



Pileated Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

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NOVEMBER 2007

OWEN SOWERWINE WORK DAY A BIG SUCCESS!



West Leisure Island Crew Rides to Work

By Brent Mitchell
with
Photos by Linda Winnie
Co-Chairs of Owen Sowerwine Committee



East Leisure Island Crew Hikes In to Work

Isn't it rewarding when Audubon plans a **BIG** project and everything, I mean absolutely EVERYTHING, falls right into place to make it a fantastically successful and productive event?!! This year's OSNA Work Day was exactly such a project. We had the *Most* people help with the work: 39. We got the *Most* work done: all 3 trails (a total of 1.3 miles) opened up, AND the boundary line across Leisure Island (0.5 mile) cleared. Despite threatening weather in the morning, the day was quite pleasant, if not totally gorgeous, and the Fall colors were terrific! Two local businesses provided professional, friendly, efficient, safe (and very fast) employees to help cut the boundary line through the "jungle" on Leisure Island and help open the Greenridge Trail. Summit River Corporation's Jack Jay & Roger Goodwin, along with Confluence Timber Company's Bob Love were the sawyers on large parts of this project. Roger even brought along one of his hard working friends, Thane Marvin, who operated the Billy Goat Brush Cutter on the Mainland Trail.

The fun and cooperation on this year's project were **exceptional**. Montessori School (Terry Welder) provided the indoor meeting place. Boats were provided by Tony Anderson and Lewis Young, and Lewis doubled as a worker on one of the Leisure Island crews, while Tony ferried crew (continued on page 7)

BUY YOUR SUNFLOWER SEEDS AT THESE WESTERN BUILDING CENTER LOCATIONS

Kalispell: 1745 3rd Avenue East
Evergreen: 1019 East Idaho
Whitefish: 6130 Highway 93 South
Columbia Falls: 1550 9th Street West
Polson: 905 First St. East

For more information, contact Bob Lee at 270-0371.



NOVEMBER FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

Monday, November 12, 2007: Flathead Audubon General Meeting, 7 PM, The Summit, Conference Room 3. Dave Hadden presents "Values and Energy Exploitation of the Transboundary Flathead," see page 3.

Monday, November 5, 2007: Flathead Audubon Board of Directors Meeting, 6 PM at 295 3rd Ave EN, Kalispell (Jane Lopp & Associates Building) All are welcome.

BIRD OF THE MONTH

Article and Photos by Jeannie Marcure

NOMADS OF THE FOREST

One of the many things I love about bird watching is the continual opportunity to learn new and surprising things—even about some of the most regular visitors to my feeders. One of these opportunities (I call them AH-HAH MOMENTS!) occurred last May when I began to notice an unusual bird at my sunflower feeder. Small and almost dumpy looking, this bird was slightly larger than a sparrow, brownish in color with a very stripy chest and a slight yellow cast to its back. My identification process led me to consider the female house



finch and various members of the sparrow family but none seemed right and I continued to be puzzled until one day when a female Red Crossbill appeared next to this little mystery bird and began feeding it with the seeds from our sunflower feeder. It was only then that I realized that my little “mystery bird” was a newly-fledged Red Crossbill. What I had thought to be a lethargic or even a sick bird turned out to be one not yet quite comfortable with his wings, waiting patiently for Mom to appear with his next meal. Of course, then I realized that I had failed to notice the most significant identification feature of this little bird—the crossed tips of its mandibles. Also, because it was only mid-May, I hadn't even considered that I might be seeing an immature bird. Well, this whole experience certainly proved once again that I still have a lot to learn about the birds of our area, but I also came away with a lot of great new information about Red Crossbills which I've decided to share with you this month.

