



the Silent Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

VOLUME 36

NUMBER 7

MARCH 2012

WHITEFISH MENTOR COMBINES KIDS & CONSERVATION



In 1985 Whitefish High School hired Chris Ruffatto to teach courses in Earth Science, and Power and Energy. Bringing Chris on board was an outstanding decision.

During the past 27 years, students have been exposed to one of the best teachers I have ever had the privilege to work with. His teaching style, from lectures to labs, and his willingness to spend extra time with students is truly outstanding.

Chris has had the opportunity to hike, and ski the mountains, canoe and kayak the lakes and streams. Through these activities, he developed a keen interest in the natural areas of northwest Montana, and why it is so important to protect them.

In 1995, Chris and two other Flathead teachers became aware of a program in western Washington called "Adopt a Stream." The goal was long term monitoring of the physical, chemical, and biological health of streams and rivers. After hours of brainstorming, Project Free Flow was created in the Flathead. Within a short time, 12 schools, with over 1200 high school students were working each year in the

**CHRIS
RUFFATTO**

field to gather data on our streams and rivers. With financial assistance from Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Whitefish School, and other sources, the program has been recognized state wide. An in-service Free Flow training program brought 20 teachers to The Big Creek Glacier Institute. Monies were made available for sets of 16-20 water quality test kits to be used by participating students, and teachers.

Chris Ruffatto chose Haskell Creek as the Whitefish High School study site. With Big Mountain expansion, Forest Service and private logging, homes being built, and fire-scarred areas, this seemed a logical place to do long-term monitoring. For the past 16 years, close to 500 Whitefish students have been involved in monitoring this site, producing two publications and using data in local watershed resource planning. The collected information has been well-received and valuable. It is also important to realize the valuable experiences the students have had. Well done Chris! Congratulations on receiving Flathead Audubon Society's Conservation Achievement Recognition!

Bill Schustrom



OUR MEMBERSHIP SUPPORTS CONSERVATION EDUCATION PROGRAM

During the last six months, the Board of Directors has appealed to the FAS membership to help keep our Conservation Education Program funded. You have contributed generously! Donations from members and business sponsors from September through November were \$2,360. Donations from members in response to our year-end appeal are \$4,768 to date. This goes a very long way toward keeping our Conservation Educator on the job for the remainder of our fiscal year. Because of its success, the Board is considering the adoption of an annual year-end appeal as one means of funding this important program. **THANK YOU** for making this happen!

From President Paula Smith



MARCH FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR



Monday, March 12, 2012: Flathead Audubon General Meeting. 7 PM at The Summit. Jan Wassink presents "Birds of The Cloud Forest—A Journey to Ecuador." Details on page 3.

Monday, March 5, 2012: FAS Board of Directors Meeting. 6 PM at 295 3rd Ave. EN. All are welcome.

Saturday & Sunday, March 31-April 1: Freezout Lake Wildlife Management Area Field Trip. Details on page 4.

BIRD OF THE MONTH

By Lewis Young

WESTERN GREBE (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*)

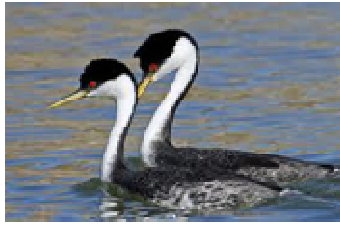
The Western Grebe is a striking black and white bird with a long slim neck and a long bill. The largest of our grebes with a length of 25 inches, a wingspan of 24 inches, and weighing just over 3 pounds, they have a long greenish-yellow sharp-pointed bill, and black (or dark gray) and white plumage. The dark plumage is found on the top of the head, back of the neck, and the upper body. The white is found on the chin, front of the neck and the underside of the body. At close range, the red eye may be seen. Their tail feathers are very small and hidden among other body feathers. A gregarious, colonial nesting species, they are infrequently seen on land or in flight. Males and females are generally indistinguishable.

The Western Grebe is one of seven species of grebes in North America and easily separated from other grebes, except the Clark's Grebe, which is also occasionally found in our area. Differences in bill color and the pattern of white on the face allow the two species to be differentiated. The Clark's has a bright yellow or orange bill and white surrounding the eye, while the Western has a yellowish green bill and dark surrounding the eye.

