



Pileated the Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

VOLUME 33

NUMBER 6

FEBRUARY 2009



CHRISTMAS COUNT RESULTS

(Full Details at www.flatheadaudubon.org)



35th Bigfork Christmas Count, 2008:

Deep Cold and Bright Sun

Dan Casey, Compiler

An intrepid group of 32 volunteers braved temperatures as low as -16F to participate in the 35th annual Bigfork Christmas Bird Count, Saturday, December 20th. We counted 7,628 individuals of 76 species, well below our recent averages, on a day where deep snow and cold kept people and birds under cover. This was just the fifth time since 1987 that we failed to find at least 80 species. But we found a few interesting birds, including our first Eurasian Collared-Doves, 3 seen near Somers. Other highlights included a single Wood Duck near Creston, just the third time we have had this species on the count, an immature Gyrfalcon at Woods Bay (our third), and a Prairie Falcon in the Lower Valley (our fourth). Wild Turkey numbers continued their recent downward trend; the 165 we counted was our lowest since 1979. Tundra Swan numbers (9) were the lowest since 1996, due at least in part to the cold temps, which created "steam" problems for counters along the north shore of the lake. We recorded new high counts for Red-tailed (33) and Rough-legged (44) Hawks, Gray Partridge (41), Common Raven (230) and House Finch (460). Single Eared Grebe, Red-breasted Merganser, Ruffed Grouse, Northern Pygmy-Owl, Snow Bunting and Cassin's Finch sightings helped round out the list. We had one additional species during count week (Horned Lark).

2008 EUREKA CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Lewis Young, Compiler

The 16th annual Eureka Christmas Bird Count was conducted on December 20, 2008. Six hardy field observers and 17 feeder watchers counted 48 species of birds and 810 individual birds. The day began at -26° F and later "warmed" to near 0°F and no doubt contributed to the reduced number of field observers and the number of birds sighted. This was the lowest total for individual birds ever recorded on our count. Over the 16 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 a high of 66 in 2006. Altogether, a total of 106 species have been sighted over the 16 years.

Some of the most numerous birds sighted were evening grosbeak, European starling, Bohemian waxwing, and black-capped chickadee. By contrast, only 1 individual was sighted for 12 species with a few examples being, ruffed grouse, great blue heron, golden eagle, merlin, and Clark's nutcracker.

Three species new to the Eureka count were sighted on count day this year—merlin, dunlin, and pine warbler. Another new species, Eurasian collared-dove, was seen during count week.

The sighting of the dunlin and pine warbler are especially noteworthy due to their rarity in Montana and especially during winter. Dunlins migrate through Montana with some regularity but normally winter ➡

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS, continued on pages 5 & 6...

FEBRUARY FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

Monday, February 9, 2009: General Membership Meeting. 7 PM, The Summit, Conference Room 3. Lisa Bate presents "The *WILD* Life in Dead Trees." Details on page 3.

Monday, February 2, 2009: Flathead Audubon Board of Directors Meeting. 6 PM at 295 Third Ave. E.N. All are welcome.

Friday—Tuesday, February 13—16, 2009: Great Backyard Bird Count. See page 3 for details!

Saturday, February 14, 2009: Snowshoeing in Glacier National Park. Details on page 3.

BIRD OF THE MONTH

By Linda DeKort

The Birds in the Backward Tuxedos

The first time I spotted a flock of Evening Grosbeaks at a feeder adjacent to Owen Sowerwine Natural Area, I thought I was witnessing escapees from a tropical bird aviary. The plumage of these stocky robin-sized birds is stunning and unmistakable. The male's forehead and eyebrows are bright yellow. The crown is black and the breast and lower back are also yellow. Most of the wing is black with a striking white patch. The stubby notched tail is totally black. Our neighbor, Reta Sweeney, describes these males as "the birds in backwards yellow trimmed tuxedos." Females are duller, but easily identified by the white wing patches and large bill. Females also have white at the tip of their short black tails and white spots on the upper tail. Their name is a misnomer. Apparently the first recorded sighting in 1823 of this heavy-billed species occurred "at twilight", hence the name: **evening** grosbeak (*Coccothraustes vespertinus*). They are actually more active in the morning and often roost for the night as early as 2 pm in the winter.