A member of the finch family, the Red Crossbill is slightly larger than the House Finch and adult males tend to be red or orange in color with black wings and tail, while females are yellowish with grayish olive wings and tail. At a distance, Crossbills can be differentiated from House Finches by their stockier shape and their larger heads. At



close range, the most distinguishing feature of the Red Crossbill is its crossed mandibles which allow it to pry the seeds from conifer cones. Since birds' biting muscles

are stronger than the muscles that open the bill, the tips of its slightly open bill are placed under a cone scale and when it bites down, the crossed tips push the scale up, exposing the seed inside. While Red Crossbills are mainly resident, the population may erupt south if its food source fails.

Because they feed primarily on seed cones, Red Crossbills live mainly in coniferous forests. According to Sibley, at least nine forms of the Red Crossbill occur in North America with the various forms differing from one another in their average bill size and

structure, body size and their flight and alarm calls. Generally referred to as call types, these different forms reflect the preference for cones of a particular type of conifer. In general, the larger and stouter bills types forage more efficiently on the larger and harder cones such as those of the pines, while the smaller-billed types feed most efficiently on smaller and softer cones such as those from spruce, firs and larch. The different forms rarely, if ever, interbreed. While ornithologists agree on the existence of these types, there has not yet been a decision as to whether the forms should be regarded as separate species.

Interestingly, because the Red Crossbill is so dependent on conifer seeds, it even feeds them to its young and consequently, it can breed any time of the year that it finds a large enough cone supply, even in winter. Nests are made of twigs and grasses and placed on tree branches. The 2 - 5 eggs are greenish-white or bluish-white with dark marks. Hatch occurs in 12 - 18 days and the young fledge 15- 20 days after that. Parents continue to feed the newly fledged babies regurgitated seeds - either from cones or in the case of the ones I observed, from my sunflower seed feeder—for several weeks.

Because of their sporadic breeding pattern, the Red Crossbill's molts and plumages vary more than those of any other North American songbird. Juveniles hatched during the summer molt between late summer and late fall, as do the adults. Most of the juveniles hatched earlier (late winter to early spring) begin to molt approximately 110 days after hatching and then again during the main molt period.

(Red Crossbills, continued on page 3...)



November 2007 Program



VALUES AND ENERGY EXPLOITATION OF THE TRANSBOUNDARY FLATHEAD

Dave Hadden will present a PowerPoint show on the values of the Trans-boundary Flathead River and the threats to those values, from British Columbia policies that are encour-aging energy exploitation of the Flathead. Dave works for Headwaters Montana, a new, Flathead-based conservation group. He also chairs the Flathead Coalition, which has worked for over 30 years on energy development issues in the Canadian Flathead.

The Flathead River is an international watershed. The headwaters of the Wild and Scenic North Fork of the Flathead begin in British Columbia. As the river flows south, it becomes the western bound-ary of Glacier National Park, before joining the Middle Fork and South Fork on their journey to Flathead Lake. Scientists are now racing against time to collect baseline data that will determine how proposed industrial activity will impact the rich and biologically diverse Transboundary wilderness environment.

There are two active proposals for exploitation of Transboundary mineral resources. One pro-posal is the Cline open-pit coal mine on Foisey Creek, a tributary of the Flathead River. The mine would be only 25 miles upstream from Glacier National Park. The top of one of the Canadian Rockies would be removed. The other proposal is British Petroleum's coal bed methane drilling program, which would blan-ket 500 square kilometers of the upper Flathead watershed.

Learn about Transboundary issues, as well as about birds currently being sighted around the Flathead. Please join us at 7 p.m. on Monday, November 12, in the Community Room of The Summit, 205 Sunnyview Lane, Kalispell.

Win A Goldfinch for Christmas!

A beautiful framed photograph of a bright and colorful American Goldfinch is the prize in Flat-head Audubon's Christmas Raffle this year. Raffle tickets are \$1 each, or 6 tickets for \$5. The winning ticket will be drawn at the FAS December 10th meet-ing. You need not be present to win.

