



# the Pileated Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

VOLUME 37

NUMBER 3

NOVEMBER 2012

## NEW MEETING LOCATION!

Starting in November, our monthly general meeting will be in the **United Way Conference Room in the old Gateway West Mall on Highway 2 West in Kalispell**. The building is now called the Gateway Community Center. It is also the location of the Flathead Food Bank. The building is two blocks west of the intersection of Meridian Road and Highway 2 (Fairgrounds/Albertson's corner). It is just behind the Roscos Dollar Store. Access the United Way Conference Room from the parking lot on the west side of the Gateway West Mall, the side facing the abandoned theatre. The big general entrances to the mall

are locked from the outside at night. Our entrance is north of the Food Bank and north of the New West entrance and is signed as the **"UNITED WAY CONFERENCE ROOM."**

If coming from the north, the Meridian turnoff can be used for access to Highway 2. If coming from the south, the new bypass will provide easy access. Turn right when you reach Highway 2. **REMEMBER! OUR NEW MEETING PLACE IS THE UNITED WAY CONFERENCE ROOM IN THE GATEWAY COMMUNITY CENTER.**

Richard Kuhl for Search Committee

### Flathead Valley Birding Trip, Sunday, November 4

Meet **Leslie Kehoe** at Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks parking lot, 490 N. Meridian Rd., **9:00 AM Sunday, November 4**, to tour a part of the Flathead Valley in search for migratory waterfowl, raptors, and other large and small birds. The actual trip location will be determined that day, based on weather, recent bird sightings, and other factors. The trip may head east, south, north or west and will last about 3-4 hours. Come prepared to carpool and for wind, weather, and fun. We expect to return between noon and 1 PM. Please call **Leslie at 837-4467 after 5:00 PM** to register, as space is limited to about 20 participants. All ages and birding abilities are welcome!

From Gael Bissell, Field Trip Co-Chair

### NOVEMBER FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

**Monday, November 12, 2012: Flathead Audubon General Meeting.** 7 PM at **Gateway Community Center, United Way Conference Room.** Tom Ulrich presents a colorful slide show of his many trips to the Pantanal. See page 3 for full details.

**Sunday, November 4, 2012: Field Trip!** See article above.

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

# BIRD OF THE MONTH

By Denny Olson

## Gray Jay: Giving New Meaning to “Intrepid”

Some of us have been lucky enough to have a “Whiskey Jack,” “Camp Robber,” Canada Jay, sit on our hand (or head, in my case) and calmly nab a seed or peanut. After watching them forage for years, flying lightly from low perch to low perch, I’m convinced that they are less “curious” about us than calculatingly efficient. They have a Corvid (Crow/Jay family) brain, after all, and their kin have been the uncontested “Mensa” club of the bird world for years. They know danger, and lack thereof, when they see it. And, they have had thousands of years of *practice* being cute and endearing. More on that later.

*Perisoreus canadensis bicolor*, the subspecies in Montana, has very little gray on its nape compared to Eastern birds. It is gray above, white below, almost a foot long, and fluffy.

The adult male begins the nest construction near the trunk of a thick spruce or fir, often on the south-facing edge of a copse of trees. His life-long mate joins in for the interior finish work. The juvenile fledglings are a beautiful, uniform, dark charcoal color, and seem to magically appear in May with their parents. The nesting season begins in early March, and the adult pair keep very secretive and unusually quiet until the young are fledged. By the time most migrants arrive, Gray jays are mostly done with their nesting. Since they eat almost anything (including nestlings of other species), teaching young to forage in May and June seems a logical adaptation. Nights can dip below zero during their nesting season in boreal and subalpine areas. Hence their plush-toy fluffiness for temperature regulation.

They also have to eat a *lot*, averaging around 50 calories every day, and probably twice that during the depth of winter. They eat seeds, nuts, berries, carrion, bugs, spiders, blood-filled ticks, baby birds and bats. But in the winter, they mostly raid the pantry.

