



the Pileated Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

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APRIL 2009

FLATHEAD'S EARTH DAY CELEBRATION

FREE!

April 22, 2009

FVCC Arts & Technology Building and Lawns

FOOD!

Showings of new documentary film "Fuel"
Interactive Booths from Numerous Groups

1:30 and 6:30 PM
3:00 – 6:00 PM

Topics: Carbon Footprinting
Green Building
Alternative Energy
Recycling

Green Cleaning
Waste Management
Straw Bale Homes

Energy Efficiency
Green Architecture
Alternative Fuels
.... Many Other Topics

Lots of Activities for Kids! (FAS will be there!)

FUN!

3:00 – 6:00 PM



Re-Powering the Flathead for a New Energy Economy

April 23, 2009

"Harvesting Clean Energy in the Flathead"
"Creating New Jobs & Retooling Local Economies"

"Energy Policy in a New Energy Economy"
"Homeowners Can Build Green and Save"

Other topics, panel discussions
7:30 AM – 4:00 PM



hoplivingintl.com

Green Energy-Green Building Guided Bus Tour



April 25, 2009
9:00 AM – 2:30 PM

Tour 5-6 green homes and projects, the Gas-to-Energy project at Flathead County Landfill, an older energy retrofit home and more. Call 756-8993 for Reservations.

{Reminder: Pick up a new "Birding Hotspots of the Flathead" brochure at the April FAS meeting!}

APRIL FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

Monday, April 13, 2009: General Membership Meeting. 7 PM, The Summit, Conference Room 3. Details on page 3.

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

Wednesdays, April 1, 15, 22, 29, 2009: Beauty of Birds. Flathead High School. See page 8 for details!

Wednesday through Saturday, April 22–25, 2009: Earth Day Celebration! Flathead Valley Community College Campus. See above for details!

Saturday, May 9, 2009: Family Forestry Expo. See page 3 for full details!

SPRING/EARLY SUMMER FIELD TRIPS—Full List on Pages 6 & 7!

BIRD OF THE MONTH

Article and Photos by Jeannie Marcure

A MONTANA SANDPIPER

Now that spring is officially here, it seems appropriate to write about one of my favorite spring arrivals—the Spotted Sandpiper. Before I became serious about birding, the word sandpiper evoked an image of sunny tropical beaches filled with small unidentifiable birds playing happily in the surf. However, as I became more knowledgeable, I learned that one of these fascinating little birds actually spends the summer and raises young in the Flathead. Also, as the most widespread breeding sandpiper in North America, the Spotted Sandpiper is easy to find and also easy to identify. No wonder that I'm so fond of "Spotty!"

Spotty is a medium-sized shorebird (7-8 inches) with a moderately long neck and legs. In breeding plumage, the under parts are white with distinct brown spots. The habit of constantly bobbing its tail up and down as it walks makes it easy to see in its shoreline habitat.



Spotted Sandpipers are most easily confused with Solitary Sandpipers, but the breeding plumage of the Solitary lacks the spotted chest. The Solitary is also slightly larger and has a more upright posture. Here in the Flathead, separation of these 2 can be aided by the time of year, as Solitary only passes through as it travels to its nesting area in the far north. A Solitary would typically be found here only during migration in May and early August. Because juvenile Spotted Sandpipers lack the distinctive brown spots that typify the adults, the most difficult time for identification probably comes in early August when both species are present in the Flathead. At that time you should check carefully for the tail bobbing and also for the more crouched posture of the Spotty. Flight patterns may also aid in identification as Spotted Sandpipers fly close to the water in a straight line with stiff, shallow wing beats, while the Solitary often zigzags on takeoff.

Arriving in the Flathead as the ice leaves, Spotty prefers a habitat that borders water, with open vegetation and a few elevated roosting sites such as fallen trees or stumps. Interestingly, Spotted Sandpipers, along with a few other kinds of shorebirds, have reversed sex roles. This means that the female is larger than the male and typically arrives at the breeding ground first, staking out her territory and attempting to

attract a male. She is also more aggressive in the courtship and may mate with several males, while the male takes the primary parental role of incubating the eggs and caring for the chicks. Because the female can store sperm for up to a month, the eggs she lays for one male may have been fathered by a different male in a previous mating.



The nest is built on the ground in a grass-lined depression concealed by tall grass. The four eggs are buff with brown spots and hatch after 21 days of incubation. The precocial chicks literally "hit the ground running," and are out of the nest foraging within hours of hatching. They will occasionally spend their first night in the nest with an adult and in the case of inclement weather, may remain in the nest, brooded by one of the adults until conditions improve. The characteristic tail bobbing begins as soon as the chicks being to walk; first flight occurs 13 to 21 days after the hatch. Spotted Sandpipers are usually seen only in small family groups of 2 to 5 and not in the large flocks that typify some of the other sandpipers.

As the ice leaves your favorite lakes and rivers this spring, I hope you'll get a chance to see the Spotted Sandpipers. They are most easily found if you canoe or kayak quietly along the shoreline of any of our smaller lakes. Listen for their distinctive "WEET" and watch for a small bird flying near the water or teetering on a shoreline log as they search for a meal of insects or larvae. Last summer I saw Spotted Sandpipers on Foys Lake, Blanchard Lake and also along the Stillwater and Flathead Rivers.

