



the Flathead Post

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Foys to Blacktail Trails Recognized for Conservation Achievement



It is an unfortunate fact of life in the Flathead that land that was traditionally open is being closed to public use. In 2001, a group of individuals concerned about access to the forested lands connecting the Foys Lake area to Blacktail

Mountain organized to form Foys to Blacktail Trails (FtBT) under the umbrella of the Flathead Land Trust. In January 2004, FtBT became a Montana nonprofit corporation with 501(c)(3) status. In recognition of FtBT's vision and achievements, Flathead Audubon is proud to present the first Conservation Achievement Recognition for 2009 to FtBT at our January meeting.

Most of the trails and lands between Herron Park and Blacktail Mountain are open to hikers, horseback riders, birders, mountain bikers, skiers and dog walkers, but permanent public access is not guaranteed. As the valley grows, recreational use of forested lands just minutes from our city limits will become even more precious than it is today. The mission of FtBT is "To secure historic access to trails and lands connecting the Foys Lake area to the forested lands at Blacktail Mountain, to provide for the long-term stewardship of this corridor, and to accomplish this mission through voluntary and cooperative means."

FtBT has made significant progress towards its goal of preserving public access to the Foys to Blacktail area. In 2006 John and Myron Chase generously donated a trail easement on a 160-acre ridgeline property on which a 1.6 mile trail has been built. Talks

have been initiated with Stoltz and Plum Creek about securing permanent, flexible easements. This summer, a half-mile Overlook Trail was constructed to the top of the ridge overlooking Herron Park and Foys Lake. In addition to the formal trails, there are miles of old logging roads that meander through the area.

The priority goal for FtBT in 2009 is to purchase the 320 acres of land immediately to the west of Herron Park. Originally owned by the Louisiana Land Co, the 320-acre parcel was purchased in September 2007 by the nonprofit Conservation Fund with the goal of holding the land for two years until FtBT could arrange its purchase. FtBT hopes to raise \$2.25 million to buy the land back in September of 2009.

Foys to Blacktail Trails needs members and volunteers to help with fundraising, trail maintenance, publicity, litter/weed control, and board membership. Their contact information is: FtBT, PO Box 81, Kalispell, MT 59903, or www.foystoblacktailtrails.org. The best way to get acquainted with their project is to drive to Herron Park and hike across the meadows to the trails that will take you into the Foys to Blacktail Trails area. Once you visit the area, it will be clear why FtBT's effort to secure access to this land for permanent public enjoyment merits Flathead Audubon's Conservation Achievement Recognition.

By Richard Kuhl



JANUARY FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

Monday, January 12, 2009: General Membership Meeting. 7 PM, The Summit, Conference Room 3. Program Details on page 3.

Monday, January 5, 2009: Flathead Audubon Board of Directors Meeting. 6 PM at 295 Third Ave. E.N. All are welcome.

Saturday, January 31, 2009: Winter Trails Day. See page 3 for details and schedule!

BIRD OF THE MONTH

By Mary Nelesen

Species at Risk: Clark's Nutcracker

The Clark's nutcracker, named after the famed Lewis and Clark explorer, Captain William Clark, was mistaken for a woodpecker when first sighted by The Corps of Discovery while they camped with the Shoshone Indians near Idaho's Lemhi River, on August 22, 1805. This jay-sized gray bird with glossy black wings with a large white patch and a black tail with white edges is often heard before it is seen. Its throaty squawk announces its presence while perched on treetops.

Clark's nutcrackers inhabit the high montane regions of the western United States and Canada, preferring coniferous forest dominated by one or more species of large-seeded pines. Its year-round diet consists primarily of fresh and stored pine seeds.

This past summer I participated in a High Country Citizen Science project in Glacier National Park that monitored mountain goats, pikas and Clark's nutcrackers. The project is headed by Jami Belt, a wildlife biologist, who works in the Crown of the Continent Research Learning Center in West Glacier.

The Clark's nutcracker is of particular concern because of its dependence on the high-energy seeds of the Whitebark pine. At one time, Whitebark pine stands covered 15-20% of Glacier National Park. Today, over 50% of the trees are dead or dying due to white pine blister rust.

A hoarder of Whitebark pine seeds, the nutcracker can locate as many as 2,000 different caches up to eight months after it buried them. Luckily, it misses some, which germinate and grow.