They are aptly named grosbeaks, having an unusually bulky bill whose color differs in summer (slightly greenish) and winter (bone colored). This powerful triangular bill is fashioned specifically for cracking seeds, which they first roll up on edge with their tongues, then pop in two with a munch of their heavy mandibles. They are especially attracted to black oil sunflower seeds and we used to joke at Flathead Audubon board meetings that it was these gregarious birds with the voracious appetites that kept our seed sales hopping and our coffers full. The food of the evening grosbeak also includes spruce budworm larvae and other insects.

In fact, National Audubon reports that the most important consideration for a nest site is the abundance of spruce budworms, which explains why we had several pairs of Evening Grosbeaks nesting adjacent to our spruce stands this summer and we hope they devoured a good number of larvae. As is common with birds breeding at high altitudes, the Evening Grosbeak usually only lays one brood of 2-5 eggs per year. The nests are often high in a tree and difficult to spot; courtship also is a bit secretive with no showy display or song. The nest looks like a flattened loose saucer of small twigs and roots, lined with grasses, twigs, lichens, or conifer needles. The eggs are light blue to blue-green with brown scrawls concentrated on the large end. Nesting dates

in NW Montana are early June to late July. When the fledglings emerge by late July, you know that they are here with much raucous rattling and buzzing.



Karen Nichols photo

Evening Grosbeaks range throughout the northern US and southern provinces of Canada. They are found in the mountains of the Western US, Canada and Central Mexico. If food is available, in bird-feeders or elsewhere, and winter is not too severe, they may not migrate. We have seen Evening Grosbeaks on our Christmas Bird Counts in this valley for the last decade. I was fortunate to be in Kathy Ross' group on the Kalispell Christmas Count last month. Her eagle eye spotted a flock of 15 large beaked birds wearing backwards tuxedos out the window of our moving car. One of those hearty souls visited our feeder last weekend, a splash of tropical gold against the winter grey.

Evening Grosbeaks are not doing so well nationwide, however. Christmas Bird Count data were instrumental in development of an Audubon Report in 2007 entitled [Common Birds in Decline](#), which states that some of America's most beloved and familiar birds have taken a nosedive in the past forty years. The decline of the Evening Grosbeak has been startling: 78 percent in 40 years (3.8 million now as opposed to 17 million in the 1960's). Because they are birds of boreal and montane forests, they are susceptible to all incursions into those habitats: logging, mining, drilling, acid rain, and human development.

Chemical control of spruce budworm and other tree pests lowers this species' food supply and may cause secondary poisoning. Competition and the spread of disease among house finches, goldfinches, and other feeder birds may also be playing a role in the decline. Global warming is predicted to cause deforestation due to increases in insect populations and fire frequency. There are many actions we can take to help Evening Grosbeak populations rebound. One of them is to plant Rocky Mountain Juniper which is a native shrub and provides good cover for many songbirds, including Evening Grosbeaks. Another is to stay involved in the monitoring of our local birds through citizen science efforts such as Christmas Bird Count, Backyard Bird Count (coming up over Presidents' Weekend), and Project Feeder Watch. The National Audubon website offers many other suggestions.



Jeanne Marcure photo



February 2009 Program
THE WILD LIFE IN DEAD TREES



Lisa Bate has been studying the importance of decay for wildlife since earning her Master's Degree studying woodpeckers and their habitats at the University of Idaho in Moscow. To her, a forest isn't healthy unless it contains decay, because of its integral role in multiple ecological processes. Many species, especially cavity-nesters, depend upon decay. Cavity-nesting species include woodpeckers, bluebirds, swallows and many small mammals. A scientist studying cavity-nesting species must also study the snags (standing dead trees), large trees, and logs upon which wildlife depend.

Lisa is a research wildlife biologist who has worked primarily as a private contractor with federal, state and private organizations. She has worked with the Rocky Mountain Research Station in Bozeman looking at the effect of prescribed fire on vegetation and birds in the Birds and Burns Project. Another major research project was with Pacific Northwest Research Station in LaGrande, Oregon, which looked at the effects of roads and human access on snags, large trees, and logs important to wildlife. Half of this study was conducted on the Flathead National Forest. A major focus of much of her research has been investigating which sampling techniques are best for quantifying the snags, large trees, and logs that are important to wildlife. Lisa's research occupies a very specialized niche—everything is about decay.