Given the economic challenges of the past year, isn't it nice to know that you can add a sandpiper to your life birding list without taking an expensive trip to some faraway beach? Enjoy our Montana spring—it won't last long and remember that Spotted Sandpipers are only here from late April until mid July! Their stay is brief—just like our beautiful summers!





acnews.wsu.edu

April 2009 Program

CROWN OF THE CONTINENT and its MOSQUITOES



Bruce Gunderson, Coordinator for the Flathead County Mosquito Program, will discuss control and data collection methods used by the local district and will field questions about areas of concern. In addition to his local responsibilities, Gunderson is Vice President of the Montana Mosquito Vector Control Association and will be president in 2011.

Bruce's presentation at the Flathead Audubon general meeting will be followed by Marilyn Blair of COCEEC, Crown of the Continent Environmental Educational Consortium. Marilyn will present the history, activities and products of COCEEC. She has been active with COCEEC for over 10 years.

The Crown of the Continent is one of the premier mountain ecoregions of the world and an integral part of the much larger mountainous landscape Yellowstone to Yukon. The natural processes in the Crown continue to unfold, largely unimpeded by human tinkering. As a result, rare species of fish and wildlife can still be found here, including grizzly bears and gray wolves, lynx and bull trout. For the most part,

the Crown of the Continent is a vibrant, functional ecosystem. It will remain so, provided the people who treasure this place are willing to do three things.

First, they must make themselves aware of the ecological processes that govern this ecosystem and humankind's impact on those processes. Second, they must be concerned about maintaining the health of this ecosystem, and third, they must translate their concerns into beneficial actions. Recognizing the need to assist people with these three things, in 1994 more than 20 education providers came together to form a collaborative organization known as the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem Education Consortium. COCEEC has since been active in developing ecosystem-focused curricula, workshops, and projects. Meeting semiannually, COCEEC represents the ecosystem from the Waterton and Castle-Crown regions in southern Alberta to Missoula, Montana.

Please join Flathead Audubon for these interesting presentations in the Community Room of The Summit, April 13 at 7:00 PM.

MAY FLATHEAD AUDUBON MEETING & POTLUCK



Date: Monday, May 11, 2009

Location: Bethlehem Lutheran Church Basement

Address: 603 South Main Street, Kalispell

Directions: Enter large parking lot behind the church from Sixth Street East or First Avenue East
Drop off your recyclables with Roger at the FVCC Truck at the edge of the parking lot

Times: Doors Open 5:00 PM, Potluck Dinner 5:30 PM, Meeting Begins 6:30 PM



Silent Auction Request: Scour your closets, bookshelves, and CD racks for nature-related items to bring to Flathead Audubon's Silent Auction. This fun display and hot bidding are an important fund raiser for our chapter activities. We depend on members to generously donate items for the auction. Traditional favorites have been bird books, CDs, art work, guided field trips, raft trips, or dinners, spring bedding plants, homemade cookies, and outdoor gear. Use your imagination! Bring your loot to the May Potluck meeting. And remember to bring your wallet, so you can haul off someone else's former prized possessions!

T-I-M-B-E-R ... and birds!

The 20th anniversary Family Forestry Expo is coming soon to Stoltze Trumbull Creek Experimental Forest. This free annual event is sponsored by many local forest industry and recreation groups and has exhibits on forest management, wildlife, fisheries and recreational interests from around the Flathead Valley.



Nancy Zapotocki Photo

About 1200 local 5th graders will tour the field exhibits and nearby lumber mills through the week of May 4 – 8. The general public may attend on May 9

from 9 AM - 4 PM, and May 10 from 11 AM - 3 PM. The weekend highlight is the logger sports and equipment demonstrations; there are other great exhibits, including one from Flathead Audubon. Many people visit our station to learn more about birds of the Flathead and share stories of their own birding adventures. This is a

wonderful opportunity for Audubon members to share their knowledge and love of birds with others. We would love for you to help, so please contact Nancy Zapotocki at naz@centurytel.net to get on board.

BOARD MEMBER MUSINGS

From Jill Fanning

Get Your Lawn and Garden off Drugs

The loss, fragmentation and degradation of habitat is the leading cause of population decline in birds and other wildlife. Our backyard habitats are becoming critically important pieces holding together an increasingly fragmented landscape. In every community, there is the potential to make our backyards and neighborhoods healthier places—for ourselves, and for the birds, butterflies, and other wildlife that are increasingly dependent on them.



and soil healthy. Healthy plants can better resist and recover from pest damage. Plant native flowers, trees, shrubs, and grasses to take advantage of their ability to thrive in your area. Mow higher; a longer, thicker lawn will crowd out weeds. Reconsider what's a weed. Tolerate some plants other than grass. Allow naturally occurring plants to fill in problem spots. Many low-growing wildflowers can tolerate mowing and will add some diversity to your lawn area. Create a mowed meadow. Pest control does not mean pest elimination. Realize that insects can live in your lawn and garden and not cause damage. The mere presence of a potential pest species does not mean you have a problem. Is it abundant enough to cause damage?

Pesticide residues can be found in every living thing. The polar ice cap—about as remote as you can be from a garden—contains DDT, among other man-made chemicals. There is not a water body, animal, tree, bird, fish or human that does not have some pesticide contamination. And the “pests?” They keep coming back, bigger, stronger, and immune to chemicals to which they have adapted.