The nutcrackers – members of the genus *Nucifraga* – have a sublingual pouch, an opening in the floor of the bird's mouth beneath its tongue. This pouch can hold about 100 Whitebark pine seeds. According to Ronald M. Lanner, who taught in the Department of Forest Resource at Utah State University,



the nutcracker brings up the pouched seeds in its bill, one by one, and thrusts them into the soil, about an inch below the surface. Seeds may be cached within a hundred yards of the tree they came from or up to 20 miles away. Seeds are often buried in open areas, such as treeless slopes and ridges, and in recently burned-over forests. Many caches are made where wind keeps the snow swept clear and winter access is assured, but nutcrackers will retrieve seeds from beneath the snow if they must.

So how does the Clark's nutcracker find its numerous caches? Experiments have shown that nutcrackers find their caches by relying on memory – they actually *remember* where most seeds are buried, by angles between their caches and certain nearby landmarks, like boulders, trees, stumps, and logs. In other words, they triangulate.

Professor Lanner estimated that 48,000 Whitebark pine seeds would be needed by a nutcracker wintering in the high country of Wyoming or Montana, and that each bird would have to memorize the whereabouts of about 12,000 separate caches. At least two angles would have to be remembered to locate each cache. A bird raising a brood would also have to unearth many additional seeds to feed its young, because they are fed a diet of almost nothing but pine seeds, for many weeks after fledging.

Can the Clark's nutcracker survive without the Whitebark pine? The bird does eat other wingless seeds, such as limber pine seed, but this food source does not contain the high-fat content of the Whitebark pine, the nutcracker's primary food source. In addition, the limber pine is also susceptible to blister rust.

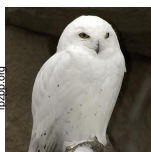
What does the future hold in store for Captain Clark's namesake? There is no easy answer...much research remains to be done. I do know, however, that I take great joy whenever I catch a glimpse of this *smart* bird as I wander through Glacier National Park.

Please save your 2008 calendars that have bird pictures on them. Bring them to the January FAS General Meeting and give them to Nancy Zapotocki. The Education Committee will happily use them for presentations in local school classrooms.



Many thanks go to the participants in our Christmas raffle. In particular, we wish to thank Josh Covill for the outstanding bird drawings, and Brent and Kay Mitchell for the beautiful wreath and walking stick. The drawings were won by our conservation chair, Lewis Young. Ferne and Marty Cohen won the walking stick. The wreath was won by Patricia Peebles. The proceeds from the raffle were about \$300 which FAS really needs this year. Thanks to everyone who participated.

From FAS President Mike Fanning



January 2009 Program
SNOWY OWLS – WHOO ARE THEY?

It's "Story Time!" It's winter in Montana, and you know what that means...another chance to see Snowy Owls around the Flathead Valley! If you are intrigued by these beautiful, snowy white birds of the north, then you are in for a treat!



SNOWY OWLS – WHOO ARE THEY? is a wonderful book published in 2007. Authors Ansley Watson Ford and Denver W. Holt, who teamed up to translate field research and experience into literature, will present a program about Snowy Owls at Flathead Audubon's January membership meeting. We will learn about Denver's Arctic research, hear how the book was created and see beautiful owl paintings on the big screen.

Most of us still recall the exciting winter of 2005-2006, when *Bubo scandiacus*, or Snowy Owl, showed up in the farmlands of the Mission and Flathead valleys. Ansley and Denver will talk about conditions in the usual winter range of the Snowy Owls that may have led them to migrate this far south that year. They will describe the habitat and life cycle of Snowy Owls and will also discuss the relationship between the Inupiat people of the Arctic tundra and this large, white bird of prey they call Ukpik. Denver has just completed his 17th season researching Snowy Owls in Barrow, Alaska.

SNOWY OWLS, written for ages 8 and up, was published by Mountain Press Publishing Company in 2008. The end of the book includes photographs of Snowy Owls and their food source, as well as photos of the authors. Also included are online sources for activities, instructions for three games, web site and book resources, a glossary and an index.

Ansley is on Flathead Audubon Society's Board of Directors and serves as Education Committee Chair. She is a science and history teacher at Somers Middle School and teaches the "Beauty of Birds" course at Flathead High School. In 2007 Ansley received the Montana Environmental Educator of the Year award. **SNOWY OWLS** is her first book. Ansley lives in Somers with her husband Rob, who is also a teacher. She grew up in Alaska, which sparked her interest in animals of the north.