More recently, Lisa has switched gears. She worked in Glacier National Park as a Biological Science Technician in 2008 monitoring Pikas, Golden and Bald Eagles, Common Loons, Harlequin Ducks, Mountain Goats and other wildlife species. She also worked for International Hawk Watch in the Jewel Basin this fall, monitoring migrating raptors.

Although Lisa grew up in Ohio, her home for the last 31 years has been Idaho and Montana. She lives south of Creston on Swallow Crest Farm. Her husband, Julian Cunningham, is an organic farmer. Their Community-Supported Agriculture farm (CSA) grows food for 160 families. Cavity-nesting species are encouraged on their farm as biological controls for insect pests. Lisa and Julian have two children, 14-year-old Kieran and 12-year-old Marika.

Please join us at 7 PM on Monday, February 9 to learn about the role of decay for wildlife in healthy forests. We meet in the Community Room of The Summit at 205 Sunnyview Lane in Kalispell.



WINTER FIELD TRIP

Saturday, February 14, Snowshoeing in Glacier National Park. Join a Park Interpreter at the Apgar Visitor Center at 10:30 AM for a free two-hour snowshoe exploration of the winter environment, to discover how Glacier's winter residents survive these lean times. If you don't have snowshoes they are available at the visitor center for \$2. (There is a park entrance fee.) Contact Bill Schus-trom at 257-2359 for further information and to sign up for the trip.

SIGN UP NOW FOR GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT



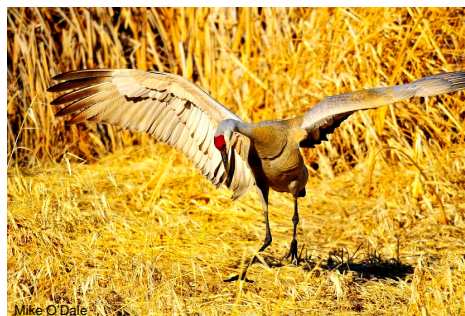
February 13-16, 2009. **FREE!**
 Become a Citizen Scientist!
www.birdcount.org

This beautiful picture of a Sandhill Crane, caught in mid-dance, will be the prize in Flathead Audubon's upcoming Spring Raffle. The picture, handsomely matted and framed, has been donated by photographer Mike O'Dale, who captured this image on a visit to Smith Lake last spring. The picture itself is 8"X12"; framed and matted, the piece is about 15"X19".

Raffle tickets will be sold at both the February 9 and March 9 Flathead Audubon meetings, with the winning ticket to be drawn at the March meeting. You need not be present meeting to win. **Tickets are \$1 each, or six for \$5.**

You may also purchase tickets by mail. Send your name, phone number, and payment for the number of tickets you wish to purchase, to Jill Fanning,

Win a Dancing Crane!



380 Tally Lake Road, Whitefish, MT, 59937.

Proceeds from the Raffle will help fund local Flathead Audubon projects such as the FAS Bird Education Program (which provides classroom bird education trunks, classroom presentations complete with bird costume, and teachers' workshops for local educators), FAS grants and scholarships for the study of

avian natural history, and the leasing and managing of the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area.

Flathead Audubon wishes to thank Mike for his generous donation. Thanks, also, everyone who purchases raffle tickets. It is only with your support that Flathead Audubon can continue its local projects.

From Linda Winnie



BOARD MEMBER MUSINGS

From Richard Kuhl



Being Messy

Our neighbor, a veteran of WW II, claims the vegetative growth in our Kalispell yard reminds him of the jungles he experienced in the Pacific. He exaggerates a bit, but with two 60 foot spruce trees, a 50 inch diameter elm, two maples, three junipers, two mountain ash, two willows, five small spruce, nine fruit trees, four grape vines, raspberry and strawberry patches, six flower beds, an 800 square foot garden, dozens of shrubs and two brush piles spaced randomly across our 75 by 150 foot lot, one could say it is a bit cluttered, even messy. I prefer to think of it as a bit wild.

