



the Pileated Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

VOLUME 36

NUMBER 3

NOVEMBER 2011



Photo by Sheryl Hester

OSNA Work Day, 40 Happy Workers

Forty workers enjoyed digging trails, repairing bridges, pulling weeds, stringing fence and cutting brush. They also enjoyed the cookies, cakes, juice and coffee served by the hospitality volunteers. Despite the whirl of activity, no toes or fingers were lost and no discouraging words were heard.

Part of the work session was clearing a corridor for a wheel chair trail 800 feet into OSNA from the Treasure Lane entrance. Major work on the trail will start this coming spring.

Thanks to all the folks who helped make the workday a success, to Terry and Sally Welder for letting workers meet at their Kalispell Montessori School and to Jane and Bob Lopp for once again submitting the work day project to Prudential Insurance for a grant consideration.

Richard Kuhl, OSNA Co-Chair

(Readers of electronic Pileated Post, see more OSNA Work Day photos on For E-Your Eyes Only!)

CHALLENGE GRANT!

FAS was recently awarded a \$1000 challenge grant by the Cinnabar Foundation. This means that Cinnabar will contribute \$1000 to our Education Program if we can match the \$1000. Any donations we receive in the next 2 months will count toward this match. This would be an excellent time to make a donation to our Education Program.

Mike Fanning, Finance Chairman



"Now listen here, guys. As I've advised you before....."

.....when renewing your Flathead Audubon membership, be sure to check the box for Electronic Delivery of *The Pileated Post*. *The Post* comes right to your email box, your own personal copy, in full color, and with the addition of the wildly popular page "For E-Your Eyes Only!" You also get *The Post* earlier than you would receive the paper copy. So save a tree, save FAS your printing and postage costs, and save a little time each month to read YOUR newsletter – E-cover to E-cover!

NOVEMBER FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

Monday, November 14, 2011: Flathead Audubon General Meeting. 7 PM at The Summit. Dr. Pete Smith presents "Birding the Falklands, South Georgia and Antarctic Peninsula." Details on page 3.

Monday, November 7, 2011: Flathead Audubon Board of Directors Meeting. 6 PM at 295 Third Ave. E.N. All are welcome.

BIRD OF THE MONTH

By Gael Bissell

DON'T YOU WISH YOU WERE A REDHEAD? Life History and Ecology of One of Our Unusual Local Nesting Waterfowl

Each spring, just after the ice melts and the bulk of the Northern Pintails and American Wigeon pass through our waters, I quickly look for the brightly colored Redheads (*Aythya americana*). I am not sure why I like these particular waterfowl; perhaps it's because when I see them in the Flathead Valley, they are in small groups and are a bit less common. Although Redheads aren't as brightly plumed as Harlequins or Wood ducks, the male's rufous head and neck lights up when it catches the sunlight. This waterfowl's red head contrasts dramatically with its black chest and grayish back and black tail. The Redhead's round and lighter head and blueish, relatively small bill help distinguish this species from the also reddish-colored, rather heavy, straight-billed cousin, the Canvasback. Redheads sit rather upright in the water, and they are a bit smaller than mallards, usually 19-20" in length. In flight, they look much like a mallard with shallow but faster wing beats.