Denver is founder and President of the Owl Research Institute and the Ninepipes Center for Wildlife Research and Education Center. The ORI, now 20 years old, is nationally and internationally recognized in the field of owl research, education and conservation. ORI documentaries on Snowy Owls have been televised in Canada, Japan and Norway. Snowy Owl research has also earned Denver a spot on the cover of **NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC**. The Montana Chapter of the Wildlife Society named Denver the Montana Wildlife Biologist of the Year in 2000. **SNOWY OWLS: WHOO ARE THEY?** is one of Denver's numerous publications.

So sit back, relax and enjoy "Story Time" with Ansley and Denver at 7 PM on Monday, January 12, 2009, in the Community Room of The Summit, 205 Sunnyview Lane, Kalispell. (You may even want to reread "Snowy Owl, Arctic Owl" by Marcy Mahr in the March 2008 PILEATED POST.)

Saturday, January 31, 2009: Winter Trails Day. A family-oriented morning to be spent snowshoeing, looking for interesting tracks in the snow and watching for feathered ones that inhabit a winter landscape. This walk will be short and snowshoes will be provided. Meet at the Upper Blacktail trailhead parking area at 10 AM. This field trip is cosponsored by Swan Lake Ranger District, Flathead National Forest and Flathead Audubon. To sign up for the trip and reserve your snowshoes, call the Swan Lake Ranger District at 837-7500.

SCIENCE TIDBIT from Bruce Tannehill

GOOGLE EARTH is a free and exciting program for anyone interested in travel, history, geography or the stars. You first must download the program from Google and install it. When you open the program, you find that you have a globe. The images that you get are composites of aerial photos. The following is a greatly abbreviated list of the program's abilities.



- ◆ You can zoom in on any point down to the resolution of the photos. For my own house, I can see the truck parked in front. These images are easily emailed.
- ◆ Placing the cursor over the image gives you the elevation, latitude and longitude of that location. I have used this information, a GPS and printouts to navigate in road sign deficient countries like Costa Rica.
- ◆ Move to any point on the globe simply by writing the name or latitude and longitude in a blank. I recently read a book on The Reindeer People in Siberia and wanted to find the spot the people were camping. A single local name allowed me to find it. Looking at the topography gave me a much clearer picture of the lives of these people.
- ◆ Best of all, perhaps, you can tilt the image by holding the shift key while using the mouse wheel. This allows you to fly through a three dimensional image of the area.

If Google Earth will just increase the resolution, maybe we can look for those life birds without having to leave our home!



BOARD MEMBER MUSINGS

From Bill Schustrom, Field Trip Chairman, Board Member



I have to admit, when I was asked to serve as a director of the Flathead Audubon, I had no idea I would be asked to write a FULL-paged article for the January newsletter! I had several questions: What should I write about, how many words would I need to fill a whole page, and finally, what could I write about that might be of interest, and maybe meaningful to all of YOU? I like birds and have several bird feeders in front of my kitchen window, and even supply them with sunflower seeds I buy at Western Builders and have bought there for many years, not knowing I was contributing to this great organization.

WOW – what an auspicious first paragraph! I am a retired science teacher who spent thirty-some years trying to inspire biology students to believe the natural world we live in is truly important to each of them. In trying to connect these young people with the concept of wilderness and its importance, I, with the help of a very dedicated and focused group of English, math, art, and science teachers developed a program that attempted to take a twofold look at the management of federal lands. We focused on the Forest Service and their management mandates of multiple use, and the National Park's mandate to preserve and protect. We looked at the timber, wildlife, water, recreation, and wilderness concerns of the Forest Service. We also looked at the way the National Parks (especially our Glacier National Park) managed their lands as preserve and protect areas!

Through the whole process, we introduced kids to the world of plants, animals, BIRDS, and to the people who have dedicated their lives to making sure we understand how all of these creatures are indicators of the overall health of the world in which we live, and how we are all connected. I would like to think all of our work made a difference.

In addition to the many indicator species we

had our students look at, we focused on two birds: #1, the Clark's nutcracker and its effect on the white-bark pine, and #2, the Whitetailed Ptarmigan, which has been impacted by global climate change.