Over the last 70 years, I've traveled thousands of miles in our backcountry areas both on my own and as a wilderness ranger in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness of Idaho. My appreciation of wild areas started early in the rural town of Three Bridges, New Jersey. The town was still connected to its agricultural roots. We raised pigs and chickens right in town and for a time even had a cow. We were educated in one-room schools with potbelly stoves for heat, hand pumps for water and outdoor privies for toilets. Surrounded by farmland next to the Raritan River adjacent to ancient Indian pathways, it was an ideal location for exploring areas that still revealed arrowheads of the Lenni Lenape. Overnight camping trips to farm woodlots taught the basic lessons of wilderness travel--stay warm, drink water, keep fed, know where you are and anticipate problems.

My initial move to Montana in 1958 was spurred by a picture of my brother, Frank, standing in the doorway of an abandoned lookout on Spar Peak in the Kootenai National Forest. I too wanted to stand on mountaintops. Over the next five years, while working on blister rust control for the Kootenai, I managed to top the high peaks of the Cabinets and the rounded crests of the Yaak country. Beginning in

1963 I took advantage of 19 cent gasoline and a VW bug, \$99 for 99-day Greyhound bus tickets, the hitchhiker's thumb and easy-to-get jobs to visit wild areas from Mount Katahdin in Maine to Mount Whitney in California.

In 1972 I returned to work for the Forest Service, primarily as a wilderness ranger on the Moose Creek District of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. The peaks of the Selway country only go up to about 8000 feet. Just a few are above timberline. The main attractions are its deep river canyons, its vast size and remoteness and its wildlife. I began to enjoy a meadow of flowers, the bugle of an elk or the flight of a butterfly as much as bagging a peak.

As the trails get longer and the hills steeper, my appreciation for the less physical aspects of wild country grows. My son and daughter are now the ones who most enjoy the alpine rock and ice. I still bag a few Glacier peaks. A job caretaking grayling eggs in the Gates Park section of the Bob Marshall satisfies my thirst for large wilderness. I am happy, with my wife, Marylane, to stroll around the Jewel Basin country, to explore the Blacktail to Foy's area, to climb up the trails of Lone Pine State Park, to investigate the swamps of nearby Lawrence Park and to add a bit more clutter to our yard.

Helping to increase the amount of wildness is why I agreed to serve on Audubon's board of directors (Linda DeKort's constant harassment also helped.) As the amount of straight lines grow in Flathead County, we can all work to add some curves and messiness, whether it be classified wilderness, streamside protection areas or a tangle of brush in the backyard. I look forward to serving on Flathead Audubon's committee overseeing the management of our own natural tangle, the Owen Sowerwine Area.

Science Tidbit

SPECTACLED EIDER MYSTERY

SOURCE: Living on the Wind by Scott Weidensaul

A recent development in animal tracking has been transmitting devices that beam their coordinates directly to satellites. Weidensaul tells us about one of the more interesting examples of the use of this technology.

Spectacled Eiders spend the summer along the coast of Siberia and Alaska. Until recently, no one knew where they spent the winter. By planting satellite tracking devices in fourteen Spectacled Eiders, the researchers hoped they would get the answer. Unfortunately, the devices all stopped working before winter. That is where it would have ended, except one transmitter blinked on long enough to give a location in the middle of the sea ice in the Bering Sea. While believing that it must be a mistake, the biologists still hired a plane. What they found was 155,000 Eiders jammed into cracks in the pack ice feasting on mollusks and invertebrates. Apparently their movement and body heat is enough to keep the cracks from icing over.

From Bruce Tannehill





MORE CHRISTMAS COUNT RESULTS

(Nationwide Tallies at http://cbc.audubon.org/cbccurrent/current_table.html)



EUREKA CBC, continued

... along the ocean far from Montana. As of January 5 the dunlin was still present. The pine warbler sighting was only the 5th record for Montana, as their normal range is in the eastern U.S. and wintering in the southeastern states. Luckily for our count, the pine warbler appeared 8 consecutive days at the Compiler's feeders and the last day observed was on count day!



UPPER SWAN VALLEY 2008 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Jody Wolff, Compiler

The 16th annual Upper Swan Valley Christmas Bird Count was held on Saturday, December 20, 2008. Eleven observers braved a cold but beautiful, clear day of birding, with temperatures ranging from -5 to +6 degrees Fahrenheit. (Compare this to 3 years ago, when our temperature range was -22 to +15 F.!) We sighted 27 species on count day, and a total of 415 individual birds. Both numbers are about average for this count. We also picked up 3 species (Pygmy Owl, Great-horned Owl, and Belted Kingfisher) on count week.