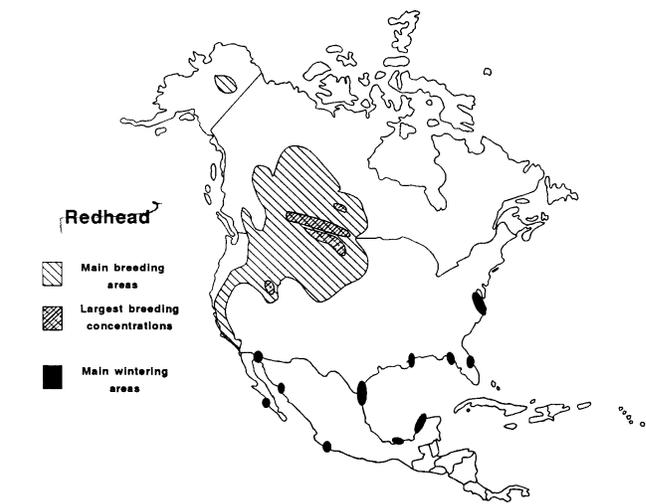


All of the five species in the genus *Aythya* (Canvasback, Tufted duck (west coast), Ring-necked duck, and Greater and Lesser Scaup) are divers, feeding on aquatic invertebrates, insects, and plants. Apparently, the six species can interbreed with only the male hybrids identifiable.

Redheads nest primarily on permanent and semi-permanent non-forested marshy lakes and ponds, with the highest densities reported in the Dakotas, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba (Fig. 1). They also nest in high numbers in the Salt Lake area of Utah, eastern Montana, and the Mission Valley south of Flathead Lake. Redheads winter in large mixed flocks mostly on hypersaline southwest lakes and sheltered saltwater bays along Mexico, the Gulf Coast. They are tolerant to salt in winter (like loons), one of the characteristics that differentiate Redheads from Canvasbacks and points to an evolutionary origin in the arid areas of the West. In spring, Redheads tend to migrate in small groups, arriving in our area just after the peak migration of mallards and Pintails. As they move through or settle on non-forested local ponds and wetlands, the males and females are quite active and noisy, bobbing their heads in the annual mating ritual for this species. Maybe you've heard the male make a far-carrying catlike, nasal "waow?"

Probably one of the most interesting life history facts about Redheads is that they are parasitic! No, they don't carry more parasites than other waterfowl. They, like cowbirds, will place their eggs in the nests of other waterfowl (Mallards, Pintails, Scaup, Teal, etc.) to increase their chances of reproductive success. Actually, some authors called them semi-parasitic. Under stressful or poor conditions (e.g., dry years), younger females are entirely parasitic while older females nest normally. During normal water years, females will lay 6-10 parasitic eggs in other waterfowl nests prior to their own nest building. In some cases, particularly as waterfowl densities increase, Redhead parasitism will decrease the productivity of the host waterfowl species.

Locally, you can see a large number of Redheads both migrating through and breeding in the Mission Valley pothole area of Ninepipe National Wildlife Refuge, Ninepipe Wildlife Management Area, and associated Confederated Salish and Kootenai tribal wildlife lands. Redheads arrive in pairs in March and rest/feed on the larger water bodies. Those that remain after April soon move to the smaller, shallow wetlands where they will either parasitize other waterfowl nests and/or nest or hatch their own broods. If successful, they will gradually move their own broods to larger and deeper wetlands.



Redheads, continued on next page ...

BIRDING THE FALKLANDS, SOUTH GEORGIA AND ANTARCTIC PENINSULA

Our November program begins in Dr. Pete Smith's Flathead Valley "backyard" and ends on the Antarctic Peninsula. If you joined one of Flathead Audubon's rare evening field trips a few years ago, you undoubtedly heard with amazement how Pete Smith calls in the Barred Owls near his home. Pete will remind us of those delightful field trips by beginning his program with some exceptional Barred Owl photos.

Next we will fast-forward to January 2011 and 19 days on a small expedition ship at sea exploring some of the remotest places in the world. Pete embarked on his cruise in Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego, Argentina, the southernmost city in the world. Following a successful, but memorable, negotiation of the infamous heavy seas and bad weather of the Drake Passage, the cruise ship headed for the Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic, later landing on the sub-Antarctic island of South Georgia, and then the Antarctic Peninsula.

Pete's photographs include penguin colonies, albatrosses, seabirds endemic to the Scotia Sea, as well as glaciers and Zodiac cruising among icebergs. He will describe heart-stopping experiences he survived in those frigid, rough seas.



birdingnz.co.nz

Pete has been birding all his life. He has seen 1,825 bird species throughout the world. Antarctica is the sixth continent on which he has birded. Africa will be his next birding destination. Pete is a pathologist at Kalispell Regional Medical Center. He lives near Lake Blaine. Please join us for high adventure in the Antarctic at 7 PM on Monday, November 14 in the Community Room of The Summit, 205 Sunnyview Lane, Kalispell.



wikipedia.org

Audubon 2012 calendars will be available for sale at the October general meeting

SAVE THIS DATE!