The Clark's nutcracker not only affects the trees and their dispersal of critical seeds for the continued success of the tree species itself, but also the ability of the grizzly bear to access a major source of protein for its existence. It was interesting to see how quickly students picked up on the interdependence of the trees, birds, and bears upon each other, and with much discussion, how we are all part of an ever-changing world.

When my family and I began to explore the Logan Pass area, we (my wife, children, and I) were always very excited to observe many families of the Whitetailed Ptarmigan scampering around the visitor center and out into the Hanging Gardens. It was a very good thing indicating a very healthy environment for these birds. Sadly, this past summer, I spotted on my frequent trips to the Hidden Lake Overlook, only two nesting pair of these bird families. Thirty years ago, it was unheard of not to see fifteen to twenty nesting pair. Where have all of these birds gone? We know that the ptarmigan change color in the winter to a snowy white color, and this is very good protective coloration against predators. With spring coming so much earlier, these birds can't change fast enough to elude predators; the same thing happens in the fall, as that season is lasting longer, too. Predators are doing very well today in the ptarmigan range, and reducing this intriguing species in front of our eyes.

I hope my students of years past at least had a glimpse of what is happening to our world and, as they grow into positions of leadership, will consider what is so obviously happening to our world and will become advocates to preserve this finite planet.

Your Suggestions Are Welcome!

As the new chairperson for Field Trips, I have had the opportunity to review offerings of the past few years. I must say I am impressed with trips available to members and others. Many of you who have led trips in the past will be hearing from me and being asked again to lead a trip during the 2009 season. I also am asking for help in suggesting possible new trips. My phone number and e-mail are in the Post. I am looking forward to hearing from YOU.

Bill Schustrom, Field Trips Chairman



There's A New Kid in Town!



Curbside recycling! Weekly! No need to save up your recyclables until Audubon meeting day! No sorting required! Inspired by their 4-year-old son's insistence and run by Dan and Sarah Mullis of Kalispell, **The Green Machines** is now in the business of collecting recycling for residences and businesses. Gosh, they even provide the collection bin for each address. Call office manager Paula at 755-8112 to find out more. Their flyers will be available at the back table at the next Audubon meeting. Support a local business!

AUDUBON AT THE 2009 MONTANA LEGISLATURE

Your Help is Needed!

Montana Audubon has made the following list of bills a priority for the 2009 Montana Legislature:



Montana River Legacy Act ~ As Montana continues to grow, it makes sense to protect its clean water and rivers. Legislation for a "River Legacy Act" will be introduced. This bill will require new homes and commercial buildings to be set back at least 250 feet from the ordinary high water mark on up to 12 legacy rivers. Additionally, the legislation will outline a process that local governments can use—at the local government level—to protect other rivers and/or streams.

Wind Farms and Wildlife ~ Legislation will be introduced to certify new wind projects that have implemented measures to minimize impacts to wildlife, critical wildlife habitat, and other areas of special concern. Wind farms can "opt in" or "opt out" of this certification program, but incentives will be established to encourage wind companies to be "good neighbors" to Montana's wildlife.

Protecting Prairie Dogs ~ Prairie dogs play an important role in the prairie ecosystem, with bird species like Mountain Plover and Burrowing Owl highly dependent on 'dog' towns. In Montana, prairie dogs are currently regulated by the Department of Agriculture as rodent "pests." In order to allow Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks to manage these declining animals, legislation needs to be passed by the Montana Legislature.

If you are interested in helping with our legislative work, an important role that local Audubon members play during the legislature is to participate in statewide legislative alerts. When crucial issues are at stake, Montana Audubon will contact interested members by phone or email, explain the issue and why we need action taken on it, and then ask members to contact their legislators. Alerts will be sent out only a handful of times during the session, but they provide a powerful way to lobby legislators on crucial bills and issues.

To sign up for alerts, you can sign up at your local chapter meeting, email lobbyist Janet Ellis (jellis@mtaudubon.org), sign up on our website (www.mtaudubon.org), or call Montana Audubon (443-3949). Please provide your name, home address, phone number, and email address. Even if you were signed up for our 2007 Legislative alerts, you should sign up again for this session so that Montana Audubon lists can be updated. THANKS for your interest and involvement!

From Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Program Director & Lobbyist

*'What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments,
but what is woven into the lives of others.'*



Commissioners Decide Streamside Setback Regulations

After months of public hearings and debate, the Flathead County commissioners decided, as part of the new subdivision regulations, to treat stream setbacks on a case by case basis. A Riparian Resource Management Plan will be required for all subdivisions bordering natural watercourses. The details of each individual plan, including the type and width of vegetative buffer zones, will be decided by the commissioners. These new subdivision rules go into effect on January 15, 2009. Copies of the new regulations are available for \$10 at the county planning office or can be viewed online on the planning office web site. Just google "Flathead County Planning and Zoning" and look up subdivision regulations.

Flathead Audubon, along with many other conservation groups, supported required setbacks ranging from at least 250 to 60 feet depending on the stream size. While supporters of specific setbacks are disappointed by the commissioners' decision, the reality is that neither type of regulation as presently written and enforced are the ultimate answers to protecting water quality in the Flathead. First, the setback regula-

tions only apply to land proposed for subdivision. Second, once a subdivision is approved by the commissioners and the lots sold to private owners, the county has no enforcement capability to see that vegetative buffer zones are maintained in unzoned areas. Private lot owners can turn natural vegetated buffer zones into manicured lawns. Zoned areas have setbacks that are enforceable but these setbacks may be smaller than the setbacks required in a subdivision's Riparian Resource Management Plan. Even in zoned areas, the county depends on complaints from private citizens to alert the zoning officer about violations.

In order to address water quality and streamside environments outside the subdivision process, Commissioner Joe Brenneman is initiating a dialogue with streamside property owners. His goal, similar to the effort used by the forestry industry, is to get streamside owners together to voluntarily create a best management practices plan for private land along streams. If successful, this effort has the benefit of dealing with all streamside areas, not just those areas being subdivided.

By Richard Kuhl

BOOK REVIEW: *BIRDS IN FLIGHT* by Carrol L. Henderson

Did you know that a swift sometimes flaps one wing faster than the other? Or that the pattering of a storm petrel's feet in the water acts to stabilize the bird's flight, like the tail on a child's kite? Or that one of the best places in the world to watch albatrosses is on the east coast of the South Island of New Zealand?

These are just some of the nuggets to be found in Carrol L. Henderson's new book, *Birds in Flight. The Art and Science of How Birds Fly*.

"The Art" of the subtitle is photography. This 160-page book has more than 150 photographs, some of them full-page, some even two-page, of birds in flight. Most are by the author. Henderson is a wild-life biologist for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and has been leading international bird watching trips since 1987. He is also an excellent bird photographer. Many of his pictures in this book are of upper-midwest birds, apparently taken in Minnesota – where he helped to reintroduce (and take pictures of) the Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Eastern Bluebird, and Trumpeter Swan. But just as many, if not more, are from his trips to Central and South America, New Zealand, Kenya and Tanzania, where he has traveled to conduct birding tours.

The first chapter, "A Gallery of Birds in Flight," is a medley of some of Henderson's pictures of birds in flight. It is much like sitting next to the author as he shows you an album of his favorite birds-in-flight pictures, and chats about where he was when he got the pictures or how he happened to get them. Often he includes tidbits of information about the species in the photograph or behavior it depicts, and sometimes offers tips on how to take such action shots. The photographs are beautiful, and often revealing of bird agility and behavior, and the author's discussion of them provides the background and instruction that makes this much more than just a series of pretty pictures.

The remaining seven chapters focus on various aspects of bird flight. A list of chapter titles reveals the topics covered: 2. Aerodynamic Principles; 3. Feathers and Bones; 4. Wings; 5. The Tale of the Tail; 6. Taking Flight; 7. Types of Flight; 8. The Art of Landing. The author analyzes each of these topics, and provides pictures or diagrams to illustrate his points.

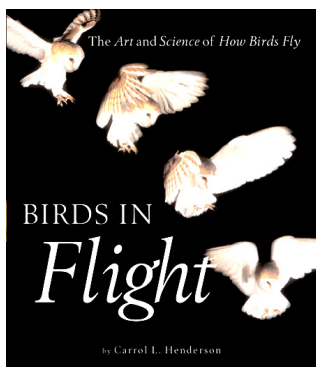
The discussions in chapters 2 - 4 are pretty standard stuff. If you've read accounts of the bird wing as airfoil, or worked through discussions of angle of attack, wing loading, and aspect ratio, you will learn nothing new here. Treatment of the theory of bird flight is brief and non-technical. But for those who have never studied the science of bird flight, these chapters will function as a gentle introduction to the topic. The pictures are quite beautiful, and together with some good drawings, do an adequate job of illustrating and clarifying the author's presentation.