Western Grebes are famous for their elaborate courtship displays with different phases at different stages of breeding. Perhaps most recognized is the ballet-like rushing display in which 2 birds in unison rear to an upright posture with necks kinked and wings swept back, race across the lake surface with a great pattering of feet, then dive underwater.

Their nest is a floating heap of plant material anchored to standing vegetation in a shallow water marsh. Their 2-4 bluish-white eggs become brown-stained over time and both sexes incubate the eggs for about 24 days. Hatching is not synchronized, so the last egg may be abandoned in the nest. Chicks can swim and dive from birth and often ride upon parents' backs for shelter, protection, and brooding.

Adults may even dive with chicks on their backs. Chicks have bare yellow spots on their heads that become vivid red when begging for food or alarmed. They take their first flight in



mtfwp.gov

about 10 weeks.

The diet of the Western Grebe is mostly fish, although they are also known to eat crustaceans, insects, worms, and salamanders. Most foraging occurs at or near the water's surface, but they can dive to 90 feet. They also eat large numbers of their own feathers,

primarily from their flanks and belly. This may protect their stomachs from puncture by indigestible parts of the prey they eat and the feathers also provide the base material for regurgitated pellets of undigested items such as fish bones.

Western Grebes summer mainly on freshwater lakes with large areas of open water and marsh vegetation throughout much of the western US and southern Canada. They winter on sheltered bays or estuaries along the Pacific coast, and inland on large freshwater lakes (rarely rivers) primarily in the south-western US and parts of Mexico. Western Grebes may

be found in the Flathead Valley and surrounding area both summer and winter.

Western Montana hosts overwintering birds on large lakes like Flathead Lake and Kootenai Reservoir when they are ice free. Flocks of over 50 birds have been observed on Kootenai Reservoir on the Eureka Christmas Bird Count and flocks of over 200 birds during fall migration. Migration between summer and winter ranges is believed to occur at night in flocks.

In the early 1900's, tens of thousands of Western Grebes were killed for their "fur," which was used to make hats and coats. Natural predators include large fishes such as bass and pike, turtles, herons, gulls, raccoons, and mink. Western Grebes are susceptible to a variety of toxins and human related influences. PCB's and organochlorine pesticides cause eggshell breakage and nesting failure. Ingestion of lead fishing weights and lures cause lead poisoning. Nesting and feeding habitat is often altered by human activities such as development on lakes, vegetation clearing, boating, and alteration of water levels.

Western Grebes contribute to the wonderful birdlife diversity on our lakes, and should you ever be fortunate enough to observe their mating "dance," you will be enthralled and have a great memory to associate with sightings at other times of the year.



March Program

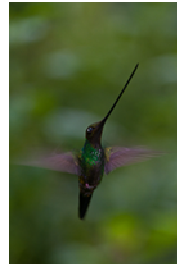
BIRDS OF THE CLOUD FOREST—A JOURNEY TO ECUADOR



Jan Wassink has many accomplishments. He is a professional photographer, author or coauthor of seven books, wildlife biologist, Administrator of the International Llama Registry, Flathead Audubon Director and Website Committee Chair. At the general membership meeting

of Flathead Audubon on March 12, Jan will show photographs of his recent journey to Ecuador, a poor, but beautiful South American country that borders the equator. Ecuador is said to be one of the most bio-diverse countries in the world, with over 1,600 bird species.

During September 2011, a group of ten photographers from Montana, North Dakota and Oklahoma flew to Quito, Ecuador, to photograph birds endemic to the steep terrain and lush vegetation of the cloud forest. The group included Flathead Audubon's Jan Wassink and was led by Flathead resident Tom Ulrich. Travelling by van, the photographers visited five lodges during the following ten days—three on the west slope and two on the east slope of the Andes. They spent two days photographing the birds in and around each lodge. Many bird species were the same at each location, yet each also had different species because of differences in

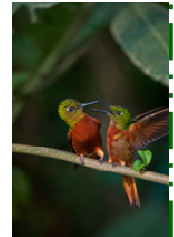


altitude and slope. In effect, each lodge, between three thousand to over nine thousand feet in elevation, had its "specialty species."