Despite the prevalence of synthetic pesticides on the shelves of hardware stores and garden centers, you have many other pest control options that pose little or much less toxic risk, even no risk at all. Besides being healthier, many less-toxic options are also less expensive. Many stores in the Flathead Valley are carrying an increasing selection of healthier pest control products and organic fertilizers.

The good news is that some people are taking the time to learn about alternatives to pesticides. Alternatives that design pests out of the equation in the first place or deal effectively with a problem when it does arise. Alternatives that do not harm beneficial organisms, or the soil itself. Alternatives that are not poison based, but are instead based upon cultural practices that build the soil, producing hardy plants that are pest-resistant. Alternatives that are not toxic to humans or wildlife and that will not contaminate our groundwater.

Audubon has published a pamphlet, “Healthier Choices,” which will be available on the back table at our general meetings. National Audubon offers many interesting alternatives at www.audubon.org/bird/at_home/alternatives.html. Visit www.gardensalive.com to order products online. A good book is “How to Get your Lawn and Garden off Drugs” by Carole Rubin, published by Harbour Publishing Co. Ltd., www.harbourpublishing.com. Happy Gardening!

Pests, whether bugs, weeds, or other undesired organisms, are usually the symptom of a problem, rather than the source. We can prevent problems that lead to pest infestations. Keep your plants



A Final Goodbye to Elna Darrow

Elna Darrow, a lifelong leader in conservation and water quality preservation, passed away on February 2, 2009. Elna was the first recipient of the Flathead Audubon “Conservation Achievement Recognition.”

Elna graduated from North Dakota State University with a B.A. in 1964 and a M.A. in 1966, with honors, in economics. I met her when she worked for the Flathead County Planning Department in resource economics. She served ten years on the Board of Directors of the Flathead Lakers, beginning in 1988, and that led to an appointment to the Flathead Basin Commission in 1989 by Governor Stan Stephens. Elna served one term as vice chair and two terms as chair.

During those years, she worked to strengthen the Flathead Basin Commission’s water quality monitoring programs. A major goal for Elna was to promote better coordination with British Columbia regarding issues in the shared North Fork of the Flathead. Under her leadership, the FBC’s Voluntary Nutrient Reduction Strategy was developed, to achieve better water quality in Flathead Lake and other Flathead Basin water bodies.

Elna tirelessly advocated progressive approaches to land use planning and the protection of water quality in the Flathead. Her voice will be sorely missed.

By Bob Lopp



MT Audubon Legislative Update



There is good news and bad news at the 2009 Montana Legislature. The good news is that two of our legislative priorities have passed the House and are now in the Senate. HB 443 will allow Fish, Wildlife and Parks to manage certain nongame species, including prairie dogs. HB 584 creates a stakeholders group to consider wildlife-friendly siting guidelines for wind farms. Both will probably have a difficult time passing the Senate, so we have our work cut out for us. The bad news is that our Big Sky Rivers Act, HB 455, died in the House Local Government Committee on a tie vote. We were optimistic that we had the votes to pass this legislation—and were caught short when it failed.

In our work to combat global warming, two energy efficiency bills are also priorities. These bills have only recently been introduced, so as of this writing, their committee hearings have not occurred yet. HB 641 would create an energy efficiency standard for utilities, which would in turn save ratepayers money on their utility bills, decrease the demand for utility services, and decrease global warming pollution. HB 646 establishes funding for public schools to improve the energy efficiency of buildings, helping schools save money by reducing their energy bills. It also creates good paying jobs and reduces global warming pollution.

Although the legislature is more than halfway done, we have lots of work to do before legislators leave Helena in late-April. Many key pieces of legislation, both good and bad, hang in the balance. Because the status of bills changes on almost a daily basis, the best way to find out the latest on legislation Audubon is involved in is to visit our website at www.mtaudubon.org or contact Janet or Casey at mtmagpie@mtaudubon.org or (406) 443-3949.

From Casey Perkins, MT Audubon



Montana Audubon Offers Awards



Montana Audubon will be giving at least 4 awards at its annual meeting this year. The awards acknowledge individuals who exemplify commitment to birds, other wildlife and habitat conservation. Awards will be given for Conservationist of the Year, Environmental Educator of the Year, Special Achievement, and Lifetime Achievement Award.

To nominate your candidate, please call the Montana Audubon office to request an award nomi-

nation form or download the form from our website at <http://mtaudubon.org/about/awards.html>. To be considered for this year's award, nominations and all supporting material must be postmarked no later than May 8, 2009. Send to Montana Audubon, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624, or by fax: (406) 443-7144. The award ceremony will take place on June 6 at MT Audubon's Bird Festival in Great Falls.

Janet Ellis, Program Director, MT Audubon

AN INVITATION FOR YOU



Montana Audubon & Upper Missouri Breaks Audubon Chapter invite you to attend the June 5-7, 2009 annual Bird Festival in Great Falls. The 28 field trips will certainly be a weekend highlight. Five of your exciting choices are hiking through the riparian and grassland areas along the Thain Creek Trail (Highwood Mts.), participating in a bird banding demonstration, seeing a myriad of birds at nearby Giant Springs State Park, driving to Benton Lake and/or Freezout Lake for a good view of the many shorebirds that inhabit or migrate there, or visiting the Beartooth Wildlife Management Area where flycatchers and Western Tanagers are a possibility! A complete list of the trips is online and in the registration brochure.