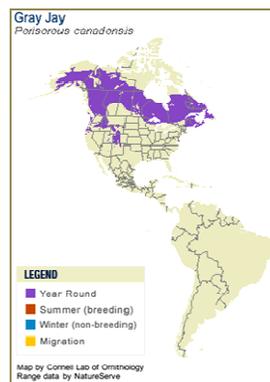
Like their cousins the Clark’s nutcrackers, they are hoarders extraordinaire. Food gathered in the summer (thousands of items per day) is temporarily stored in their chipmunk-cheek “gular pouches,” and coated with an efficient glue / saliva while there. Handy hideaways are selected on tree trunks and lower branches, e.g. behind large flakes of bark, and



food is glued in place for the winter. The requirements of “putting up food” demand that a second nesting attempt – whether the first was successful or not, just doesn’t happen. The Gray jay “larder” is spread over a quite large area, and, like their nutcracker cousins, an almost mystical memory is required to efficiently find the tens of thousands of stores next winter. Some unfortunate graduate students have been fodder for experiments in seed retrieval – testing the comparative memories of the Corvids and our best

and brightest humans. While the birds’ retrieval rate is around 80% (of thousands), the students could only remember 20% (of hundreds). Of course, the students’ lives didn’t depend on finding the seeds, and only the most diabolical professor would design an experiment that way. Even so, the jays’ “bird-brain” memories are nearly beyond belief.

Untested, but widely anecdotal evidence that Gray jays have an ability to place their seeds just above the maximum snow levels for the coming winter may usher them into the world of the paranormal. Farmer’s Almanac, eat your heart out ...



If you are observant while out on snowshoes or skis this winter, you’ll notice that, for Gray jays, three is *not* a crowd. In fact, three birds traveling and foraging together is the norm. Here’s the “cute and endearing” explanation for that. When the fledglings are about 55 days old, like a lot of siblings I know, they begin to fight a lot. At the same time, the eventual dominant winner, usually a larger male, “sucks up” to Mom and Dad (aren’t I cute and endearing -- or perhaps just whinier), and eventually goads them into letting that single fledge “stay at home” for the winter (you know, that 40-year-old uncle who still lives with mom ...). The adult pair provides experience and protection, but the “stayer” is expected to help with food storage and also feed next year’s chicks – only after they have fledged. The adults likely don’t want the nest location compromised by having three adults, one inexperienced, flying in and out regularly.

So what happens to the “leavers”? They fly off and seek unsuccessful pairs of jays, and (undoubtedly looking cute and endearing) convince them to adopt. They then also forage as a threesome. Here’s another  
(*Gray Jay, continued on page 9 ...*)



# November Program

## PANTANAL—WET AND WILD



[pantanalbraziltourism.com](http://pantanalbraziltourism.com)

Why does Tom Ulrich keep returning to Brazil's Pantanal? He has already visited the Pantanal 14 times, yet plans to return again in 2013. We will learn the answer to this question at our November 12 meeting, when Tom shows us beautiful photographs of the world's largest freshwater wetlands.

The Flathead's own globe-trotting acclaimed nature photographer was one of the first to document the Pantanal with a camera in the late 1980s. He has accumulated a collection of photos that resulted in the book PHOTO PANTANAL.

The Pantanal straddles Brazil's border with Bolivia and Paraguay, with about 80 percent in Brazil. It is about 65,000 square miles of tropical flood plain. The Paraguay River and its tributaries flood during the October through March rainy season and aquatic life flourishes. Fish swim out of the river and spawn. As water recedes during the dry season, leftover potholes become full of fish and attract multitudes of birds. This seasonal inundation, followed by desiccation, creates a biologically rich environment that supports what is

said to be the greatest and most diverse concentration of flora and fauna in the Americas. Pantanal, Brazil is said to be the "greatest aviary spectacle known to man," with up to an estimated 1,000 bird species.

Tom's photographs have appeared in numerous magazines and earned many awards. He leads photography tours, conducts seminars and workshops and lectures at institutions of higher education. In addition to PHOTO PANTANAL (available for purchase at the meeting), Tom has published BIRDS OF THE NORTHERN ROCKIES, MAMMALS OF THE NORTHERN ROCKIES, MT REYNOLDS: THE STORY, and ONCE UPON A FRAME. When not photographing wildlife in remote parts of the world, Tom comes home to West Glacier.

Please join us at 7 PM on Monday, November 12, at our **new meeting location, the United Way Conference Room #38 at the Gateway Community Center on US Highway 2 West in Kalispell**. Enter directly from the parking lot on the west side of the building.