Several lodges had checklists of over 300 birds. However, the purpose of this trip was not to list as many species as possible, but to photograph the details of certain species, especially hummingbirds. Collectively, the group saw 100 bird species, 25 of which were hummingbirds. Jan was able to take several hundred photographs of several of the hummingbird species! These include the Violet-tailed Sylph, Chestnut-breasted Coronet, Green Thorntail, Green-crowned Woodnymph, Rufous-tailed, Andean and Sword-billed Hummingbirds.

Jan's most recent book is *Watchable Birds of the Black Hills, Badlands and Northern Great Plains*. He and his wife Dar live in Kalispell.

Come travel to equatorial South America with us at 7 PM on Monday, March 12 at The Summit, 205 Sunnyview Lane in Kalispell. Also at this meeting, Chris Rufatto will receive Flathead Audubon's Conservation Achievement Recognition.



BEAUTY OF BIRDS

APRIL 4, 11, 18, 25
6-8 PM

All for only \$10!

Sponsored by Flathead Audubon
Learn about local Flathead birds!
Call 752-0000 to sign up



TAXES ARE FOR THE BIRDS!

Be sure to mark the Non-game Check-off box on your Montana tax return. Your generosity supports birds, butterflies, frogs, salamanders and many other needy "critters."



FLATHEAD AUDUBON MISSION STATEMENT

THE FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY IS A LOCAL CHAPTER
OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY.



- ◆ OUR MISSION IS TO CONSERVE BIRDS, WILDLIFE HABITAT, AND ECOSYSTEM DIVERSITY.
- ◆ WE PROMOTE AWARENESS AND APPRECIATION OF THE NATURAL WORLD THROUGH EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND ADVOCACY PROGRAMS.
- ◆ WE WORK WITH DIVERSE GROUPS AND AGENCIES TO ACHIEVE SOUND DECISIONS ON NATURAL RESOURCE ISSUES.
- ◆ WHILE FOCUSING OUR EFFORTS IN NORTHWEST MONTANA, WE BELIEVE IN THE PROTECTION OF THE EARTH AND ALL OF ITS INHABITANTS.

FIELD TRIPS OF EVERY FEATHER

All FAS field trips are free and open to the public and are geared for all ages and levels of field experience. They are led by area biologists, retired professionals, and some of the best birders in the region. For more information, contact Kathy Ross, 837-3738, or Gael Bissell, 261-2255, or the individual field trip leader below.

SATURDAY & SUNDAY, MARCH 31-APRIL 1: FREEZOUT LAKE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA FIELD TRIP.

Spring waterfowl migration at Freezout Lake WMA is an experience not to be missed. Snow Geese numbers often total 100,000 or more, along with thousands of swans and a wonderful diversity of ducks and other birds (more than 40 species most years). The trip leaves at 10:30 AM Saturday from the west end of the downtown Super 1 parking lot on First Avenue East in Kalispell. We will arrive at the WMA in time to watch the white geese leave Freezout Lake for the surrounding barley fields that afternoon. Make your own reservation for Saturday night; Chateau options include the Stage Stop Inn (888-466-5900), Bella Vista Motel (406-466-5711), Big Sky Motel (406-466-5318) and the Gunther Motel (877-466-5444). After watching the geese leave the lake at dawn Sunday morning, brunch, and one more visit to the WMA, we will head for home in time to arrive in Kalispell by 5 PM. Contact Dan Casey at 857-3143 or danielcasey55@gmail.com to arrange carpooling and to sign up for the trip.



Lower Valley Field Trip

Thanks to pre-trip publicity in the Daily InterLake, Bob Lee's field trip in the Lower Valley attracted a record **60 participants**, plus one Highway Patrolman (who thought the long line of vehicles and large group by the roadside meant a wreck)! Photos by Sheryl Hester, field trip participant.



Report from January Glacier Park Field Trip

Twenty-two participants, including 14 non-members saw Common Goldeneye and Bufflehead ducks on McDonald Creek above the Apgar Bridge. Along the creek at the oxbow, we saw an adult Bald Eagle fly down the creek to the southwest; it was probably one of the pair that nests near Fish Creek. We also saw 3 male Common Mergansers fly down the creek, a Common Raven calling from the top of a tree, 2 ravens flying over, and a Dipper on the creek right below us. The minimal snow cover didn't make for very good tracking conditions, but there were faint tracks of red squirrel and weasel at the oxbow.