In the remaining chapters (5 – 8), Henderson goes beyond the standard discussions, and they tend to be more interesting. Henderson's original contributions to these topics are based on what he has learned from many years of watching birds in flight, and from studying his own photographs of their behaviors. In these chapters, Henderson's written comments are often quite brief, as he lets his striking photographs show even better than words the point he is making. But readers should not expect any profound, new revelations about bird flight in these chapters, either. As in the earlier chapters, Henderson does not go into great depth or technical detail.

Some might describe Henderson's book as a "coffee table" book because it is filled with big beautiful pictures. If that is the kind of book you like, this one will certainly not disappoint. Some of the pictures are quite spectacular. But it is more than that. At the least, it is a very readable introduction to the theory of bird flight and related topics. In addition, there are things to be learned from Henderson's book -- from both the text and the photographs, and interesting nuggets to be found. And Henderson's treatment of some of the topics may well help readers observe more carefully and see more clearly for themselves some of the finer details of bird flight and bird behavior.

Birds in Flight. The Art and Science of How Birds Fly (2008, Voyageur Press) retails for \$25. The book is an interesting, informative introduction to the topic, for the most part well written, and chock full of illustrative drawings and photographs. The photographs alone make this book worth looking at; they are beautiful and technically excellent. After looking, you may well decide you want to own it.

Review by Linda Winnie



A truly happy person is one who can enjoy the scenery on a detour.



JOIN THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT



New York, NY and Ithaca, NY: Bird and nature fans throughout North America are invited to join tens of thousands of everyday bird watchers for the 12th annual **Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)**, February 13-16, 2009. A joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, this **free event** is an opportunity for families, students, and people of all ages to discover the wonders of nature in backyards, schoolyards, and local parks, and, at the same time, make an important contribution to conservation. Participants count birds and report their sightings online at www.birdcount.org.

"The Great Backyard Bird Count benefits both birds and people. It's a great example of citizen science. Anyone who can identify even a few species can contribute to the body of knowledge that is used to inform conservation efforts to protect birds and biodiversity," said Audubon Education VP, Judy Braus. "Families, teachers, children and all those who take part in GBBC get a chance to improve their observation skills, enjoy nature, and have a great time counting for fun, counting for the future."

Anyone can take part, by counting birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the event and reporting their sightings online at www.birdcount.org. Participants can also explore what birds others are finding in their backyards, in their own neighborhood, or thousands of

miles away. Online resources include tips to help identify birds, a photo gallery, and special materials for educators.

The data these "citizen scientists" collect helps researchers understand bird population trends, information that is critical for effective conservation. Their efforts enable everyone to see what would otherwise be impossible, a comprehensive picture of where birds are in late winter and how their numbers and distribution compare with previous years. In 2008, participants submitted more than 85,000 checklists.

Each year, participants also submit thousands of digital images for the GBBC photo contest. Many are featured in the popular online gallery. Participants in the 2009 count are invited to upload their bird videos to YouTube; some will also be featured on the GBBC web site. Visit www.birdcount.org to learn more. Businesses, schools, nature clubs, Scout troops, and other community organizations interested in the GBBC can contact Cornell Lab of Ornithology at (800) 843-2473, or Audubon at citizen-science@audubon.org or (215) 355-9588, ext 16.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is a nonprofit membership institution interpreting and conserving the earth's biological diversity through research, education, and citizen science focused on birds. Great Backyard Bird Count is made possible, in part, by support from **Wild Birds Unlimited**.



Wonders of Wetlands and Riparian Areas! A Workshop for Educators



Project WET, Flathead Audubon and Flathead Conservation District host a one-day, interdisciplinary workshop for K-12, formal and non-formal educators on Saturday, February 21st, from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm at the Lone Pine State Park Visitor Center. This workshop is intended to increase your knowledge of local wetlands and of riparian areas (located near lakes, rivers and streams). The workshop will also help to connect the following science concepts across the curriculum: wetland and riparian areas' functions and values, local wildlife and plants, and habitat and conservation, through the use of a newly developed Wetlands and Riparian Studies Education Trunk, which can be borrowed to use in the classroom and in the field.