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There were no new species found, nor did we have any real surprises this year. Some of the most numerous species we saw were Common Raven (106), Canada Goose (54), Steller's Jay (23), Black-capped (36) and Mountain (35) Chickadees, and Red-Crossbill (37). The three Spotted Towhees we recorded represent an unusual species for the Swan CBC.

2008 LIBBY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Al Bratkovitch, Compiler

The Christmas Bird Count for the Libby, MT count circle was conducted on December 20, 2008.

Ten field observers and twelve feeder watchers recorded 46 species and 2607 individual birds. The species total was well below our previous thirty-year average of 57 species. Sub-zero temperatures were a factor, resulting in reduced visibility on the Kootenai River, due to heavy water vapor clouds rising from the water's surface throughout the day.

This was the 40th count conducted for the Libby count circle since the count was started in 1925 by the late naturalist Winton Weydemeyer.

NINEPIPE 2008 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Jim Rogers, Compiler

We enjoyed a relatively mild day during the Ninepipe National Wildlife Refuge Christmas Count on Saturday, 27 December. Nineteen participants observed 73 species and counted 26,030 individual birds.



Without a doubt, the day's highlight--which was also a count first--was a beautiful Rusty Blackbird at Ninepipe. And a Blue jay was observed for only the second time in the count's history. Also notable were two Canyon wrens on the south-facing cliffs above McDonald Lake. This was the 3rd time for this species on the count.

Count highs were recorded for the following species: 13,234 Mallards; 53 Turkeys; 277 Horned larks; and 4009 Starlings. The previous high count for starlings was 2007 and then, before that, 2006.



GLACIER NATIONAL PARK CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT -- 2008

Susan Sindt, Compiler

The Glacier National Park Christmas Bird Count, originally set for December 20, was rescheduled for December 28 due to weather-related concerns for the safety of the participants. On count day, 10 observers on 8 of 10 traditional survey routes plus one feeder watcher recorded 484 individual birds of 26 species. The species total ties the lowest count on record, from 1990, but the number of individual birds, while low, was near the norm.

The most abundant species this year was the Bohemian Waxwing, with 230 in two flocks, setting a high count record for this species. They have only been recorded on 4 previous counts since 1987, the last in 2005, and the previous high count was 45 in 1993. A total of 86 Pine Siskins was the highest count since 2000. Common Redpolls were conspicuously absent from the count this year, the first time this species was missed since 2002. House Finches were seen again, the fifth year they have been documented since being first recorded on the 2002 count, reflecting the expansion of this species' range.

Water birds were well represented, though waterfowl numbers were below long-term averages. The 17 Bald Eagles were well above the long-term average, though numbers were about half those of the previous year when a high of 35 was recorded. The 29 Common Ravens were the most seen on count day since 40 were recorded in 1991. An American Robin at Lake McDonald Lodge was the only new species added to the long-term count list. A Song Sparrow was the first since 2001, and the 4th since 1987. A Golden Eagle was the first since 1999 and only the 3rd for the count list.

Thanks to the hearty observers, and to the Crown of the Continent Research Learning Center for a warm and dry meeting place.



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 "name your bird" special gifts received through January 18.

Donations made December 1-January 18, 2008

MERLIN

Charles and Mary Bleck
Bruce Tannehill and Gail
Cleveland

Paula Smith

*In honor of Loren Kreck,
by Rod McIver*

*In memory of Mrs. Evelyn Dimond,
by Roy S. Dimond*



KESTREL

Shelly and Robert Love
Ruth Davis

Richard & Sarah Thomason
Mary Wallace

Anne Lent & Charles McCarty
Nancy Svenningsen

Gail & Brian Sullivan

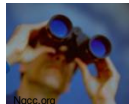
*In honor of Karen Etter Hale
by Mary Nelesen*

*In memory of Jack Whitney
by Dr. Charles J. Williams*



MY OWN VISION

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



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.

Mockingbirds, robins, bluebirds and waxwings enjoy eating fruit, especially during winter.