After returning to the Apgar Visitor Center, some of us went to the shore of Lake McDonald and saw at least 80 Common Goldeneye on the lake near the outlet, plus a single male Common Merganser on the lake. We heard Pine Grosbeaks near the lake and saw 4 fly over toward the boat dock area.



The 6 remaining participants drove over to the concessions barn on the road to the Apgar Lookout Trailhead, and walked to the Quarter Circle Bridge. We saw tracks of a coyote on the road and mountain lion tracks on the bridge. A mottled subadult Bald Eagle flew up the river past the bridge. On lower McDonald Creek above the Quarter Circle Bridge, we saw a few Bufflehead ducks and some brown ducks, maybe Mallards, too far to tell without a spotting scope.

Unfortunately we didn't see the Northern Shrike that Steve had seen the day before in the hawthorns on the island at the oxbow, but walking conditions were excellent and, due to the low water, we were able to walk across the oxbow inlet channel to the creek.

Thanks for participating in this Flathead Audubon outing.

Field Trip Leader Steve Gniadek

BOARD MEMBER

CHIRPS & SQUAWKS

From
John Hughes, FAS Board



FROM HAWK MOUNTAIN TO MOUNT AENEAS



Last September my wife and I had the opportunity to visit Hawk Mountain in Pennsylvania. Hawk watchers from around the country were treated to a spectacular display of raptors from accipiters to eagles. The most frequently observed species while we were there was the Broadwing Hawk, and the distance at which individuals were able to identify species struck me. This brought to mind a passage I had read by Roger Tory Peterson, about Hawk Mountain, in his book All Things Reconsidered.

"But watching distant birds of prey in the sky at Hawk Mountain is a different kettle of broadwings. The experienced raptor watcher, perched on a boulder, does not rely solely on details or even obvious field marks. While the bird is still half a mile away, he or she instinctively puts shape, manner of flight, wing beat, and a number of other subtle clues together and comes up with an identification. In explaining the mystique, the hawk watcher might speak of the bird's 'jizz' (G-I-S – general impression and shape), an acronym used by British fighter pilots. When the bird gets close enough, the observer can confirm things with the standard field marks. I prefer to call this the 'holistic method of identification'."

Within a week of my return from Pennsylvania, I was on the ridgeline below Mt. Aeneas helping Dan Casey conduct his annual raptor survey. For the next month and a half, I was on the ridge most days, weather permitting. Many other volunteers either joined me or conducted the survey when I was not present. Roger Tory Peterson's remarks were on my mind as I attempted to identify the birds from as great a distance as I could. I would like to report that I've got it all figured out at this point, but that is not the case. One of the most appealing parts of the experience was and remains the challenge of correctly identifying a raptor, on the wing, under various conditions.

This opportunity was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. I'm sure the other people feel the same. Standing on top of the world with three hundred and sixty degree views in-and-of-itself is hard to beat, but with spectacular, up-close views of raptors, the experience certainly ranks near or at the top of my list. Some of the highlights of my stay on the ridge include:

- 85 Golden Eagles in a day
- An immature Golden Eagle going after the owl decoy right in front of me
- A Peregrine Falcon diving in and screaming at the owl
- Literally hundreds of Sharp-shinned Hawks coming to the owl
- My first adult Northern Goshawk of the season
- Numerous other accipiters, falcons, hawks, and eagles

I especially want to express my gratitude to Dan Casey. Dan is a true friend and mentor who helped me get started, shared his expertise with identification, and checked in with me every day to see how everything was going. It was always a good day when Dan joined me on the ridge.

It's not too early to start thinking about next season's survey. Volunteers are always welcome and I assure you that you will feel very enriched by the experience. You can find more information, including results of the surveys along with great pictures taken over the years by Googling Jewel_Basin_Hawk_Watch.