WHO: People Who Love Birds & Wildlife

WHAT: Montana Audubon's Annual "Wings Over the Big Sky" Bird Festival

WHERE: Hilton Garden Inn, Kalispell

WHEN: June 8-10, 2012

WHY: Great Speakers, Field Trips & Camaraderie

HOW: Register Spring 2012



PUBLICIST WANTED

Like to write? The Publicity Committee needs someone to write articles about FAS programs and events to send to local news media. Call Paula Smith at 837-0181 or email paulabobsmith@centurytel.net

Redheads, continued from page 2 ...

A graduate study during the early 1960s in the Mission Valley found that, at that time, there were about 87-106 pairs of Redheads nesting annually in the Ninepipe area in densities ranging from 1 nest/5 acres to 1 nest/175 acres (average of 1/25 acres) depending on habitat. Only about 15% of the studied Redhead nests successfully hatched during the 1960s study, but this did not include results of parasitism. This information resulted in identifying the Mission Valley as one of the highest known nesting densities of Redheads in the lower 48 states. John Grant, Ninepipe WMA manager, reports that the size and overall condition of the Mission Valley pothole-wetland complexes have dramatically improved over the last 50 years due to increased protections by agencies and tribes and ongoing restoration and creation of new wetlands across this landscape. This area is also rich in nesting waterfowl that are not as common in the Flathead area north of Flathead Lake. Be sure to go on one of Flathead Audubon's spring waterfowl tours to the Mission Valley to see these and many other waterfowl species typical of this rare pothole and grassland habitat in northwest Montana.

References:

* "Breeding Ecology of the Redhead Duck in the Western Montana," John T. Lokemoen, Journal of Wildlife Management Vol. 30, No. 4, Oct. 1966, pps. 668-681.

* Ducks, Geese and Swans of North America, Frank C. Bellrose. Wildlife Management Institute, reprinted by Stackpole Books, 1976, pps. 314-324.

* "Life History Traits and Habitat Needs of the Redhead," Christine M. Custer, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center, LaCrosse, Wisconsin. Chapter 13.1.11, Fish and Wildlife Leaflet, 1993. (http://www.nwrc.usgs.gov/wdb/pub/wmh/13_1_11.pdf)





BOARD MEMBER CHIRPS & SQUAWKS



From
Kathy Ross, Field Trip Co-Chair

IN APPRECIATION OF OUR CHANGING SEASON

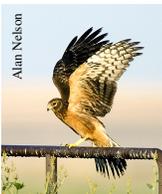
By the time this is in print, we will be deep into the changing season, but today I sit watching one golden leaf let go, then another, and another. I am reminded of a lovely autumn poem by David Ignatow:

*One leaf left on a branch
and not a sound of sadness
or despair. One leaf left
on a branch and no unhappiness.
One leaf left all by itself
in the air and it does not speak
of loneliness or death.
One leaf and it spends itself
in swaying mildly in the breeze.*

For myself, fall has a contented joyfulness that no other season can rival. It is certainly a colorful time of year as the golden leaves grab every bit of light possible, even on dark rainy days. The Black-capped and Mountain Chickadees along with young Robins still splash in the bird bath amongst the fallen leaves, and Nuthatches and Cedar Waxwings still call from forests and tree tops. In the mountains, yet to feel the blanket of protective snow, excitement still fills the air as the Hawk and Eagle migration continues, and in the

wetlands, waterfowl are on the move; some will linger and some will move south. The flocks of Clark's Nutcrackers are high profile, and Pine Grosbeaks swoop and chatter in high elevation conifers. If I could put them all together in one place, it would make a great field trip.