[clker.com](http://clker.com)

### Cinnebar Foundation Challenge Grant

Last May Flathead Audubon was chosen by the Cinnebar Foundation to receive a \$2000 Challenge Grant. This means that Cinnebar will donate \$2000 to FAS if we can raise \$2000 to match by December 1, 2012. Please consider making a contribution to FAS which will help us reach the \$2000 match! Just write "Cinnabar" on your check memo line.

Mike Fanning, Finance Committee



[es03152a.wordpress.com](http://es03152a.wordpress.com)

## A GOOD DAY AT BADROCK CANYON

It is infectious to watch Golden Eagles, one right after another, flying over the mountain top. Everyone gets excited. Who can ID each raptor? Is it an adult or juvenile? We all love watching birds, but when the bird happens to be a magnificent Golden Eagle and there are many of them flying right over your head, it is just the best! I think all of the 20+ bird enthusiasts at the Badrock Canyon site on this warm, balmy Sunday afternoon would agree.

It took all eyes to catch and ID the high flying mostly eagles and accipiters that passed by that day. In coordination with Dan Casey and the Hawk Watch volunteers in the Jewel Basin, we attempted to track the flight times and patterns of the raptors migrating through the canyon to see if they also passed the Jewel Basin ridge site a little later.

Although nothing was conclusive, it would seem from the numbers recorded and the time they



Dave Menke, USFWS

passed by each site that at least half of the eagles continued on from Badrock to the Jewel Basin ridge. In total, 80+ raptors passed through our viewing area that day. That included 51 Golden Eagles (local eagles were high profile and exciting to watch also), 1 falcon, red-tailed hawks, 1 Rough-legged hawk (yes, they are back in the valley!) and over 20 accipiters of various sizes too far away for positive ID.

Since you do not have to hike to the top of a mountain to count the raptors, this field trip gives everyone the opportunity to experience the exciting work with raptor migration that is going on in the Valley every fall. In case you were not able to join the field trip, the Golden Eagles continue to migrate over the Badrock Canyon site through the month of October. Enjoy this incredible experience! And thanks to all who joined us and helped make these counts possible. We hope to see you again next year!

Kathy Ross, Field Trip Leader



## CHIRPS & SQUAWKS

From

Kay Mitchell for the Flathead Audubon Board



### Highlights from October 2012 Board Meeting:

- \* Confirmed change of meeting location to Gateway Community Center, United Way Room
- \* Approved transfer of investment money to Vanguard Short Term Bond Fund for better return rate
- \* Heard and discussed report on MT Audubon Board activities from Bob Lee, FAS representative (see below)

Full minutes of every Flathead Audubon Board meeting are printed on the Flathead Audubon's website, [www.flatheadaudubon.org](http://www.flatheadaudubon.org), after they are officially accepted at the following month's meeting. Click on "About Us," then "Board Meeting Minute Archives." Take a look!

### MONTANA AUDUBON BOARD ACTIVITIES SUMMARY

- ◆ End of year financials showed a deficit of \$117,000, the first deficit in many years and connected to economic conditions and loss of grant funding. MA has sufficient cash reserves to cover the deficit and is actively seeking additional support from members, other supporters, corporations and foundations.
- ◆ Cary Lund was elected short term Board Secretary.
- ◆ Nominating Committee is revising recruitment procedures for attracting Board Members. Several At-Large Board positions are open at this time.
- ◆ Staff continue to make progress on MA Strategic Plan and changes in Personnel Policies. MA Office Manager position is currently open.
- ◆ Signed MOU and issued joint press release with NaturEner, USA, regarding the construction and post-construction monitoring for the new wind power project on Kevin Rim Important Bird Area (near Shelby).
- ◆ Completed bird surveys along the lower Yellowstone River, with an eye toward proposing a new Important Bird Area along portions of the river.
- ◆ Reported a very successful summer of youth education camps and other programs at the Audubon Center in Billings, and also had a successful fundraising event at the Center on 9/8.
- ◆ Started the Bridger Raptor Migration count (near Bozeman) on 9/1, the 21<sup>st</sup> consecutive season-long count at this site.