The festival includes something for everyone, from children and beginning birders to seasoned twitchers. Montana Audubon Education Director Paul Belanger has organized activities and a field trip for families. The Saturday afternoon speakers are: Bob Martinka (dragonflies), Dan Casey (flycatchers), Sherry Ritter (biomimicry), John Carlson (Montana grassland birds), Kenton Rowe (bird/nature photography), Catherine Wightman (Advances in Bird Conservation in Montana), Janet Ellis (Saving the Birds: Confessions of a Lobbyist), and Amy Cilimburg (Montana IBAs).

Did we mention that ornithologist David Sibley and Montana Senator Jon Tester will be with us Saturday? We hope you will be, too. On-line registration will be available no later than March 25 at <http://mtaudubon.org/birdwatching/festival.html>. A brochure with mail-in registration will be available to download SOON! This brochure will also be mailed to members. Nora Gray, UMBA festival volunteer



HELP WATCHABLE WILDLIFE SURVIVE!



Your Montana income tax form gives you a special opportunity to help all of the birds and other critters that we love but who don't receive any other funding for their habitat needs and protections from being "over-loved." Just check the box on the last page of your tax return, and ask that a few of your refund dollars be sent to this important program. You will feel more cheerful about paying taxes!



2009 APRIL AND MAY FIELD TRIPS

*Includes events sponsored by Flathead Audubon, Native Plant Society, Glacier Institute, National Bison Range, Glacier National Park and Montana Loon Society
All trips are free unless indicated; Everyone Welcome!*



SATURDAY, APRIL 11: CALL OF THE BARRED OWL. If you haven't heard the Barred Owl call "Who Cooks for You," this presents a great opportunity to hear the hoot of the only black-eyed owl in the Flathead Valley. Meet 7:00 PM at the Silver Bullet Bar (off Highway 206 about three miles north of Woody's). There will also be an opportunity for a side trip to a Saw-whet Owl nest nearby. Contact Pete Smith at 250-9624 to sign up.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15: PLANT FAMILY IDENTIFICATION WORKSHOP REDUX. Learn key characteristics of lily, orchid, aster, rose, and buttercup families with lots of pretty wildflower slides, to enhance your knowledge or start learning wildflowers. 7:00 PM, Discovery Square, 504 Nucleus Ave., Columbia Falls.

SUNDAY, APRIL 19: BIRDING AROUND SMITH LAKE. A morning of bird watching at Smith Lake Waterfowl Production Area gets us close to a wide variety of waterfowl, like sandhill cranes, grebes, and lots of ducks. We may also spot a bluebird, meadowlark or bald eagles, osprey and marsh harriers. Meet at Fish, Wildlife & Parks on Meridian Road at 8:00AM. Contact Bob at 270-0371 for more information and to sign up for this trip.

SATURDAY, APRIL 25: THIRD ANNUAL MARTY COHEN STROLL. Celebrate good health and happy spring once again with Ferne and Marty! Meet at 8:00 AM by the ball field pond off of Hwy. 40. In the past, we have seen waterfowl on the pond and riparian species in the wetland. We will stroll along the Whitefish River on the bike path. This two hour trip is accessible to wheelchairs and strollers. Call 755-3704 for information.

TUESDAYS IN MAY AND JUNE: NATIVE PLANTS OF THE WILD MILE. Join Anne Morley of the Montana Native Plant Society for two hours of plant identification along Bigfork's Wild Mile Nature Trail. This trail is level, easy walking, appropriate for all ages. Bring hand lens if possible. Meet at 10:00AM at Showthyme downtown Bigfork. For details, call 886-2242.

WEDNESDAYS OF MAY AND JUNE: BIRDS OF THE WILD MILE. Join Neal Brown of Flathead Audubon for two hours of birding along Bigfork's Wild Mile Nature Trail. This trail is level and appropriate for all ages. Bring binoculars and meet at 9:00AM at the east trail head of the Wild Mile Nature Trail. From Bigfork, travel east on Mt Hwy 209 to Kearney Rapids Bridge. Due to limited parking, carpooling (8:30 AM at Showthyme! in Bigfork) is encouraged. For details, call 837-5018.

SATURDAY, MAY 9: INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY AT THE NATIONAL BISON RANGE. The main event is the summer opening of the splendid Red Sheep Mountain Drive, a wonderful drive through a variety of habitats and a great place to see a broad range of birds. On International Migratory Bird Day, enjoy walks, trivia contests, and free posters. For more information, call the National Bison Range at 406-644-2211.

MID-MAY: SPRING LOONS IN GLACIER NATIONAL PARK. Volunteer in one of Montana's most beautiful places! Volunteers with some birding experience or previous trailing will look for and count Loons of Glacier National Park. Call 888-7986 to sign up. Exact date is still to be determined, depending on spring conditions.