It is a time to look forward to the return of Rough-legged Hawks, and bare tree limbs allowing us a clearer view of our year-round avian residents-- Woodpeckers, Owls and Golden-crowned Kinglets come to mind. Townsend Solitaires silhouetted on tree tops, their clear "solitaire" whistle-like call adds an element of life to a quiet winter landscape. Always with the colder seasons, there is hope for a big increase of the vole population, along with colder weather north of us that might encourage the Snowy Owls, a real "snowbird" to move south this year. Or the possibility of entertaining flocks of small Common Redpolls showing up to feed outside your door. If you haven't seen their artful track patterns in the snow, watch for them this season. Gifts of the fall and winter seasons to hope for and look forward to. Keep looking! The weather may change but so too the infinite possibilities



Jewel Basin Hawk Watch Update

Tuesday, September 20 was our 18th survey of the 2011 hawk migration season at the Jewel Basin Hawk Watch northeast of Bigfork. So far this year, the numbers of early season migrants, particularly immature Accipiters, are well down from previous years. Whether these numbers represent a delayed migration, or low reproduction, will remain to be seen; by the time you read this newsletter, perhaps we will have seen peak days like those of 2010, when more than 1,000 birds were counted during the last week of September. Here are our totals as of September 20, which was our best day of the year to date, with 93 birds of 8 species counted:

Osprey: 2	Broad-winged Hawk: 4	Peregrine Falcon: 4
Bald Eagle: 4	Red-tailed Hawk: 58	Prairie Falcon: 6
Northern Harrier: 24	Rough-legged Hawk: 2	Unidentified Falcon: 4
Sharp-shinned Hawk: 200	Unidentified Buteo: 6	Unidentified Raptor: 9
Cooper's Hawk: 66	Golden Eagle: 31	Total: 483 raptors
Northern Goshawk: 9	American Kestrel: 32	
Unidentified Accipiters: 18	Merlin: 4	

This hawk watch depends heavily on the efforts of volunteers, most of them members of Flathead Audubon, as well as on direct financial support from both Flathead Audubon and Flathead National Forest. These grants fund the coordination by American Bird Conservancy, and a seasonal technician to conduct 20 or more surveys each season. This year John Hughes is working as the technician. Contact **Dan Casey at 406-270-5941**, if you would like to participate in any of the surveys this season, which will continue until November 1, weather allowing.

From Dan Casey, ABC Hawk Watch Coordinator

Smithsonian Scientists Discover New Bird Species



26 August 2011 – Scientists at the Smithsonian National Zoological Park have confirmed the discovery of a new species of seabird, based on a specimen collected in 1963 on Midway Atoll, Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. This is the first time that an entirely new bird species has been discovered in the United States in decades – most species discoveries after 1900 have been in tropical rain forests, primarily in South America and Southeastern Asia. The new species, “Bryan’s Shearwater” *Puffinus bryani* is named after Edwin Horace Bryan Jr., curator of collections at the B.P. Bishop Museum in Honolulu from 1919 until 1968. To learn more about this exciting discovery, visit the [Smithsonian website](#).

What do you know about global warming? Can you tell FACT from SCIENCE FICTION? Want a free “Got Science?” sticker?



openparachute.wordpress.com

Take the true or false quiz that pits your knowledge of global warming against public officials, media personalities and political hacks. See if you can tell who’s “Got Science” versus who’s spreading propaganda that’s “Not Science” about global warming.

Get a free “Got Science?” sticker, no matter how well you do on the quiz. I did! It’s by the Union of Concerned Scientists, so you know it’s the real deal. Check it out: http://www.gotsci.org/?s_src=gotsci2taf

Good luck on the quiz!

From Linda DeKort



PROJECT FEEDERWATCH STARTS IN NOVEMBER

Join the thousands of FeederWatchers across North America who count the birds at their feeders from **November through early April**. All participants receive a subscription to the Lab’s quarterly newsletter, *BirdScope*, and the project’s annual summary publication, *Winter Bird Highlights*.