A couple of books I found very useful in helping to identify raptors on the wing are: Hawks At A Distance, by Jerry Liguori – recommended by BJ Worth, and, by the same author, Hawks From Every Angle. Both have the same species accounts, but From Every Angle has larger pictures, while At A Distance shows the birds as they might appear through your binoculars when far from the observer.

Flathead Audubon contributes to this important project. I hope you will consider participating in this worthwhile cause.

(Audubon board member John Hughes is a retired science teacher and outdoor enthusiast.)



Dave Menke, USFWS

OWEN SOWERWINE MONITORING RESUMES VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED

From Linda Winnie

Our Owen Sowerwine Volunteer Monitoring Program is beginning its **fifth year!** We are looking for volunteers. **Can you help?**

OSNA Volunteer Monitors are the eyes and ears of FAS management of Owen Sowerwine. They give us on-site information about management needs as they arise – a trail needs clearing, for example, or damage to the kiosk needs to be repaired, a fence or gate needs fixing, debris and impromptu structures need to be removed, or the kiosk brochure box needs restocking.

Volunteer Monitors also help gather data on visitor use at OSNA, and as they encounter visitors or OSNA neighbors, they gather comments and suggestions that will help improve our management of OSNA. In addition, Volunteer Monitors provide information that helps us expand our growing knowledge of what bird and other wildlife species are present at OSNA, and what types of vegetation grow there. *And it is easy and fun.*

The fun part is visiting OSNA and walking some of the trails. The easy part is using the OSNA Volunteer Monitoring form to give us feedback from your visit. The form has spaces and check-off boxes to enter various kinds of information; it guides you on what to look for and makes it easy for you to record your observations. Then just mail it to Richard Kuhl using the address provided on the form.

You can print the form from the FAS website (www.flatheadaudubon.org), or pick one up at an FAS meeting. You can also get a trail map that locates the places referred to on the form.

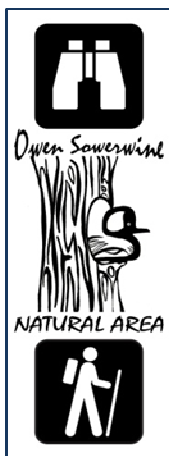
One way to volunteer is to **take a form with you whenever you make a visit to OSNA**. Just fill out the parts that apply to the trails you walk and the things you see. And remember, though our Volunteer Monitoring Program officially runs March through October, information gathered on a trip to Owen Sowerwine at **any time of the year** is valuable. If you forget to take a form, just call or email Richard with your information.

A second way to volunteer is to **do a scheduled monitoring visit**. We try to schedule 2 visits each month, March through October, to ensure feedback on a regular basis. So we need at least 18 volunteers, one (or more) for each half-month-long Monitoring Period. A scheduled volunteer makes one Monitoring Visit to OSNA sometime during the half-month of his/her choice. Group monitoring visits are also welcome – get your friends together and sign up for your chosen Monitoring Period as a team.

If you can help by doing a scheduled Monitoring Visit please contact me (755-1406 or lin-dawin@centurytel.net) or talk with me at an FAS meeting. Let me know

which month (March through October) you want to sign up for, and whether you want to cover the first half or the last half of that month. Remember, “cover” simply means make one monitoring visit during your chosen period. (You are allowed to make more than one visit, of course – but just one fulfills your obligation.) You will get a reminder call or email shortly before your scheduled Monitoring Period.

Thanks to all of you who have served as Volunteer Monitors over that past four years. Your help has been essential and is greatly appreciated. We hope you will be able to help out again this year!



Remember the Flathead Audubon Society

You are a member of the Flathead Audubon Society and, in addition to enjoying *The Pileated Post*, the presentations at the monthly meetings, bird outings and activities, your membership supports the good work that FAS does, including its conservation education program and maintaining the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area.

You can leave a legacy in your name and insure that these programs continue by including the Flathead Audubon Society in your will. You can include a bequest in the body of your will, or if you already have a will, it is as simple as adding your bequest as a codicil at the end of your will, without the necessity of redoing the entire document. And, if you wish, you can specify which FAS program your legacy bequest will support. If you would like more information, please contact Board Member Dennis Hester.



CAN

YOU

HELP?

IT'S NOT EASY BEING GREEN!