FRIDAY OR SATURDAY, MAY 15 OR 16: SPRING LOON CENSUS DAY. Montana Loon Society and the Montana Common Loon Working Group need volunteers to count loons on lakes in northwest Montana. For information, contact: for areas north of Kalispell, Amy Jacobs at 863-5444; for areas west of Kalispell, 751-5801; for southern Flathead Lake and Mission Valley, Janee Lichtenberg at 883-2888; for the Libby area, Gill at 295-7495; for Swan Valley, Jane Ingebretson at 837-5081; for Eureka area, Christi Ferruzzi at 882-4451.

SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, MAY 16 AND 17: GLACIER INSTITUTE VOLUNTEER WORK WEEKEND. Volunteers will clean, paint, do light carpentry and outdoor work in the Park, and at Big Creek Outdoor Educational Center. Call Glacier Institute at 755-1211.

WEDNESDAY MAY 20: GARDEN PLANTING NIGHT. 5:30 PM; help plant the montane forest garden at Discovery Square. Volunteers are needed! Contact Terry Divoky at 387-5527 or tddovoky@centurytel.net

WEDNESDAY, MAY 27: COLUMBIA MOUNTAIN EVENING STROLL. Join Glacier National Park Ecologist Tara Carolin and botanist Rachel Potter on a 2 hour walk up the Columbia Mountain trail. Meet at 5:30 PM at the Park and Ride at the junction of Hwys 2 and 206 in Columbia Heights. Call Rachel at 892-2446.

SATURDAY, MAY 30: BIRDING IN GLACIER NATIONAL PARK. This trip will focus on identifying neotropical migrants by sight and ear. We may find Harlequin Ducks, vireos, warblers, Black-Backed Woodpeckers, Olive-sided Flycatchers and Northern Hawk Owls. Limited to 20 participants; sign up with Steve Gniadek at 892-7406. Meet at Alberta Visitor Center in West Glacier at 6:00 AM and return at noon. Please note: Glacier National Park entrance fee or park pass is required.

JUNE, JULY AND AUGUST SUMMER ACTIVITIES

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4: NATIVE PLANT GARDEN TOUR. Join native plant gardener Bill McClaren for a wheelchair accessible tour of the FVCC and Central School Museum Native Plant Gardens. Meet behind FVCC's Blake Hall at 7:00PM. If it is raining, meet inside. Contact Bill at 257-2540 or mccl@bresnan.net.

FRIDAY-SATURDAY JUNE 12-13: WARBLER WEEKEND AT TALLY LAKE. Join FAS and Dan and Susannah Casey at the Tally Lake Campground group campsite for an extraordinary weekend of birding and relaxing. We will focus on warbler identification, birding by ear and digi-scoping. All of the warbler species found in NW Montana are found here. You may also bring canoes and kayaks, play volleyball or horseshoes or go hiking on one of many trails close to the campground. Cost is \$12.00 per camper per night. Contact Dan or Susannah at 857-3143 to sign up for the trip.



TUESDAYS, JUNE 16 TO AUGUST 25: VOLUNTEER AT GLACIER NATIONAL PARK NURSERY. Help with seedlings, transplanting, weeding and cleaning, or work on a particular research or experimental project. Bring sack lunch, work gloves and clothes that can tolerate dirt. Drop in and work an hour or stay the entire day. Meet at the Native Plant Nursery at Glacier National Park. Contact Joyce Lapp at 888-7817 for details.

SATURDAY, JUNE 27: A MORNING WITH LOONS. This tour takes us to lakes such as Tally, Blanchard, and Little Stillwater Lakes where loons have nested. We may see loon families with chicks. Meet at Fish, Wildlife, & Parks on North Meridian Road Kalispell at 8:30 AM; return by noon. Sign up by calling 751-4580.



Record Nature's Sounds Like a Pro

Ever wished you could bottle the incredible wave of bird song that arrives with spring? You can! Learn how and benefit science in the process at the **Sound Recording Workshop** offered by Cornell Lab of Ornithology, June 6-13, at San Francisco State University's Sierra Nevada Field Campus in spectacular natural surroundings.

Through daily field recording sessions, lectures, and demonstrations, participants learn how to get the most out of their field recording equipment and take advantage of every recording opportunity. They also receive an introduction to sound analysis software that converts sound waves into visual images so they can "see" a bird's song, note by note.



Alumni of the program have gone on to record natural sounds around the world and contribute recordings to the Macaulay Library archive, the largest collection of bird and animal sounds in the world. The recordings are used for scientific study, conservation, and education, and have appeared in popular media.

To register, contact: Nancy Schrempf at (607) 254-2153 or ns29@cornell.edu

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is a membership institution dedicated to interpreting and conserving the earth's biological diversity through research, education, and citizen science focused on birds. Visit the Lab's web site at www.birds.cornell.edu



Glacier Institute Offers Bird Courses

Owls of the Mission Valley: Hoots and Haunts

Saturday-Sunday, April 4 -5, 2009, 9:00 AM Saturday-3:00 PM Sunday
Instructor: Denver Holt

Student Limit: 12, Activity Level: Easy; For ages 18+
Course Fee: \$275 includes lunch on Sunday

Montana boasts the largest number of breeding owl species of any state, from the massive great horned owl to the miniature pygmy owl. Join celebrated owl expert Denver Holt to learn about the habitats, adaptations for silent flight, hunting, breeding and life histories of these impressive creatures. Field excursions involve short hikes through level, but brushy, terrain into owl habitat to investigate snags and look for nests. Bring sack lunch the first day. Please call (406) 644-2588 for more information.