Birds & Blooms, December 04-January 05

KALISPELL CHRISTMAS (NEW YEAR'S) BIRD COUNT

Dan Casey, Compiler



(January 4, 2009) TOTALS: **73** species (plus 2 count week); **16,497** individuals. We had 36 people in 13 parties in the field on a day that started out cloudy but was sunny in the afternoon, with temperatures mostly in the teens and deep snow everywhere. We also had several feeder watchers reporting. **Greater Scaup, American Coot, Iceland Gull, and Long-eared Owl** were all new species for this count (we also had the owl during our trial run in 1999). We've now seen 109 species over the 10 years of this count. We tied or set new high counts for an additional 11 species, marked in **bold**, below. Among our new high count of 39 **Red-tailed Hawks** were 6 "**Harlan's**" **Hawks**, also a new high count. The **Iceland Gull** at the landfill is only the third one ever documented in Montana, joining 2 **Glaucous** and one **Thayer's Gull** to provide a trio of rarer gull species. The many flocks of **Pine Grosbeaks** and **White-winged Crossbills** seen by our teams were not surprising, given the large numbers around the valley this winter. And our total count of more than 7,000 Bohemian Waxwings, although not our highest ever, might well be the highest total on the continent this CBC season.



Sunflower Seed Sale Results in Cash for Flathead Audubon

This past Fall, Flathead Audubon once again partnered with WBC (Western Building Centers) to donate a portion of the sale for every bag of sunflower seed purchased from October 1 through December 31. On January 8th, Doug Shanks, the general manager of WBC, presented a check in the amount of \$278 to Mike Fanning, President of FAS. On behalf of the entire FAS Board, I would like to thank all who participated in last year's seed sale and I encourage everyone to support their local WBC store throughout the upcoming year.

Mary Nelesen, Birdseed Chairperson



HEADING EAST?

Audubon Nebraska presents the 39th annual Rivers and Wildlife Celebration, to be held Friday-Sunday, March 20-22, 2009, in Kearney. Schedule and registration: www.nebraska.audubon.org 402/797-2301. Prairie chickens, sandhill cranes, field trips and more!



Note from Owen Sowerwine Committee --

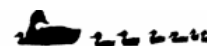
LOOKING FOR INFORMATION

We are looking into whether the current parking space at the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area is adequate to accommodate the needs of visitors to the Area. You can help us in this effort.

If you encounter any problem finding a parking spot when you visit Owen Sowerwine, please let us know. Call or email one of the Co-Chairs of the FAS Owen Sowerwine Committee, Brent Mitchell or Linda Winnie (see the FAS Directory, back page of the Post, for contact information).

SATURDAY & SUNDAY, MARCH 28 & 29: FREEZOUT LAKE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA FIELD TRIP

Spring waterfowl migration at Freezout Lake WMA is an experience not to be missed. Snow Geese can be counted by the thousands and more than 40 bird species have been seen in past years. The trip leaves at 10:30 AM Saturday from the K Mart parking lot in Kalispell and will get us to the WMA in time to watch the white geese arrive at Freezout Lake that evening. Stay overnight at the Bella Vista Motel (406-466-5711) in Choteau. Other motels in Choteau include The Stage Stop Inn (888-466-5900) and the Gunther Motel (877-491-5444). After watching the geese leave the lake Sunday morning, we will head for home in time to arrive in Kalispell by 5 P.M. Contact Dan Casey at 857-3143 or dcasey@abcbirds.org to arrange carpooling and to sign up for the trip.



Final Falconry Rules Published

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has announced a major revision to the regulations governing falconry in the United States and its territories. The changes simplify the agency's regulations and reflect current practices in the traditional use of raptors for sport hunting.

"Falconers care deeply about wild raptors, hunting and the legacy of their sport," said Service Director H. Dale Hall. "At the request of state fish and wildlife agencies and falconers nationwide, the new regulations streamline the permitting process and clarify what is considered as acceptable falconry practices." Highlights of the new falconry regulations include:

- Elimination of the federal permit in favor of state, tribal or territorial falconry permits. States, except Hawaii, already administer falconry permitting programs. Dual state/federal permitting will no longer be necessary. The Service will approve falconry regulations to be promulgated under state, tribal or territorial laws and regulations by January 1, 2014, when the federal permit program will be discontinued.
- Establishment of electronic reporting of the acquisition, transfer or loss of falconry raptors, to replace the current paper reporting system.
- Allowance of experienced falconers to assist federal and state-permitted wildlife rehabilitators in conditioning raptors for release to the wild.