If you attended last year's Project WET and Webfoot workshop, this is an excellent follow-up, which includes more activities, instructional information and the Education Trunk you can borrow! For questions or to sign up, contact Nancy Zapotocki at naz@centurytel.net or call Patti Mason at 752-4220. There is a \$10 workshop fee which includes materials and lunch. Office of Public Instruction credit is available. PIR credit is also available by registering on PIRNet (class code #2836). All activities meet MT Content Standards.

The Workshop and Education Trunk are funded in part by the Department of Environmental Quality's Mini-Grant Program under Section

319 of the federal Clean Water Act. Also Sponsored by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, MontanaWatercourse, and Northwest Montana Educational Cooperative.



Wildlife Biologist Brian Baxter will present two "Animal Tracking and Sign Interpretation" workshops in early 2009. Each workshop begins with a two hour classroom session, and an excellent slide presentation, followed by a field session, on snowshoes or pac boots, depending on conditions. The field hikes are of moderate difficulty level, and usually less than three miles round trip, or about 4-6 hours. Workshops are being held for Glacier Institute, Jan. 24th and March 7th (contact Rachael@glacierinstitute.org), and for the Flathead Valley Community College on Feb. 28th (contact dstruck@fvcc.edu.)



SPECIAL GIFTS

We want to recognize those members who have made special donations to FAS. We will do this in *The Pileated Post* each month. This list includes all donations of over \$25 received with membership renewals, and all "name your bird" special gifts received through December 18.

MERLIN

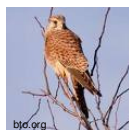
Charles and Mary Bleck
Bruce Tannehill and Gail
Cleveland



In memory of Mrs. Evelyn Dimond
Roy S. Dimond

KESTREL

Anne Lent & Charles McCarty
Richard & Sarah Thomason
Nancy Svennungsen
Shelly and Robert Love
Ruth Davis
Mary Wallace



In honor of Karen Etter Hale
Mary Nelesen
In memory of Jack Whitney
Charles J. Williams

MY OWN VISION

William & Carole Jensen
Nancy Klehm
Rosemary Mattick
Claude Paul
Gwen Bartch



SPECIAL GIFTS

I wish to help make Flathead Audubon's vision a reality. Here is my contribution to the continued success of our chapter.

- ☐ Eagle Donation, \$1000
- ☐ Osprey Donation, \$500
- ☐ Snowy Owl Donation, \$250
- ☐ Merlin Donation, \$100
- ☐ Kestrel Donation, \$50
- ☐ My Own Vision, amount of my choice



The FAS activity which most interests me is:

- ☐ Education Programs
- ☐ Owen Sowerwine Natural Area
- ☐ Scholarships and Grants
- ☐ Field Trips and Outdoor Events

☐ *I want my gift to recognize another:*

In memory of _____

In honor of _____

Please send notification of this gift to:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

☐ Please do not acknowledge my gift in the Pileated Post

Please make checks payable to:

Flathead Audubon Society

P.O. Box 9173

Kalispell, MT 59904

Your gift is tax deductible.



Conservation Achievers Keep On Achieving!

Congratulations to Loren Kreck, and to Rails-to-Trails, headed by Helen Pilling, on their continued contributions to conservation in the Flathead Valley!

This fall, a group from Columbia Falls spearheaded the development of the Loren Kreck Trail along the Flathead River. An easement from Loren allows the trail to cross through his land, and Loren has been among the large group of volunteers doing on-the-ground construction of the trail. Work will resume when weather permits. Watch the paper for announcement of the next trail work session. Loren was recognized by Flathead Audubon in February 2005 "for helping to save and preserve some of the Flathead's pristine places." His donation of the easement and work on the new trail add to the achievements for which he was recognized. Thank you, Loren, for continuing your work.

In November, a major step was taken toward the completion of a 12-mile section of the Rails-to-Trails system that runs from Meridian Road through Kila. Two fiberglass bridges were put in place and portions of the section have been black-topped, all due to the combined efforts of many donors and volunteers. Pacific Steel donated rebar for the bridge foundations, Knife River donated concrete for the footings, Harmon Crane donated use of a crane to set the bridges, and volunteer workers, including Jim Kruger, Bob Marceau, Dan Olson, and Al Sorensen, helped place the bridges. Rails-to-Trails was recognized by Flathead Audubon in February 2003 "for leadership in developing a system of trails dedicated to walking and non-motorized riding." The progress on the Meridian Road to Kila section marks another step forward in this effort. Thank you, Helen Pilling, and all Rails-to-Trails volunteers, for carrying forward this valuable project.