Project FeederWatch is one of the easiest and most popular citizen science projects available to birders in North America. With thousands of participating birders each year, Project FeederWatch is able to collect data about backyard birds that can be used to promote conservation and other important initiatives.

Any interested birdwatcher can participate in Project FeederWatch, as well as groups such as families, church or youth groups, classrooms, senior centers and businesses. The program is suitable for all ages and experience levels, and participating can help any birder perfect their backyard birding skills and learn more about their local flocks.



sbcounty.gov

Participating in the program is simple. The participant designates the area to be watched, usually a backyard or garden that can be easily seen from windows. You also choose which days to watch the birds, allowing you flexibility to match your schedule. The days you count must be at least five days apart, and you will count for two consecutive days as your “count period.” Depending on how you choose to submit your data, you may watch birds weekly or biweekly. At the end of that period, you will report the highest totals of birds you observed to be correlated with thousands of other watchers’ data.

Data for Project FeederWatch can be reported online or via mail-in forms. Online reporting is preferred for timeliness and convenience, but it is not required. When you report your bird count totals, use only the highest total of birds observed at one time to prevent counting the same birds twice. For example, if during your first observation you noted three black-capped chickadees at your feeder but an hour later there were four black-capped chickadees, you would report a total of four.

There is a participation fee of \$15 (\$12 for Cornell Lab of Ornithology Members and \$35 CAN for Canadian participants) to join the program. The fees pay for the provided materials, online support, the extensive website and data analysis.

Now is a perfect time to join this worthwhile citizen science project. No shivering in the outdoors or strenuous hiking involved. Sign up at www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/ and start counting!



The student’s name who submitted the thank-you that appeared in *Kidz Korner* in last month’s *Pileated Post* is Quentin Kennedy and he is from Creston School.



Field Trips Leading or Learning Opportunities Abound



As the excitement of the fall migration winds down and summer feathered migrants move to warmer climates for the winter, we look forward to the holidays and Christmas Bird Counts. With all of this going on, scheduled field trips slow down for a couple of months. But as the New Year rolls around, keep in mind winter offers great birding opportunities and there will be exciting field trips scheduled for January and February, especially in the Mission Valley and Ninepipes area. So watch for the winter field trip schedule in the December and January *Pileated Post*.

Also if you would like to share your favorite birding area with others, we love to have new field trip leaders. Experience as field trip leader is not required, just your enthusiasm and love for the birds you know and their habitats. Everyone shares their knowledge on field trips and we all learn together! Contact Kathy Ross, 837-3837, or Gael Bissell, 755-8709, if you would like to lead a field trip. It is good to let us know no later than the 10th of the month of the month before you would like to lead a trip so that we can announce it in *The Pileated Post*. Look forward to hearing from you!

Kathy Ross & Gael Bissell, Field Trip Co-Chairs

REDUCE

FAS RECYCLING TURNS THE CORNER

Once in a while, Progress creeps up on us unawares, so that we don't even realize, until we're clobbered with it, that we have really come a long way. Too many years ago to count, one of our very influential members, Ferne Cohen, encouraged/cajoled/persuaded Flathead Audubon to begin a recycling program for our members, even though recycling at that time was considered sort of "out there." Back then, there were just two recycling centers in Kalispell and one forward-thinking trash hauler who would accept some recycling in Whitefish.

But Flathead Audubon members, accustomed to being on the leading edge of environmentalism, brought newspapers, milk bottles, pop cans and more, first to the Mitchell Recycling Wagon, made from an old pickup truck box, and later to the sleek white trailer of FVCC's Green Team's Recycling Club. Over the years, we have literally kept TONS of materials out of the landfill and sent them back into circulation in a different form.