The photograph comes from local nature photographer (and FAS member) Mike O'Dale. Mike has generously donated this large-scale version of his photo (7 1/2" x 12"), matted in a wooden frame (13 1/2" x 19"), for this event.

Proceeds from the Raffle help fund local Flathead Audubon projects, such as the FAS Bird Education Program, nature education grants and scholarships for local students, and the leasing and managing of the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area.

You may purchase Christmas Raffle tickets at the November and December Flathead Audubon

meetings, or by mail. For mail purchase, send your name, phone number and the number of tickets you want, along with your check for the cost of the tickets, to Jill Fanning, FAS Christmas Raffle, 380 Tally Lake Road, Whitefish, MT 59937. Jill will fill out your raffle tick-ets for you and deposit them in the ticket jar in time for the December drawing.

Many thanks to Mike O'Dale for donating this beautiful raffle prize, and to Mike and his wife Jackie for their ongoing support of Flathead Audubon.



Red Crossbills, continued...

Watch for these interesting and beautiful birds any time you're in a conifer-ous forest. They can typically be spotted in small groups, flying from tree to tree, feeding on the cones. At our house, they've also often been frequent visitors to our black oil sunflower seed feeders and also to the water sources which we offer all year long. As I mentioned earlier, they brought their young to our feeder starting in May and I continued to see newly fledged Crossbills until mid August. Today, as I am finishing this article, a flock of about twenty Red Crossbills have arrived at our bird bath to enjoy the water and I'm pleased to see that this flock of twenty or so includes seven or eight juveniles. I hope that despite the drought of the summer, our Larch and Douglas Firs have produced enough cones to keep this active group around for the winter. Their arrival always brightens my day!



BOARD BRAINS
AT WORK



NEWS AND VIEWS FROM
INDIVIDUAL BOARD MEMBERS

It's for the Birds! FAS Sunflower Seed Sale

"Now is the time for all good members to come to the aid of their chapter"

Flathead Audubon Society's most important fundraiser has always been its annual bird seed sale. So, it is time to think about hanging up your bird feeders and filling them with sunflower seeds and various other seeds of choice.

This year, due to the closing of our long-time supplier, The Montana Sunflower Co., FAS has had the good fortune to partner with Western Building Centers (WBC), who will be supplying our members and friends with black oil sunflower seeds.

Doug Shanks, the general manager of WBC, has generously agreed to donate a portion of the profit from every bag (both 25 and 50 pound bags) of sunflower seed purchased during the months of October, November and December 2007, to FAS.

For those of you who are not familiar with WBC, it has been a locally-owned and operated business in the Flathead Valley since 1946. They employ 235 people and have nine retail locations with four stores (Kalispell, Whitefish, Columbia Falls, and Evergreen) in the Flathead Valley. They also have stores in Polson, Eureka, Ronan, Plains and Libby.

There are numerous reasons to support the FAS annual seed sale, aside from the most obvious - the enjoyment of feeding and watching birds from the comfort of your home. Your purchase helps fund Flathead Audubon's projects and educational outreach.

So the next time you are planning on purchasing bird seed, please go to the nearest WBC location and tell them FAS sent you!



MARY NELESEN

New FAS Board Member



Editor's Note: From a quick survey of Audubon chapters who are selling sunflower seed around the state, we find that the price being charged by WBC locally is lower than anywhere else, and is lower than FAS's price for the last 2 years, so treat your birds to an extra bag this year!



Education Committee Revitalizing Meetings

Change is in the wind for Flathead Audubon's Education Committee, with Audubon's contracting with Nancy Zapotocki as Education Coordinator. Nancy has been very active in the schools and local community with conservation education programs and activities! The existing Committee and Nancy have been exploring ways to further their work together to support the conservation education work she is doing, as the contract is currently part-time with Audubon.