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



identify.whatbird.com

Glacier's Harlequins

Saturday, May 2, 2009, 8:30 AM - 4:00 PM
Instructor: John Ashley

Student Limit: 12, Activity Level: Easy; Age 12 and up are welcome with an adult
Course Fee: \$65

The Pacific harlequin is the only duck in the world that divides its time between the torrential, cold mountain streams of Glacier National Park and the heavy surf of coastal waters. Sharing the breeding pattern of the salmon, harlequins return each year to the same stream where they hatched, in order to mate. Come with us as we visit McDonald Creek, where an impressive number of these secretive birds return each spring.



fwp.mt.gov

<http://glacierinstitute.org/index.htm>

LIVE & LEARN!



Are you interested in birds? Do you want to learn more? Then sign up for the annual Flathead Audubon **BEAUTY OF BIRDS** course.

"Bird Habitats in the Flathead" is the theme of the 2009 Beauty of Birds course. Audubon volunteers and local bird experts will present four evening classes that focus on the different habitats in which local bird species may be found. Classes will be held Wednesday evenings from 6:00 to 8:00 PM at Flathead High School.

Class speakers and topics will include Chris Peterson and "Forest Birds after the Fires", Bruce Tannehill and "Birds of Riparian Areas", and Amy Jacobs with "Loons and Loon Look-alikes." Dan Casey and Josh Covill will lead a field trip to Smith Lake on the last evening, during which participants will apply their bird identification skills.

For more information and to sign up, please call Flathead High School at 751-3500. There is a \$10 registration fee. Sign up early, as space is limited. Everyone is welcome!



FAS Education Trunks are Out and About in the Spring....Reserve Early...

Conservation Educator, Nancy Zapotocki

Springtime means longer days, warmer temps (maybe), migrating birds, early blooming flowers and the busiest season for the FAS Education Trunks! The Conservation Education Program has a variety of education trunks available for check-out, **FREE**. They need to be signed out to borrow, and the schedule gets busier in Spring, as teachers use them for end of the year activities. They are stored at the Northwest Montana Educational Co-op office located in the Linderman Education Center at 124 3rd Ave. E., Kalispell. We have a partnership with the Co-op that allows us to store our FAS Education Trunks at their office, where they assist us with the scheduling and check-out for the trunks. The Co-op also helps in ensuring that our education trunks meet Montana Content Standards for teachers.

The **NEW** trunks we have for loan are: 1) **Field Studies Education Trunk** suitable for younger grade levels; it includes a set of 10 *Montana Birds* field guides and 10 smaller-sized, child-friendly binoculars. We also still have the original one that is more suitable for older grades with 18 copies of the *National Geographic Field Guide to Birds of North America* and 10 pairs of Nikon binoculars. These Trunks help students gain basic birding skills, including use and care of binoculars and bird identification techniques, 2) **Wetland and Riparian Studies Trunk** developed in partnership with the Flathead Conservation District and appropriate from Elementary to High School. This trunk includes Project WET and Webfoot materials, a local wetland map, a classroom unit for exploring wetlands beginning with *What is a Wetland* and ending with a locally-based activity with maps and aerial photos, called *Tadpole Pond*, developed by our outstanding Education Committee volunteer, Amy Jacobs. Also contains a CD of common wetland animals



developed by our own Bruce Tannehill, "technology and birder extraordinaire", and 3) **Snowy Owls Who Are They? Book and Trunk**. The Owl Research Institute joined with FAS to develop this trunk based on the book of the same name written by our talented Board Member and Education Committee Chair, Ansley Watson Ford, with founder of the Owl Research Institute, Denver Holt. Appropriate from Elementary to Middle School, it includes a copy of the book to read and explore with students and activities to introduce them to this northernmost owl of North America.

Not new, but **REVISED** in 2009 is **Common Birds of the Flathead**, which includes a new CD with a PowerPoint slideshow of common birds and their songs. Bruce Tannehill, FAS Treasurer and remarkable recorder of bird songs, scanned our common bird slides and added their associated songs – WOW! To this list of Education Trunks available for loan, add our ever popular **Bird ID Costume**, to dress up your students with all the major bird adaptations; **Hummingbirds**, to learn all about this lightweight of the bird world, including puppets, a research unit on native hummingbirds and bird specimens; **Cavity Nesters**, to explore the adaptations and life cycles of native birds who use dead trees for food and shelter, including puppets, bird specimens and real cavity nests; **Maggie the Magpie**, a puppet for students to take home and journal about bird activities; and **The Changing Neighborhood**, to relay the story of environmental change and effects on native species using felt figures.

To borrow any of these trunks or our other education materials, please email Nancy Zapotocki at naz@centurytel.net or call the Northwest Montana Educational Co-op at 752-3302.

SPECIAL GIFTS

Each month, we recognize those members who have made special donations to FAS. This list includes all "name your bird" special gifts received through March 18.

**Donations made
February 18—March 18, 2009**

*In Honor of Jean Robocker
Bob Lopp/Prudential match*



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.