### FROM NATIONAL AUDUBON PRESIDENT DAVID YARNOLD

#### New Campaign Breaks GOP Silence on Environment



pl.wikipedia.org

Posted: 10/02/2012 11:43 AM, Huffington Post

Climate change has virtually disappeared from American discourse since it first hit the world stage in 2006. Much of what remains in popular media is riddled with inaccurate reporting and biased opinion. According to the Union of Concerned Scientists, recent analysis shows that from February to July 2012, 37 of the 40 climate references made by Fox News Channel were misleading; only three were accurate. And a one-year look at The Wall Street Journal -- with more than 2 million daily readers and the largest circulation among American newspapers -- reveals that 81 percent of the opinion page coverage was misleading.

Several organizations are feverishly working to bring environmental issues to light by injecting climate change back into the discussion, starting with the presidential debates. The League of Conservation Voters launched a petition drive to press debate moderator Jim Lehrer to ask a question about climate

change. The organization's goal was 50,000 signatures; according to The Hill's Zach Coleman, it accumulated over 160,000. Widespread support for the petition campaign comes from grassroots groups such as Mom's Clean Air Force and [Care2.org](http://Care2.org), which alone has more than 20 million members in its network.

The people have spoken. While this campaign scores points for targeting a tangible, and seemingly achievable, objective, I have to ask: How did we get to the point of petitioning for a single question about how the U.S. will handle a planetary threat girded by overwhelming scientific consensus? It would seem that somewhere around 2009, the issue fell into a political crevasse and has not yet climbed out.

Recognizing a need to find common ground, the Audubon Society and ConservAmerica are trying a different tack to raise awareness: the American Eagle Compact. Seeking a "bipartisan consensus around (New Campaign, continued on page 5 ...)



## OSNA Work Day-2012

Thirty enthusiastic workers surged forth on September 22 to combat the weeds and brush along the trails of the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area. A mower crew clipped the grass on either side of the trail. Pruners and clippers attacked overhanging branches. Ten large bags of weed seeds were collected and holes in the western fence repaired. The kiosk projects a brighter



face with a new map, more information and plexiglas on both sides. Cookies and coffee by the hospitality crew provided an energy boost.

Once again, we extend our thanks to Terry and Sally Welder for the use of the meeting room at the Kalispell Montessori School and to Jane and Bob Lopp for submitting our work project to Prudential Insurance for grant consideration.  
Richard Kuhl, OSNA Co-Chairman



*New Campaign, continued from previous page ...* protecting air, water, and our natural heritage for future generations," the social media campaign is asking citizens to pledge support for common-sense solutions. The strategy is to redirect the conversation toward conservation -- a less divisive, but still transformational, goal for a country that consumes more than 20 percent of the world's energy. The American Eagle Compact's environmental prescription for the next president deemphasizes climate change in favor of less politically-charged objectives. But then it would have to, given the GOP's patent unwillingness to make global warming a priority.

Which strategy will be more effective in getting green into the next president's agenda? One pressures candidates to take a position on a singular hot-button issue. The other offers citizens a rallying cry for less contentious, but equally necessary solutions for smarter energy production and use, as well as land and species protection. In reality, we need both approaches if we are going to bring environmental issues back to the forefront. That we must petition to ask about climate change demonstrates the deeper need to mainstream environmental dialogue, which has been increasingly marginalized since 2009.

American Eagle Compact co-sponsor Rob Sisson of ConservAmerica is trying to remedy this by reminding us that conservation is, well, conservative. In his blog, Sisson explains: "This simple declaration will send a strong message to our leaders: do not play politics with protecting our nation's great natural treasures. Remember the wise words of President Reagan,

who said: 'Preservation of our environment is not a partisan challenge; it's common sense.'" Invoking Reagan and other presidents, as well as other symbols of our national heritage, is a laudable attempt to remind us of our shared history.

America must forge a narrative for the future even as it revisits one from its past. Environmental advocates will soon have a more common ground to bolster their story: the financial case. According to a new study, climate change is already costing the world more than \$1.2 trillion, taking 1.6 percent annually from global GDP while also contributing to the deaths of nearly 400,000 people a year. Researchers estimate that by 2030, the cost of climate change and air pollution combined will rise to 3.2 percent of global GDP. Economic threats to the U.S. are becoming more tangible as well. The challenge with making the economic case, however, is that the real burden will be spread disproportionately to the developing world, with the least developed countries suffering losses of as much as 11 percent of GDP from climate change. There are no easy or clear solutions to healing this inequity.