The Service first proposed the revisions in response to a request from the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies asking the Service to consider eliminating the duplicative federal/state falconry permit system. The final rule can be found at <http://migratorybirds.fws.gov>

(Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is requesting public comment on a proposed rule to allow take of five nestling peregrines in 2009 for the purpose of falconry. The proposed rule includes federal guidelines and imposes additional state restrictions. **The deadline for public comment on 2009 Peregrine Take to be received is 5:00 PM Monday, February 16, 2009.** The FWP Commission will take final action on this item at its March 12, 2009 meeting. For more information, visit www.fwp.mt.gov)



HELP MONTANA AUDUBON HELP MONTANA

Montana Audubon has made these 3 bills a priority for the 2009 Montana Legislature:

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. You can sign up for these

- ◆ [Montana River Legacy Act](#)
- ◆ [Wind Farms and Wildlife](#)
- ◆ [Protecting Prairie Dogs](#)

alerts at your local chapter meeting, email lobbyist Janet Ellis at jel-lis@mtaudubon.org, sign up on our website (www.mtaudubon.org), or call Montana Audubon (443-3949). Sign up today to help steer Montana down the right path!



Beauty of Birds

Are you interested in birds?

Do you want to learn more?

*Then sign up for **Beauty of Birds!***

Classes include guest speakers, activities, slides of local birds,

and a trip into the field to practice our skills.

Classes will be held April 1st, 15th, 22nd, and 29th, 6-8 p.m., at Flathead High School.

For more information call 857-6788.

To sign up, call Flathead High School at 751-3500.

Come join Flathead Audubon Society in this annual celebration of the

Beauty of Birds!



REMINDER 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. 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. Funded in part by the Department of Environmental Quality's Mini-Grant Program under Section 319 of the federal Clean Water Act, by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Montana Watercourse, and Northwest Montana Educational Cooperative.



Kids.niehs.nih.gov



Birding at Glacier High School

By: Nancy Zapotocki, Conservation Educator

We recently worked with Glacier High School to create a Conservation Education unit on birds for the High School level using our Education Trunks. Most of our Education Trunks are geared more to the Elementary and Middle School level. Bonnie Streeter, 9th Grade Biology teacher ambitiously partnered with FAS to develop the 3-day High School unit on Common Birds, Bird Identification and Classification (including Families of birds), Bird Songs and Use of Binoculars and Field Guides. The unit was taught to her students in December. Bonnie's classroom sessions included lab stations using FAS Education Trunk materials and bird skins, FAS and Fish, Wildlife and Park's websites, and field guides and binoculars. Bonnie relayed in her recent email, "We had a lot of fun with this unit. My only regret was not being able to have students look at actual birds outside. Maybe next year!" They do not have much natural habitat on the new school grounds, so with this in mind, we are now working on a grant with the High School to create native habitat outside of her classroom to go along with her bird unit! Look for a future article and update on that exciting project.



Conservation Education Happenings

The last six months of 2008 were full of exciting educational experiences with the Conservation Education Program. Continued support from the Sustainability Fund made this possible. We also wrote/partnered on several grants, receiving funding from MT Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) for a Wetland and Riparian Studies Education Trunk and Workshop, National Audubon Society for youth binoculars and bird books, Plum Creek for *Community Caring for Lands and Wildlife*, Art Ortenberg for Raptor Day, Forestry Expo for workbook revisions, and MT DEQ through Flathead Conservation District for the Riparian Education Media Campaign.

We branched out to the High School with our Education Program and are creating some native

habitat at Glacier High School, expanded our Education program to include a watershed approach and continued work with the Flathead Community of Resource Educators and Montana Watershed Coordinating Council, and added a Wetlands and Riparian Areas trunk. We maintain a successful partnership with the NW Montana Educational Cooperative for K-12 activities, and the Kalispell Library with the program for Pre-school and families.

You can see our updated FAS brochure and newly purchased and developed panels for portable display at Earth Day in April and Raptor Day in September.