We are excited to announce that upcoming meetings will include a potluck dinner and a guest speaker. Topics will be focused on Conservation Education, as well as training opportunities for members to get comfortable taking our materials out to schools and community organizations. We have set meeting times for every other month, to be held on

the second Wednesday of each month at 5:30 pm. (Call 387-4150 or email Sonja Hartmann for meeting locations.) Our first meeting will be Wednesday, January 9th, where Elli Jones will share her experience banding hummingbirds, and we will dive into FAS's hummingbird trunk to learn a few of the fun activities available.

We hope that these changes will facilitate people being able to get these dates on their calendars earlier. If you would like to learn more about birds, conservation and how to share your interest in birds with others, we would love to have you on our committee! You don't have to be a bird expert, or have teaching experience to get involved. For more information, e-mail Sonja Hartmann, Co-chair of the Education Committee, at prather@digisys.net.



Surveys Reveal a Hidden Jewel in Our Backyard

By Dan Casey



Dave Morey, USFWS

The Jewel Basin Hiking Area sits on the rim of the Flathead Valley northeast of Bigfork, an extremely popular and accessible network of trails, peaks and lakes on Flathead National Forest. For years, Susannah and I have taken day hikes to Mt. Aeneas, the highest peak in the area, with our girls and visitors. And every time we did so in the fall, we saw just enough hawks and eagles that I suspected it might be worth checking as a monitoring site. Our (busy) lives being what they are, it only took a couple decades to get around to trying to confirm this suspicion. But based on two visits this fall, "the Jewel" just might be one of the best hawk migration sites in the Northern Rockies, particularly for accipiters (Sharp-shinned Hawks, Cooper's Hawks, and Northern Goshawks).

With the encouragement of Steve Hoffman, the Executive Director of Montana Audubon and a long-time hawk-counting aficionado, we selected a day with an approaching northern cold front and WSW winds (predicted highs in the 70's didn't hurt, either.) Steve had joined us on a scouting trip in August, when we selected a spot on the ridge that looked promising, but saw just 3 passing birds (a Cooper's Hawk, a Red-tailed Hawk, and a Turkey Vulture). On our big day, we arrived at the parking lot at 9:45, and after stopping for an hour at a midway hilltop to check the skies for passing birds (30 in the first hour we were there), we moved to our preselected spot on the ridge by 1:00 pm. In the next 2.5 hours, we watched as 124 mixed raptors passed. We had 112 birds between 1:00 pm and 3:00, a remarkable rate of 56 birds/hr! (Usually, a rate of 10 birds per hour is used as a benchmark for sites worth monitoring). Our vantage point was on the ridge below Mt. Aeneas, about ¼ mile north of the microwave building, overlooking Picnic Lakes.

Our totals for the day were 168 passing birds of 7 species: Sharp-shinned Hawk (104); Cooper's Hawk (28); Red-tailed Hawk (14); Golden Eagle (8);

American Kestrel (4); Northern Goshawk (3); Osprey (1); and 6 unidentified. The best part of our vantage point on the ridge was that 90% of the birds going by came within 50 meters or less, some less than 10 meters away, from just below to just above eye level. This incredible day convinced us that the site clearly deserves more coverage during this and future fall seasons.

Five other Audubon members joined us for our second visit, October 9th. On this day the winds were from a less favorable direction (ESE), but we still saw 43 raptors of 8 species in 4 ½ hours (11:30 am – 4:00 pm), with Sharp-shinned Hawks (20) again leading the pack. Other species sighted included 8 Red-tailed Hawks, 4 Golden Eagles, 4 American Kestrels, 3 Cooper's Hawks, 1 Rough-legged Hawk, 1 Northern Harrier, and 2 (local) Bald Eagles. Again, most of the birds gave us breathtakingly close eye-level views.