*Maybe we can change the world,
If we all start with OURSELVES*
Sunny Lawrence



Swiftly's Big Flight
a review by Linda De Kort



In early January, the Flathead Audubon board voted to sponsor the Vaux's Swift in the **Birds of Montana** book which is currently being compiled by Montana Audubon. **Birds of Montana** will summarize information on the status, distribution, biology, conservation, and historical aspects of the 422 bird species known to occur in the state. Because Montana is one of the few states without a general reference on its birds, the need for this book is great. Former Montana Audubon Director of Bird Conservation Jeff Marks is leading this project; Dan Casey is one of the co-authors. The book will be completed in fall 2011.

Coincidentally, that same week in January, we received a letter from Lee Jackson of Portland Audubon announcing his recently published children's book about a young Vaux's Swift heading south for the winter. Lee subsequently sent a copy of his book, **Swiftly's Big Flight**, for review. I read it to our two grandchildren, ages 4 and 7, and gave it to our daughter who teaches fourth grade. The reviews from the children were very favorable. They enjoyed the simple but endearing illustrations and our grandson, age 4, liked to follow the migration on the map. He also liked the hawk attack and the safe escape to the chimney (oops, I may have given away the ending to this "cliff hangar", pun intended!) Our first grade granddaughter liked to hear about how swifts fly and wondered if it were true that they can fly sleeping, and whether they really have Velcro on their feet. I asked them if they would like me to read it to them again sometime or if they would like to have a copy of this book. They both nodded yes. Our daughter did not think that it would be an appealing book for fourth graders, unless they were doing a research project on Vaux's Swifts or were already familiar with Vaux's Swift colonies. She noted that it is good to have accurate ornithological information in easy-to-read form and found the facts at the back of the book very helpful. I also enjoyed refreshing my knowledge of this amazing bird and realized that I had been saying its name incorrectly; according to Jackson, the accepted pronunciation of Vaux is "vawks," and not "voh."

As a member of our local mosquito board, I was also interested in the estimated amount of flying insects these birds consumed. I asked Lee Jackson if he knew of any definitive studies on mosquito intake by Vaux's Swifts. He said he didn't know of any, then added: "I can tell you, anecdotally, that we live near a big Vaux's Swift migration site and have no trouble with mosquitoes or other bugs! Just a lot of bird "doo" during September!"

Proceeds from sales of **Swiftly's Big Flight**, a 32-page soft cover book at \$7.95, benefit the Audubon Society of Portland's Swift Watch program. A copy will be available to preview at our sales table at the General Meeting in April and the Silent Auction in May. To purchase the book, contact Lee at thinkfast4@aol.com.



Secretary Salazar Releases Study Showing widespread Declines in Bird Populations



Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar released the first ever comprehensive report on bird populations in the United States on March 19, 2009, showing that nearly a third of the nation's 800 bird species are endangered, threatened or in significant decline due to habitat loss, invasive species, and other threats. Also, the report highlights examples, especially waterfowl, where habitat restoration and conservation have reversed previous declines, offering hope that it is not too late to take action to save declining populations.

The report, *The U.S. State of the Birds*, synthesizes data from three long-running bird censuses conducted by thousands of citizen scientists and professional biologists.

In particular, it calls attention to the crisis in Hawaii, where more birds are in danger of extinction than anywhere else in the United States. In addition, the report indicates a 40% decline in grassland birds over the past 40 years, a 30% decline in birds of aridlands, and high concern for many coastal shorebirds. Furthermore, 39% of species dependent on U.S. oceans have declined. However, the report also reveals convincing evidence that birds can respond quickly and positively to conservation action

"Habitats such as Hawaii's are on the verge of losing entire suites of unique bird species," said Dr. David Pashley, American Bird Conservancy's Vice President for Conservation Programs. "In addition to

habitat loss, birds also face many other man-made threats such as pesticides, predation by cats, and collisions with windows, towers and buildings."

Surveys conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Geological Survey, including the annual Breeding Bird Survey, combined with data gathered through volunteer citizen science program such as the National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count, show once-abundant birds such as the northern bobwhite and marbled murrelet are declining significantly. The possibility of extinction also remains a cold reality for many endangered birds.

"Citizen science plays a critical role in monitoring and understanding the threats to these birds and their habitats, and only citizen involvement can help address them," said National Audubon Society's Bird Conservation Director, Greg Butcher.

The United States is home to a tremendous diversity of native birds, with more than 800 species inhabiting terrestrial, coastal, and ocean habitats, including Hawaii. Among these species, 67 are federally listed as endangered or threatened. In addition, more than 184 species are designated as species of conservation concern due to a small distribution, high level of threats, or declining populations.

You may read the full report on the Flathead Audubon website, www.flatheadaudubon.org or at www.stateofthebirds.org.



GOING SOMEWHERE?



Sponsored by *Birding Drives Dakota*, the 7th Annual **Potholes and Prairie Birding Festival** will be held June 3-7, 2009, in Jamestown, North Dakota. Featured are nationally known birding experts Bill Thompson III, of *Bird Watcher's Digest* and wife, Julie Zickefoose, widely published natural history writer and artist, and Sharon Stiteler, also known as *birdchick.com*. For a complete agenda, visit www.birdingdrives.com/Festival%20Documents/festivalbooklet.html

7th Annual Dubois Grouse Days

Fostering Partnerships for Grouse Conservation



What: A two-day event to celebrate the shrub-steppe ecosystem and unique animals which call it home.