The ray of hope is that grassroots green organizing is getting smarter about sealing the leaks in the public's understanding of the issues, and together we're building a new story. Opening up more channels for Republicans to enter the conversation on their terms will help engage a vital part of the electorate. Regardless of who wins this election, we must find ways to sustain the conversation if we are ever going to create a sustainable future.

## Review of *Bird Sense: What It's Like to be a Bird*, by Tim Birkhead

From Linda Winnie

Tim Birkhead's latest book, **Bird Sense**, is a fascinating examination of the sensory capabilities of birds. Each of the seven chapters of the book is devoted to a separate bird sense – *Seeing, Hearing, Touch, Taste, Smell, Magnetic Sense, and Emotions*.

This is not just another dry, systematic, ornithological treatise on bird physiology. Rather, Birkhead has created an intriguing montage of fact, personal anecdote, and historical narrative providing the reader with an understanding of what we currently know about bird sensory apparatus, kinds of information a bird can gather with that apparatus, and how the twisting path of scientific research has uncovered these things.

Particularly interesting, I thought, is Birkhead's careful sorting of the differences among species in both sensory capability and apparatus. The results of research on one species do not automatically generalize to others. Some species depend heavily on excellent hearing to make their way through life, others on an extraordinary sense of smell, etc. By highlighting these differences, and tracing the history of the research that uncovered them, Birkhead illustrates one of his main themes: "birds are so staggeringly diverse" that there can be no simple, general answer to the question, "What is it like to be a bird?"

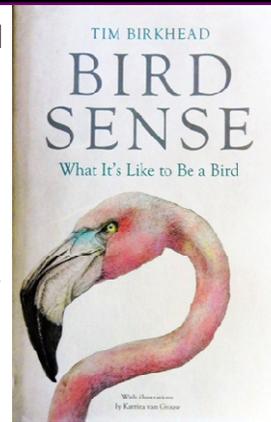
Remarkable examples of avian sensory abilities fill every chapter. In the *Seeing* chapter, for instance, Birkhead explores the recent discovery that birds often use their right and left eyes for different tasks – and the tasks vary across species. What purpose does this differential use of each eye serve? How does it arise? Check out the last part of this chapter to find out.

Another example is an extensive section in *Touch* that looks at how various species make use of highly sensitive structures of touch receptors in their beaks, such as for feeding or allopreening (preening other individuals). Birkhead's account and illustrations of the intricate pattern of touch receptors inside a Mallard beak (used for dabbling feeding) makes you want to go out and catch one to see for yourself.

Birkhead's own research has focused on the Zebra Finch and what he refers to as the Common Guillemot. Much of his factual exposition and many of his anecdotal stories concern these two species. Readers should keep in mind that Birkhead is British, and so uses the term "guillemot" to refer to what we Americans call a murre. What we Americans call a guillemot is a quite different species. Every time Birkhead began telling about his work with "Common Guillemots," and this happens frequently, I had to make a conscious effort to picture in my mind a Common Murre.

Birkhead writes well – a combination of careful, detailed description, vivacious prose, and some interesting glimpses of bird researchers at work. And while many readers probably already know about some of the topics he covers, my bet is that everyone will discover a lot they hadn't known. The last two chapters, *Magnetic Sense* and *Emotions*, explain results of the very latest research on these topics, as well as outlining the questions that still beg to be answered.

**Bird Sense** would make a great Christmas present for your birder friends – and while you are at it, you might want to get a copy for yourself, too. The book is also available from the Flathead County Library.



### RED ROCK LAKES NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE EXPANSION

On September 13, 2012, federal officials announced that Red Rocks Lakes NWR would get a 12,352-acre addition. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar announced the \$3.6 million expansion as part of an effort to preserve more wetland habitat in the U.S. The addition includes a mix of formerly private and leased lands. The refuge, located in southwestern Montana, is the largest wetland complex in the greater Yellowstone area. Interior officials say the addition will help protect that habitat and provide important breeding grounds for 21 species of waterfowl. The purchase and leasing of wetland habitat is paid for in part by money from sales of Duck Stamps to hunters and others.