This fall, FVCC told us that they would no longer be able to bring their trailer to The Summit prior to our general meetings. When the FAS Board discussed where to take the recycling program at this juncture, we realized that all of our persistence in recycling has been SUCCESSFUL. Not only have we diverted tons of materials from the waste stream of the Flathead, but we have continued to get the word out, cooperate with other recycling-inspired groups, and "walk the talk." There are now recycling Blue Bins all over the Flathead, in locations that are convenient to everyone. The grocery stores take back their plastic bags, Target recycles glass, and our landfill even recycles hazardous waste and composts. Several commercial recyclers offer their services for a fee. Even the number of thrift stores has tripled.

So, although we won't have the camaraderie of tossing piles of newspapers from car to trailer in a blinding snowstorm, the FAS recycling program goes on. Next month's general meeting and *Pileated Post* will feature a big list for you of locations of all of the Blue Bins and other places that you can take your recyclables. We encourage you to help take our program into the community. Now that's PROGRESS!

From Kay Mitchell, FAS Board

REUSE

REFUSE

RECYCLE

Sponsors of FAS Conservation Education Program

Tyler Bebee, Senior Financial Consultant
D.A. Davidson & Co.
200 First Ave. E., K-M Building
Kalispell, MT
(406) 752-6212



Thanks!

...to those below who have made special donations to Flathead Audubon from September 18 through October 18, 2011

Snowy Owl \$250+
Paula Smith



Dan Casey Photo

Merlin \$100+
Roy Dimond



merlin-os.co.uk

Kestrel \$50+
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In Memory of Val Ellingsen
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Kathy Ross
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My Own Vision
Brian Marotz
Mrs. Louise Beiser



Nqpc.org

SPECIAL GIFTS

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



Dave Menke, USFWS

- 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 _____

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Please send a notification of this gift to:

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Please do not acknowledge my gift in the Pileated Post

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Please make checks payable to:

Flathead Audubon Society

P.O. Box 9173

Kalispell, MT 59904

Your gift is tax deductible.

PICK YOUR PIC

Scroll through your bird-related photos and choose your best one to email to lin-dawin@centurytel.net for one of the next editions of "For E-Your Eyes Only." You'll be surprised at how good your handiwork looks in print! Send by the 18th for inclusion in next month's Post!



NOVEMBER 2011



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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: lindawin@centurytel.net**

Website: www.FlatheadAudubon.org

FlockMaster - John Kyle: jkyle@fastmail.us

Conservation Educator - Ashley Mason: AudubonAshley@gmail.com

FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY DIRECTORY

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Vice-President	Bob Lopp	(boblopp@bresnan.net)	752-7026
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2011-2012	Kathy Ross	(mkat@montanaport.net)	837-3837
2011-2012	Kay Mitchell	(kbmitch@centurytel.net)	756-8130

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www.MTAudubon.org

Executive Director: Steve Hoffman

shoffman@mtaudubon.org

Board President: Dan Sullivan
443-4229



FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY



Membership
Individual or Family

Basic Membership \$20
(Pays for newsletter and operating costs)

Supporting Membership \$35
(Extra \$15 funds local projects such as grants, scholarships, meetings, and Christmas Bird Count)

Additional Donation of \$ _____
to Education Fund
Owen Sowerwine Fund
Wherever needed

Name _____

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State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____ - _____

Email _____

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20 Hanson Doyle Lane
Whitefish, MT 59937

O WEN SOWERWINE WORK DAY LOTS OF WORK AND FUN

Photos by Sheryl Hester and Linda Winnie



Frank & Dennis Work on the Kiosk/LW



Group Photo before Work Starts/SH



Brent & Steve man the power tools/LW



John clears trail/LW



La Presidente—a great hole filler!/LW



Upgrading Greenridge entry gate/SH



Ben & Bob Lee move footbridge/SH



Gael—Ace Weed Puller!/SH



Roy—Champion Weed Puller!/SH



Linda & Steve brush out trail corridor/SH



Pat brings out the weeds/SH



Steve clips overhead branches/SH



Bob Lopp & Barb work on the new trail/LW



New Accessible Trail Corridor Entry/LW



Trail Corridor brushed out/LW



Accessible View Area next to Apple Tree/LW