END OF THE AFFAIR

November 2008: *THIS GREEN LIFE*, Northern Resource Defense Council

Plastic bags lose their luster



Nearly 75 years ago, soft plastic ranked up there with the Mona Lisa and Tower of Pisa as one of civilization's masterpieces, at least according to Cole Porter in his popular "You're the Top." Feelings have changed a bit since then. While plastic remains the *ne plus ultra* as far as convenience is concerned, people are not so thrilled with its nasty habit of never, ever going away. Plastic bags, in particular, have come in for a lashing because of the way they litter the streets, get tangled in treetops, choke sea turtles and other animals who mistake them for food, clog municipal sewage systems and, once in landfills, refuse to decompose.

What we have here is yet another love-hate relationship that we do not have the strength to end. As a result, governments at all levels around the world have found it necessary to step into the breach to save us from ourselves. Australia, Bangladesh, Italy, Ireland, South Africa and Taiwan are among the countries trying voluntary programs, taxes and bans to get the problem under control. American cities have also gotten into the act. The first was San Francisco, which outlawed plastic bags at large grocery stores and pharmacies in 2007. Well, that's not so surprising, San Francisco being San Francisco, but this past July, Los Angeles voted for a ban beginning in 2010 if the state fails to move ahead with a 25-cent fee on shoppers requesting plastic bags. Westport, Connecticut joined the club in September.

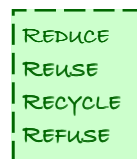
Most recently, New York City's Mayor Bloomberg proposed a six-cent plastic bag fee. The city has been abuzz ever since. Some people say it's time; others wonder how they'll ever survive.

I'm a New Yorker and I couldn't be happier. I only wish the city would tax paper bags, too, since they have their own drawbacks. As the plastics industry is oh-so-quick to point out, they contribute even more to global warming than plastic bags and take up more room in landfills when not recycled. On the other hand, they more often *are* recycled and then turned into fresh paper, whereas plastic bags are rarely recycled and even more rarely turned into something new. Moreover, when the wind starts blowing, paper bags are much less likely to take off. Paper never causes much of a litter problem anyway since it biodegrades, unlike you-know-what.

But this argument is beside the point, because "paper or plastic?" is a trick question whose answer is "reusable." Now that you know, don't wait for a plastic bag tax or ban to come to your town. Go ahead and break the disposable habit on your own. No need to buy expensive bags for the purpose. Any old canvas totes you happen to have will do. Stick one in your purse or backpack and a few in the trunk of your car if you drive, so you'll always be prepared. If you have a problem remembering to take them out of the trunk when you get to the store, as I've heard some people do, tape a reminder to the dashboard. Ugly, yes, but that's what will make it so hard to miss.

That leaves garbage disposal. In all likelihood, you will still need some kind of plastic bags for that (but probably the heavy-duty variety which is less likely to cause a littering problem -- especially when weighed down with garbage). However, you can minimize the need by reducing your trash. Here's how:

- * Avoid buying overly-packaged products.
- * Reuse what you can before disposing of it.
- * Give away what you no longer want to reuse.
- * Don't overbuy perishable food items.
- * Use older vegetables and bones for stock.
- * Compost food scraps and yard waste.



When you find yourself pining for the convenience of yore, think about the last time you spotted a plastic bag where one never should be -- at the beach, in the woods, in the mountains or in your yard -- and I bet you'll feel convenience isn't all it's cracked up to be.

By Sheryl Eisenberg

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Sheryl Eisenberg, a long-time advisor to NRDC, posts a new *This Green Life* every month. Sheryl makes her home in Tribeca (NYC), where, along with children, Sophie and Gabby and husband Peter, she tries to put her environmental principles into practice. No fooling.

The great success story. Ireland is the model for the world, when it comes to government action on plastic bags. In 2002, it instituted its "plastax" (currently 33 cents a bag). Within weeks, use of plastic bags in Ireland dropped 94 percent, changing not just behavior, but the culture, too. Today, the Irish consider it gauche to use plastic bags.

No place untouched. Vast amounts of plastic bags and other plastic debris are being trapped in remote areas of the ocean known as "gyres" that landlubbers never see. There, they circulate for years, never biodegrading, just breaking into smaller and smaller pieces, until they sink or are consumed by animals.



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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. Meetings start at 7:00PM and include 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.

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