## YOUR BIRDER'S HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

Brought to you by FAS Members



Birding Bedding Buddies from Flathead Lake Alpacas, a metal coiled cone filled with natural alpaca fiber provides soft nesting materials for our feathered friends. From \$13. [www.etsy.com/listing/71965374](http://www.etsy.com/listing/71965374), or Box 151, Rollins, MT 59931, or 406-249-8386. Sold at Think Local, WBC Kalispell and The Apple Barrel.

From Gail Sullivan

My suggestion is a roll of holographic scare tape - 3/4" X 100' at Hoopers Nursery for \$5.99, prevents bird strikes. I attach blue painters tape to each end, attach it with twists to the outside window frame. I use 2 streamers for each of my front windows. Have used it for years and bird strikes are minimal.

Mary Aley

A tuition grant for one of Glacier Institute's very popular birding classes. "Winter Birds of Prey" is a very good one. \$65, [www.glacierinstitute.org](http://www.glacierinstitute.org), or 406-755-1211.

Happy Holidays  
The Glacier Institute!

Visit the Flathead Audubon Sales Table during the November or December (or both!) General Meetings. Bird note cards, bird books, Audubon calendars, much more! \$1 and up, no sales tax, and all profit goes to your Favorite Audubon Society (FAS) chapter!



Dollar Tree—what? The dollar store, really? Yep, Stop in and score reusable strong shopping bags in several colors embossed with realistic drawings of red-tailed hawks, cardinals, etc. Great gifts for your eco-minded friends, reusable "wrapping" for other gifts, or stash a few in your car for your own shopping trips!

Kay Mitchell

Gift of a Lifetime (of Bird-watching): On a 3X5 card, write, "Welcome, new Audubon member! I promise to take you to the Flathead Audubon meeting every month for a whole year!" Hand the card to your favorite kid and hand a \$20 bill to Bruce Tannehill, Treasurer!



## Wintertime—and the Living's Not Easy Types of Bird Food

During spring and summer, most songbirds eat insects and spiders, which are highly nutritious, abundant, and, for the most part, easily captured. During fall and winter, nonmigratory songbirds shift their diets to fruits and seeds to survive. This is the time of year when bird-feeding enthusiasts roll out the welcome mat and set the table. The question is, what to serve? Most supermarkets and bird-feeding stores are stocked with bags, buckets, and cakes of many food types. You may find the task of selecting the best foods daunting. To attract a diversity of birds, provide a variety of food types. But that doesn't mean you need to purchase one of everything on the shelf.



### Which Seed Types Should I Provide?

Black oil sunflower seeds attract the greatest number of species. These seeds have a high meat-to-shell ratio, they are nutritious and high in fat, and their small size and thin shells make them easy for small birds to handle and crack. (Striped sunflower seeds are larger and have a thicker seed coat.) Several studies show that this high-energy food is the favorite of most birds that visit feeders. It is often wasteful to use a standard mix of sunflower, milo, millet, oats, wheat, flax, and buckwheat seeds, since birds may eat the prized sunflower seeds and leave the rest. Uneaten seeds may foster growth of mold and bacteria. Birds' feeding habits vary based on weather patterns, geographic region, season, and individual taste, so you may find exceptions to these guidelines.

"Corn" refers to dried, whole-kernel corn, favored by jays, pigeons, doves, quail, and pheasants. Cracked corn, however, is easier to eat for blackbirds, finches, and sparrows. "Millet" comes in red and white varieties; most birds prefer white proso millet over red. "Nijer," or thistle seed, small and expensive, is a delicacy for goldfinches, siskins, and redpolls. Offer them in special feeders, with small mesh or tiny ports that prevent the seeds from spilling out. Some birds, notably cardinals, appreciate safflower, which has limited appeal for starlings and House Sparrows (non-native species), and squirrels. Many backyard birds (and squirrels) enjoy peanuts.

Although sunflower seeds are the overall favorite, some birds prefer other seeds. Blackbirds like corn, and doves prefer corn, milo and millet. Most ground-feeding bird species prefer white millet or red milo to black-oil sunflower seed, but many tree-feeding species prefer sunflower seed. Experiment to see what your birds like best!





