flathead Audubon's industrious crews (about 30 hard workers) moved the cut brush from the fence area and scattered it in the interior of OSNA (this, during the annual work day in September); and neighbors Don Howard and John Sturzen pushed, pulled, tugged, and winched large chunks of a huge cottonwood tree from the frozen Woodland Creek to higher ground, with the aid of Don's tractor.

The fencing contractor, Advanced Fence, worked before and after Christmas in subfreezing weather to complete the job. Sean Currier, owner of Advanced Fence, and his able employees, Jeremiah Gallagher and John Vojta did a very professional job. And Jean Crow, for the Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation, notified us promptly that the state will "sign off" (OK) the improvements. And to top it all off, the whole project came in under budget!

We will be installing signs along the fence line, which runs from the southwest corner of OSNA (at Howard Drive) east to the Stillwater River and north to the Greenridge Trail. Come out and see what a "village" effort has produced, and what Flathead Audubon has done to enhance DNRC trust lands!

From Brent Mitchell, OSNA Co-chair



Nate Kohler, Deer Lodge, MT  
petbirds@webmail.bmi.net

(PYGMY OWL, continued...)

Northern Pygmy-Owls begin breeding in April and during this time their call is a repetitive "toot"-pause-"toot." Listening for this call in the evening, night and early morning is a

good way to locate these small owls, and if one happens to locate near your bedroom window it will be hard to miss! Denver Holt of the Owl Institute reports that he's had more than a few calls from frustrated homeowners who would just like those pesky owls to go away so they can get some sleep! Most owls are monogamous, with many keeping the same partner until one dies. Not much is known about the sexual displays of owls but because they happen primarily at night, it is thought that vocalizations are probably more important than visual displays. Males advertise and females respond with various calls.

Northern Pygmy-Owls nest in old woodpecker holes where they lay three to five eggs which are incubated for approximately 25 days. During breeding and incubation the male delivers food to the nest, but as the young become larger and the food demands become greater, the female joins in the foraging. Fledging occurs in four to five weeks

but the young remain with their parents for another four to five weeks. Most North American owls raise only one brood per year. Energy demands made by the late summer molt make raising a second brood impractical since hunting for food for the female and the young would be very difficult for the males while they are replacing their wing and tail feathers.

Take time soon to go for an evening walk and listen for the plaintive call of a lonely male owl looking for a mate. I guarantee that the sound will be one you won't soon forget. Remember spring is just around the corner, and springtime in the Flathead Valley offers many fantastic birding opportunities. Get out there and enjoy!

If you would like to learn more about the Northern Pygmy or any of the other owls in our area, visit the website of the Owl Research Institute at: <http://www.owlinstitute.org/index.html>. The Institute offers many interesting tours and programs and founder and wildlife researcher Denver Holt has received worldwide recognition for his work.

By Jeannie Marcure



Nate Kohler, Deer Lodge, MT  
petbirds@webmail.bmi.net



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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 electronically, email your request to: [lindawin@centurytel.net](mailto:lindawin@centurytel.net). **Deadline for newsletter copy is the 18th of each month. Contact newsletter editor at 755-1406; email submissions to: [pileatedpost@flatheadaudubon.org](mailto:pileatedpost@flatheadaudubon.org)**

## FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY DIRECTORY

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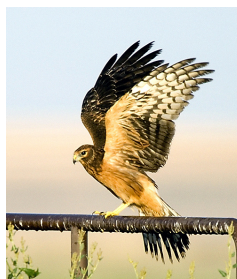
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