In our an effort to make our Montana Bird Festival as green as is practicable, the Transportation Committee is working diligently toward our goal to have some field trips and the pre-festival workshops covered by group transportation: vans and buses, SUVs or minivans, especially for lead vehicles. In addition, we will facilitate and coordinate carpooling once festival participants have registered and have confirmed their field trips. We'd be very appreciative of anyone who wishes to volunteer a vehicle or who knows a person or organization with an available van or bus. If we could halve the number of cars coming to the festival, we would cut ~20 tons of carbon dioxide from the festival's footprint! Please contact Kathy Ross, mtkat@montanaport.net.



Photographers! We are in need of some donated (but high quality) photographs of representative birds from the Flathead and Glacier areas -- for a brochure outlining a "Birding Trail" here. It is being produced by Audubon and the Whitefish CC, on a shoestring, of course. If you have any high-resolution photos of these birds you would like to donate to a great cause, send digital jpg's to Denny Olson, docwild@centurytel.net, 249-2497.

Specifically, we need:

- ◆ Harlequin Duck
- ◆ Common Loon
- ◆ Western Tanager
- ◆ Townsend's Warbler
- ◆ Bald Eagle
- ◆ Northern Hawk Owl
- ◆ Varied Thrush

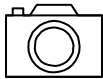


And we may need:

- ◆ Chestnut-backed Chickadee
- ◆ Spruce Grouse
- ◆ Northern Pygmy Owl
- ◆ Gray Jay
- ◆ Black-backed Woodpecker (male)
- ◆ American Dipper
- ◆ Gray-crowned Rosy Finch



Nate Kohler



SHOOT A SNOWY OWL!

After being treated to a great show of snowies this winter, we know that lots of Auduboners have been out finding and photographing our white friends. This is an open invitation to you to send any of your snowy owl pics for a special E-page in next month's *Pileated Post*. Great, good, or pretty average—we'll print them all! You don't have to be a professional to send us the results of your search. Send your jpg photos to: lindawin@centurytel.net. Let's celebrate a great snowy winter!



ssaadubon.org



It's in the Air

The Environmental Protection Agency is poised to take a bite out of carbon pollution through proposed standards for new coal-fired power plants. With the unlovely name of New Source Performance Standards (NSPS), this draft rule is nevertheless our next best shot at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and slowing climate change.

Leading scientists warn that climate change poses a grave threat to the world's biodiversity. With legislative climate solutions mired in bipartisan gridlock in Congress, this new draft standard offers a way to make progress on one of the biggest polluters of carbon pollution -- coal-fired power plants. If this rule goes well, dirty, older plants are next in line for pollution reductions.

Getting comments in to EPA to support this standard is a top priority for Audubon. You can help by sending in the postcard you'll find in the March/April of Audubon Magazine. Look for the snowy owl -- one of the many birds whose habitat is being impacted by our warming climate. We'll also be sending chapters a supply of cards -- let's get an avalanche of support into EPA to reduce carbon pollution!





2012 Wings Across the Big Sky Bird Festival

Greening the festival. Montana Audubon is dedicated to lessening our impact on the planet and the annual bird festival is no exception. We continue our efforts to become a carbon neutral organization, and in doing so, we plan to both reduce and "offset" the impacts from this year's festival. In order to "offset" the waste we cannot reduce outright, we support carbon sequestration programs. What better place to embark on afforestation than at our Audubon Conservation Education Center in Billings? For a \$15 donation we will plant two trees that will sequester more and more carbon dioxide as they mature. The more trees we plant, the more carbon we can offset. Look for that option when you register.

At the hotel, we plan to offer shade-grown coffee and compostable plates and cups when washable dishes are not available. Last but not least, remember to bring from home your refillable water bottle and coffee to-go mug!

Saturday presentations. We have a diverse lineup of speakers and topics for Saturday afternoon. We're very excited to bring Cornell's Brian Sullivan to the festival to talk about the **eBird program**. Brian will kick off the sessions with a presentation to all festival goers about how we can share our bird sightings and help conservation in Montana and beyond. He's a magnificent photographer and brings a truly compelling program to life. Then we'll offer two sessions of concurrent talks. Choose topics ranging from ...