So, that makes more than 200 hawks, eagles and falcons of 10 species in just over 8 hours of surveys. These numbers mean the site probably will have real value for tracking trends in raptor populations, particularly the forest-dwelling accipiters which breed in Canada. This, in addition to the pleasure of sitting on a ridge at 7100 ft, looking out over the valley to the west, and east toward the snow-covered Great Northern Mountain and the peaks of Glacier National Park. Throw in sunshine, singing Townsend's Solitaires, migrating bluebirds and butterflies, and a flock of Gray-crowned Rosy-finches for good measure. Sound appealing? Unfortunately, the migration period has now ended. But next year we will be working with Montana Audubon to find a way to monitor this "station" for the season (roughly Sept. 1st through Oct. 20th), including recruiting volunteers from our ranks. The ridge is about a 1.5 hr hike from the parking lot, with a gain of about 1340 feet over 2+ miles. But clearly worth the effort on a beautiful fall day!



Dave Morey, USFWS



Science Tidbit

When the population of any species suddenly drops, there is reason for concern. The October *Scientific American* article "Conservation for the People" proposes a paradigm shift in our conservation efforts from "conserve because it is the right thing to do" to "conserve because the rest of the natural world is vital to human health." As one example, in India there are three species of vulture whose populations have dropped from 40 million in early 1990s to the point of being placed on the critically endangered list in 2004. The vultures are being killed by an anti-inflammatory medication given to cattle to reduce pain. The medication is harmless to humans and cattle but fatal to vultures. With the loss of the vultures, the feral dog population has exploded and with it the incidence of rabies in India. Our health depends on vultures.

From Bruce Tannehill



Annual Treasurer's Report

From FAS Treasurer Bruce Tannehill



FINANCIAL REPORT 7/1/06 - 6/30/07		
INCOME		
NATIONAL AND LOCAL DUES		\$4,327
RAFFLE		\$171
SEED AND CALENDAR SALES (Net)		\$1,743
RECYCLE		\$158
DONATIONS TO EDUCATION PROGRAM (SUSTAINABILITY FUND)		\$5,500
OTHER DONATIONS		\$1,918
TOTAL INCOME		\$13,817
EXPENSES		
GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS		\$700
MONTANA AUDUBON		\$1,000
EDUCATION (SALARY AND MATERIALS)		\$6,018
CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT (NET)		\$95
PERMITS AND OTHER FEES		\$245
OWEN SOWERWINE NA EXPENSES (FENCE AND LICENSE)		\$4,311
ROOM RENT		\$435
SPEAKER		\$117
WEB PAGE		\$1,100
TRAVEL		\$92
OFFICE - OTHER		\$20
NEWSLETTER		\$3,435
TOTAL EXPENSES		\$17,568
Assets	7/1/2006	7/1/2007
GLACIER BANK	\$5,603	\$4,077
WHITEFISH CREDIT UNION	\$14,762	\$15,486
MUTUAL FUNDS	\$49,809	\$60,568
TOTAL OF ALL ASSETS	\$70,175	\$80,131



COMMENTS ON FINANCIAL REPORT

- ◆ Notice that 80% of the dues FAS receives is used for the publication and mailing of the newsletter. It is clear that FAS would not be able to support important causes without donations.
- ◆ The expenses outpaced the income last fiscal year by about \$3700 because of one-time expenses for the fencing at the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area. The money for the fencing came from a grant from Montana Audubon in a previous year.
- ◆ A major change in FAS finances is the expense of supporting an Education Coordinator. This support comes primarily from a grant of \$5000 from the Sustainability Fund and a matching \$5000 from FAS. This important cause will be a significant financial challenge for FAS in the next year.



The Work was Hard, But Rewarding

(OSNA Work Day, continued...)

members back & forth to the mainland. One of our new volunteers learned about the work day honoring Owen Sowerwine and the volunteer efforts in the community, through the newspaper. John knew Owen Sowerwine personally and had spent several years with the Sowerwine family. And before the work day had begun, neighbor Don Howard helped by clearing large cottonwood limbs



Boat Riders Enjoyed the Fall Colors

from the fence along the South boundary. Other neighbors, Darlene & George Johnson, helped by allowing access to one of our Leisure Island crews. Of course, we had lots of our many-years-running star performers show up for the work: Ferne & Marty Cohen, Bob Lee, Linda & John Winnie, Judy Spence, Linda Young, Bruce & Gail Tannehill, Mary & Gary Sloan, Lucinda Baker, Pat McClelland, and many, many more.