By Nancy Zapotocki, Conservation Educator





EXOTIC WILDLIFE AND THEIR REGULATIONS



Exotic wildlife are those species not native to Montana and often have resulted in adverse effects to native species and ecosystems when they become established. Consider the effects of house sparrows and starlings on native cavity nesting birds. Because of known or potential adverse impacts, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) regulates exotic wildlife under the authority of MCA 87-5-791 to 721. Exotics are classified into three categories: non-controlled, controlled, and prohibited. Classifications are based on: (1) the environmental impacts caused by the animal if it is released or escapes from captivity, including ecological and economic impacts, (2) the risk the animal would pose to health or safety of the public, wildlife or agriculture, and (3) the ability to readily control and contain the animal in captivity.

Noncontrolled species may be possessed, sold, purchased, exchanged, or transported within the state without a permit with a few exceptions. All animals being imported into the state require a Certificate of Veterinary Inspection from a veterinarian and an importation permit from the Montana Department of Livestock. Some examples of birds and fish in this category are: mynahs, toucans, parrots, cockatoos, and all tropical, subtropical, and marine fish for use in residential and office aquariums.

Controlled species may be imported, pos-

sessed, sold, purchased or exchanged in Montana under a controlled species permit available from FWP. Examples of birds include all exotic waterfowl in the *Anatidae* family (ducks, geese, swans). Koi and goldfish used in outdoor ponds are in this category and must complete a reporting form to FWP; the ponds must meet the following criteria: must not be larger than 400 square feet, must not be within the 100-year flood plain, must be at least 200 yards from any open water, must not receive diverted surface water, and must not have an effluent or discharge to surface water.

Prohibited species cannot be imported, transported, or possessed in Montana including hybrids, viable embryos, or gametes. African clawed frogs and North American bullfrogs are prohibited, as are several species of fish such as grass carp and walking catfish. Prohibited mammals on the list include axis deer, foxes, nutria, most primates, red deer, and Russian boar. Animals on the prohibited list that were obtained prior to January 2004 can be kept legally under a grandfather clause but must be registered with FWP.

A full listing of species in each category as well as further information about the rules and classifications is available from FWP or on their website at <http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/exotics>.

By Lewis Young, FAS Conservation Chair

New FAS Wetland Committee Chair Request

I would appreciate input from members about areas of concern, both wetland and riparian, that could use public advocacy. Some of my goals for the wetland committee are:

1. To ground-truth and expand the wetlands in the upper Flathead Valley identified by satellite and presented on the National Wetlands Inventory site: (wetlands.fws.gov/wetlands/Data/GoggleEarth.html).
2. To apply the hydrogeomorphic methodology to wetland delineation as defined in ERDC/ER TR-02-7: A Regional Approach to Assessing Wetland Functions of Intermontane Prairie Pothole Wetlands in the Northern Rocky Mountains (Hauer, et al., 2002).
3. To ensure that the Army Corps of Engineers follow existing regulations about wetland mitigation, permitting and public notice.

Donna Pridmore, Wetland Committee Chair



New Report Measures Wildlife Watching's Contribution to Nation's Economy

A report recently released by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service shows that expenditures for wildlife watching are equivalent to revenues generated from all spectator sports, amusement parks and arcades, non-hotel casinos, bowling centers and skiing facilities combined. Using data from the *2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation*, the new addendum report *Wildlife Watching in the United States: The Economic Impacts on National and State Economies in 2006* shows wildlife watching not only contributes significantly to people's enjoyment of the outdoors, but is a major factor in state and national economies.

In 2006, nearly 71 million Americans spent more than \$45 billion observing, feeding, and photographing wildlife. The direct expenditures of wildlife watchers generated \$122.6 billion in total industrial output, which resulted in 1,063,482 jobs, federal tax revenue of \$9.3 billion, and state and local tax revenue of \$8.9 billion. Direct expenditures by wildlife watchers were for items such as cameras, binoculars and bird food, as well as trip-related expenses such as lodging, transportation and food.



The report is available at http://library.fws.gov/nat_survey2006_economics.pdf. For information about Montana, visit <http://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/Subpages/NationalSurvey/reports2006.html>.





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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.

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: pileatedpost@flatheadaudubon.org

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