When: April 17 & 18, 2009

Where: Dubois, Idaho, a small ranching community in the Upper Snake River Plain

Why: To promote education and conservation of our western rangeland heritage.

Activities: Banquet, arts and craft booths, kids activities and art contest, presentations by biologists and ranchers, raffle and silent auction, guided tours to grouse breeding grounds to view sage and sharp-tailed grouse courtship, Clark County Civil Defense Cave, and The Nature Conservancy's Crooked Creek Ranch.

Sponsored by: North American Grouse Partnership, Upper Valley Sage Grouse Local Working Group, Idaho Department of Fish & Game, US Fish & Wildlife Service, BLM, Clark County Stockgrowers, North American Falconers Association, and the people and businesses of Dubois, Idaho.

Contact: Curtis or Nikki Keetch: ckeetch71@hotmail.com; 208-374-5179 or www.grousedays.org



SPRING RAFFLE THANKS

We wish to thank everyone who participated in the FAS Spring Raffle. This includes a huge "Thank You" to Mike O'Dale, who contributed the raffle prize -- a beautifully matted and framed version of his amazing photo of a dancing Sandhill Crane. The winner of the prize was FAS member Judy Spence.

And our thanks also to all who bought raffle tickets for this event. It is your support that allows us to continue funding our local education and conservation projects. The \$131 raised in this raffle will be used to help fund the activities of our outstanding Education Coordinator, Nancy Zapotocki.



CAN YOU HELP?

Flathead Audubon Needs Volunteer Monitors for Owen Sowerwine

From Linda Winnie, Co-Chair of the FAS Owen Sowerwine Committee

We are looking for volunteers to help Flathead Audubon keep track of activities and maintenance needs at the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area.

How does it work? Take an OSNA Monitoring Checklist and an OSNA map with you on a visit to Owen Sowerwine. The Checklist tells you what sorts of things to look for and where to look. The map shows the areas and trails referenced on the Checklist. If you wish, take a camera to document your observations.

You can pick up a Monitoring Checklist and an OSNA map at the FAS meeting, or ask me to send them to you (contact info below) or print them from the FAS website (click on CONSERVATION, then on Owen Sowerwine Natural Area).

Fill out the Checklist as you walk around Owen Sowerwine. You may also talk with other visitors to Owen Sowerwine, or with Owen Sowerwine neighbors, to find out what they like to do at Owen Sowerwine, how often they visit, and get their comments and suggestions. Report these findings in the "Comments" section of the Monitoring Checklist.

Then send the completed Checklist (and any accompanying pictures) to Brent Mitchell, Co-Chair of the Owen Sowerwine Committee (address on the Checklist). Brent is the data collector on this project.

There are two different ways to help as a Volunteer Monitor.

OPTION 1. Sign up to cover a Volunteer Monitoring Period.

Each of the nine months from March through November is divided in half, to form a total of 18 Volunteer Monitoring Periods. We would like to have at least one volunteer to cover each of these Periods. "Covering" a Monitoring Period simply means making at least one monitoring visit to Owen Sowerwine during the half-month. Having at least one volunteer signed up for each Monitoring Period ensures that we will have at least 2 monitoring visits per month.

You can sign up to cover any Monitoring Period that is convenient for you, even if someone else has already volunteered for the period. Several people can sign up as a monitoring team. The more eyes and ears we have at Owen Sowerwine the better.

But we currently have three periods this summer that no one has yet volunteered to cover:

June 16-30 August 1-15 August 16-31

So we especially need volunteers to sign up for these.

We ask that you make your visit(s) during your Monitoring Period as thorough as possible – recognizing you may have to curtail your visit because of such restrictions as heavy snow, high water, bad weather, or mosquitoes. A weekend visit is best, since weekends are busier times at Owen Sowerwine, but this is not required. A thorough monitoring visit usually takes from 1½ hours to 2 hours.

To volunteer for a monitoring period, or to get more information, please contact me or see me at the upcoming Flathead Audubon meeting.



OPTION 2. You can also help by sending us feedback whenever you visit Owen Sowerwine.

Whenever you go to Owen Sowerwine – whether for just a short time to walk on the trails, or for a few hours of birding, please take a Monitoring Checklist with you. Use the Checklist to indicate what parts of Owen Sowerwine you visited, and what you saw there, and then mail it off to Brent.

Whichever way you choose to help, please be sure to let us know about the birds you see on your visit. You can use the Monitoring Checklist to report your sightings. If you find a species as yet unreported for Owen Sowerwine and tell us about it, we'll make sure that it gets added to the Owen Sowerwine Bird List.

We encourage all Flathead Audubon members to become the Chapter's eyes and ears at Owen Sowerwine. Even when you forget to take a Checklist along on your visit Owen Sowerwine, if you see something of note, please let Brent know. Please contact me at lindawin@centurytel.net or 755-1406; Brent at bkmitch@centurytel.net or 756-8130.



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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**

Website: www.flatheadaudubon.org

FlockMaster - John Kyle: jkyle@fastmail.us

Conservation Educator - Nancy Zapotocki: naz@centurytel.net

FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY DIRECTORY

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2008-2009	Leo Keane	514 Pine Place, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-5807

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Executive Director: Steve Hoffman
shoffman@mtaudubon.org

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FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY

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