- ◆ raptor migration projects in Montana
- ◆ seeing tangible results when teaching kids about the natural world
- ◆ colonial nesting waterbirds on the Flathead Indian Reservation
- ◆ Montana Audubon's Gambia birding tour
- ◆ recording bird sounds

Festival registration. (Begins the first week in April) Look for the registration brochure arriving in your mailbox at the end of March. For additional updates, visit <http://www.mtaudubon.org/birdwatching/festival.html> and "like" us at <http://www.facebook.com/MontanaAudubon>.

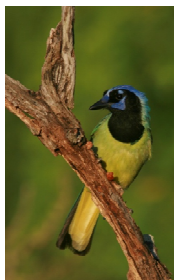


Montana
Audubon

2012 SOUTH TEXAS BIRDING Sunday, April 22th – Sunday, April 29th

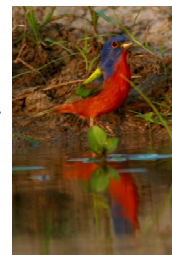
Because of its southern latitude, diverse mix of habitats and unique position along a major migration corridor, South Texas offers a nearly unparalleled opportunity to observe birds in North America. Not only are there a suite of resident species with limited North American ranges like Green Jay, Tropical Parula, Ferruginous Pygmy-owl, Great Kiskadee, Altamira Oriole, Olive Sparrow and more, but in late April, a tremendous variety of neotropical migrants sweep through the area. The first part of this trip will involve birding the spectacular King Ranch (825,000 acres), which encompasses a whole range of habitats from coastal grassland to thorn-scrub brush to stands of live oak that are home to nearly all of the South Texas specialty birds.

The second part of the trip will be in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, home to more birds that have slim U.S. ranges. Throughout the trip we'll have the flexibility to take advantage of favorable weather patterns to visit coastal migrant traps where a vast number and diversity of migrating songbirds can be seen at close range. We will likely see between 175 and 200 species on this tour, possibly more if conditions are good. Brian Williams and Steve Hoffman will be your expert guides. *The cost is \$1795/person which includes double occupancy lodging (single supplement \$350), meals, and transportation from Harlingen, Texas. A \$425/person deposit reserves your place.*



Green Jay

All tours are on a first come, first served basis. Complete trip itineraries and bird species lists are available upon request. For more information, please go to: <http://mtaudubon.org/birdwatching/tours.html>. For reservations, call the Montana Audubon office 406-443-3949 or email norane@mtaudubon.org.



Painted bunting

FUN FACTS



Northern cardinals can live as long as 13 years.

When resting, a hummingbird takes 250 breaths per minute.

Large-billed finches, such as cardinals and grosbeaks, have pads on their feet to help them grip branches. In fall and winter, northern bobwhites gather in flocks of up to 30 birds, called coveys.





Business Sponsors of FAS Conservation Education Program

Tyler Bebee, Senior Financial Consultant

TBebee@dadco.com

D.A. Davidson & Co.

**200 First Ave. E., K-M Building
Kalispell, MT (406) 752-6212**

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www.whitefishcu.com

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Great Northern Printing & Sign Inc.

gnpsignco@gmail.com

11 S. Meridian Rd., Ste. C

Kalispell, MT (406) 752-8729

Third Street Market

244 Spokane Ave.

Whitefish, MT (406) (406) 862-5054

Thanks!

*...to those below who have made special donations to
Flathead Audubon from January 10 through February
18, 2012*

Kestrel \$50+

Anonymous



nbnature.org

Supporting Member + donation

Mary Wallace

My Own Vision

Karen and Wesley James



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
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Do not feed children on a maudlin sentimentalism or dogmatic religion; give them Nature. Let their souls drink in all that is pure and sweet. Rear them, if possible, amid pleasant surroundings....Let Nature teach them the lessons of good and proper living, combined with an abundance of well-balanced nourishment. Those children will grow to be the best men and women. Put the best in them by contact with the best outside. They will absorb it as a plant absorbs the sunshine and the dew.

Luther Burbank (1849-1946)





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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

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FlockMaster - John Kyle: jkyle@fastmail.us

Conservation Educator - Ashley Mason: AudubonAshley@gmail.com

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FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY



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