2012-2013 Business Sponsors of FAS Conservation Education Program

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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 May 18 through October 18, 2012

Snowy Owl \$250+

Paula Smith
Joyce Schaub
In Memory of Colin McLean



Raymond Lee

Merlin \$100+

Bob Lopp/Prudential Financial
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Mike & Jill Fanning
Mary Granger
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Rosemary McKinnon



granderie.ca

Thanks, too, to everyone who has renewed a membership!

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
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Field Trips and Outdoor Events

\*\*\*\*

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Your gift is tax deductible.

GIVE THE BEARS A BREAK!

Bears are still very active in the valley and really need our cooperation. Please take down your bird feeders (day and night), and keep dog food and garbage inside until at least mid-November or until winter weather sets in and forces them into hibernation. They will continue getting into trouble as long as they find easy food to bulk up on. A FED BEAR IS A DEAD BEAR. Too many have been put down this year because of irresponsible actions by humans. They are our neighbors and deserve our consideration.



state.nj.us

From Kathy Ross



## DIGGING UP THE DIRT ON FLATHEAD AUDUBON'S CONSERVATION EDUCATION PROGRAM



### FAS Helps Plant Native Habitat at Local Area Schools

In the spring Flathead Audubon and Flathead National Forest were awarded a "More Kids in the Woods" grant through the National Forest Service. This funding supports the planning and development of native plant gardens at three local elementary schools, curriculum-based lessons and materials, and class field trips to Flathead National Forest to participate in wildlife surveys, planting, wildlife observations, and education. The funding also supports the expansion of the Glacier High School native plant garden, a project that FAS partnered on three years ago. The four schools are West Valley, Helena Flats, Glacier High School and Somers School.

This fall two of the schools, Glacier High School and Helena Flats, hit the ground running! As soon as students started school in September, they began planning their gardens. This planning included re-researching native plants and their optimal growing conditions, laying out a planting matrix on paper, designing, measuring and marking out their garden plots and making materials and plant lists.

Julie Fiske at Helena Flats School added a beautiful peace pole to her garden and had her students working on their garden every Friday this fall. Their project culminated with planting day on Friday, October 5. Each student was able to participate in every leg of the project, from the ground up - literally! You can see by the pictures that they worked hard and have good reason to be proud of their garden!

Glacier High School teachers Pat Allick and Ben Young had their students organized like a well-oiled army to create their garden from scratch in two days! Their students spent most of September doing habitat surveys and native plant research. Then on September 26 and 27 they had about 300 students, 75 at a time, cut and roll sod, till and mix dozens of wheel barrows of soil, plant, mulch, water, and clean. In two days they went from bare, sterile sod to a beautiful, rich native habitat that will be used for generations of students to come! It was a truly amazing process! The native plant garden that Glacier planted three years ago is thriving with robust & lush native plants, shrubs and trees. The new garden is sure to be just as beautiful in equal time.

West Valley had a tremendous turnout for their ground breaking on Saturday October 13. Teachers, fourth graders, parents and grandparents and Master Gardeners broke ground on the first stage of their Native Plant Garden. Fourth and fifth grade classes will learn about native plants, pollinators and bird habitat this winter. In the spring, they will plant the prepared ground with species used by Native Americans. This is possible through our Feathered Friends Grant with the US Forest Service. The students need bags of leaves (no brush or weeds, please) and fencing, such as chicken wire or finer, and 5 foot stakes to hold the leaves in. If you can donate these, please contact Linda de Kort (755-3704) to come and pick them up. They plan to do the remainder of their planning and planting in the spring, as does Somers School.

Audubon and Flathead National Forest hope to co-host a "Show-Me Day" in the spring for folks interested in seeing the Gardens! Please stay tuned for dates and times!

Ashley Mason, FAS Conservation Educator, supplemented by Linda DeKort



*Gray Jay, continued from page 2 ...*

way Gray jays are *evolutionarily* intrepid. The unsuccessful nesters unwittingly pass on the genes of the successful nesters, giving the Gray jay an accelerated rate of natural selection! Although it may not seem so, the 50% survival rate of the "stayers" and the 20% survival rate of the "leavers" is quite high according to Nature's math in the harsh boreal forest.

Next time you are surrounded by a group of Gray jays floating from tree to tree, quietly chirping their foraging calls, just remember. Charming, indeed. Tough and intrepid, for sure. A perfect fit for the Flathead, I'd say.



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**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](mailto: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](mailto:lindawin@centurytel.net)**

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