Jane Lopp & Associates, along with Bob Lopp, have included Flathead Audubon in Prudential's Global Volunteer Work Day application for a \$1000 grant. Aside from providing a good time, Audubon's volunteer efforts may result in a much-needed boost in our treasury and more funds available for improvements to the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area.

Flathead Audubon Volunteers, you've done a big service for the community...and you did it in just over two hours. WOW!



DO YOU SEE BIRDS IN LIVING COLOR?



If you are still seeing birds in black and buff, you must not be receiving your *Pileated Post* by email! With all of the beautiful color in the natural world, you owe it to yourself to enjoy the full color of the wonderful bird photos in every issue of *The PP*. Nearly all photos are taken by our own members of Flathead Audubon. It's also a great way to learn to recognize and identify birds at your feeder.

Many members have requested the newsletter by email because it produces less clutter around

the house and less volume in the recycling bin, but e-delivery also dramatically reduces Flathead Audubon's costs to produce the newsletter. Emailing costs us \$0, but our costs for printing and postal rates have increased almost 30% this year, requiring us to use more of your dues to send paper newsletters to fewer members. We can stretch your dues further when you simply send a short email to lindawin@centurytel.net saying, "Please send my *Pileated Post* to this mailbox." You'll see a rainbow of rewards within a month!

Glass Recycling is Here!

New World Recycling is now offering limited recycling of glass in both Whitefish and Kalispell. The first and third Sunday of each month, glass for recycling can brought to two locations:

Whitefish Mall parking lot (near McDonalds), from 12 to 1 p.m.

Kalispell Center Mall parking lot (south end), from 2 to 3 p.m.

The cost is \$10 per 32 gallons (or less) of glass. Just bring your glass, and put it in one (or more) of the 32 gallon garbage cans provided at each site. The glass collected at these sites is transported back to the New World Recycling facility, where it is pulverized and offered to the public for a small fee. "For \$20 you can take as much as you want," says Corry Cullen, owner and manager of New World Recycling. "If you only need a couple of buckets, you can have it for free." So far, the pulverized glass has been used for paving roads, driveways, and walking paths, as well as garden decoration. "The pulverizing produces smooth, round edges," Corry reports. He hopes to eventually use the pulverized glass to make landscaping blocks to be sold locally at a modest price.

Corry has been working to bring glass recycling to the Flathead for roughly 5 years. By 2004, his New World Recycling company was offering a curb-side recycling service, including glass recycling, to the Whitefish area. He was the recipient of FAS's Conservation Achievement Recognition in February, 2004, for that initial effort. Corry plans to add more hours to the Whitefish and Kalispell mall recycling collection program as participation in the program grows. For more information, you may call New World Recycling at 257-7855.

From Linda Winnie





NOVEMBER 2007



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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. **Deadline for newsletter copy is the 18th of each month. Contact newsletter editor at 755-1406; email submissions to: piledatedpost@flatheadaudubon.org**

FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY DIRECTORY

Website: www.flatheadaudubon.org

FlockMaster - John Kyle: jkyle@fastmail.us

OFFICERS

President	Mike Fanning	(shrldu@centurytel.net)	862-8070
Vice-President	Bob Lee	(rml3@centurytel.net)	257-0363
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Education Coordinator	Nancy Zapotocki	(naz@centurytel.net)	756-9363

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MONTANA AUDUBON

P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624
443-3949
www.mtaudubon.org

Executive Director: Steve Hoffman
shoffman@mtaudubon.org

Board President: Larry McEvoy
mcschmid@mcn.net

FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY

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