



Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

APRIL 2014

VOLUME 38, NUMBER 8

Please excuse our "dust!"
www.FlatheadAudubon.org is being remodeled. We appreciate your patience!



IS IT SPRING YET?



Time To Prepare For The Bears

Friday, March 07, 2014, MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Montana's hibernating black bears and grizzly bears will soon be stirring. Adult males usually emerge first from winter dens in mid-March. When bears emerge from their dens, they are physically depleted and food is a priority. Bears are often tempted to go where raccoons and domestic dogs are getting into garbage. If these animals are already causing problems nearby, consider it an early warning that food attractants are available and need to be removed.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks' bear experts stress that conflict prevention steps can greatly reduce the chances of attracting black bears and grizzly bears.

FWP recommends bear resistant bins in communities and on ranches; electric fence systems to protect bee yards and sheep bedding grounds; random redistribution of livestock carcasses each spring; and educational programs in schools and communities.

FWP's [Be Bear Aware](#) website at fwp.mt.gov is an easy way for homeowners and landowners to assess what they need to do now to prevent bear conflicts. Go there [for tips and tools](#) on obtaining and using bear spray, safe camping and hiking, access to bear resistant products and a guide to other items that attract bears to a property.

It's also time to empty your bird feeders!



© Can Stock Photo - csp13055264

UPCOMING ELECTIONS

At the annual FAS potluck/meeting in May, we elect officers for a 2-year term, with the President and Vice President elected one year, and Secretary and Treasurer elected the next, resulting in staggered terms. Board of Director positions are generally elected for a 3-year term. Additionally, Committee Chairs may be appointed to serve as Board members for a 1-year term.

On May 12, we will elect a Secretary and Treasurer, as well as a couple of Board positions. This is your organization, so if there is someone you would like to see in a leadership role, please contact me (RML3@centurytel.net or 270-0371). I will talk with them about the roles and responsibilities of the positions.

Thanks, Bob Lee

TAX TIME ALREADY

Be sure to check the "Watchable Wildlife" box on your Montana tax form to support our feathered friends!

SILENT AUCTION

It's Coming! - The annual Silent Auction at the Flathead Audubon May Potluck. Now's the perfect time to gather all of the valuable "stuff" that you might be able to live without. Popular items at past Silent Auctions have been bird books, outdoor gear, art work, live bedding plants, homemade pies and cookies and bird houses and feeders of all kinds. This is your opportunity to be a Primo Recycler!



APRIL FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

Monday, April 14, 2014: Flathead Audubon General Meeting. Gateway Community Center, United Way Conference Room. Denver Holt discusses DECLINING POPULATIONS OF LONG-EARED OWLS IN WESTERN MONTANA. See page 3 for full program details!

Monday, April 7, 2014: FAS Board of Directors Meeting. 6 PM at 295 3rd Ave. EN. All welcome.

Saturday Evening, April 19, 2014: AN EVENING WITH THE BARRED OWLS. See page 5!

Saturday, April 26, 2014: EIGHTH ANNUAL COHEN STROLL. See page 5!

Spring-Early Summer Field Trips, page 5!

BIRD OF THE MONTH

Bird Photos and Text by Jeannie Marcure

A LIFE BIRD: THE WILLIAMSON'S SAPSUCKER



One of the most exciting events for me as a birder is adding a species to my life list. Usually this addition takes place while traveling, but in June 2009 it happened to me while bird

watching from the comfort of our front deck! Suddenly a bird that I couldn't identify landed on a nearby tree and started working on the bark. Fortunately, I had my camera close and was able to snap a few pictures for ID purposes, and I've included that picture here. Behavior told me that this new arrival was probably a member of the woodpecker family and while we frequently are visited by Pileated, Flicker, Hairy, Downy and occasionally by the less common Three-toed and Black-backed Woodpeckers, as well as Red-naped Sapsuckers, this bird was a complete mystery. However, after a little research I was able to identify our visitor as a male Williamson's Sapsucker.

Since our initial sighting of the Williamson's we've been lucky enough to see this rather elusive bird a few times each summer, and in May of 2012, we were finally able to see and photograph the female as well. That picture is also included.

Sapsuckers are the only members of the woodpecker family that are completely migratory and are usually here in Montana from mid-April until mid-September. In western Montana, we have only two species of Sapsuckers, the more common Red-naped and the more elusive Williamson's.

In most woodpecker species, the appearance of the male and female is only slightly different, with the male usually sporting a patch of red somewhere. As you've probably already noticed from these pictures, the appearance of the male and female Williamson's is drastically different. The male has a black back, white wing-patch and rump, a red throat patch and a yellow belly, while the female looks somewhat like a Flicker, with a brown head and a densely barred body. IBird tells me that the Williamson's was named for Robert Stockton Williamson who led an expedition west to find the best route for a rail line to the Pacific. Early birders actually considered the female to be a

different species and called it the Black-breasted Woodpecker.

Sapsuckers get their name from their habit of drilling holes in tree trunks and coming back to these later to feed on the running sap and the insects that it attracts. However, they do not actually suck the sap as the name implies, but rather lick it up using the small hair-like projections on the tip of the tongue. Interestingly a group of sapsuckers is collectively called a "slurp." Unlike most woodpeckers, sapsuckers feed on healthy trees and can actually kill trees if they make too many sap holes around the trunk. If you are having this problem, there are various products available to deter the sapsuckers from working on a favorite tree without harming these beautiful birds.

Preferred habitat for the Williamson's Sapsucker is a dry, open coniferous forest in the mountains, with aspens or larch often chosen for nesting trees. These chosen trees may have dead heartwood but always have a solid outer layer and the appearance of a healthy tree. Although the Williamson's often return to the same tree, the male makes a new nest cavity each year and lines it with wood chips from the excavation but nothing else. The 4 to 6 eggs are incubated for 12 to 14 days; this duty, as well as the feeding of the new

hatchlings, is shared by both parents. The young fledge after 31 or 32 days and typically don't spend much more time with the family group. Juveniles are similar to the adults in appearance.

One of the most reliable ways to search for these secretive birds is by listening for their calls and distinctive drumming pattern. Both can be heard at: www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/williamsons_sapsucker/sounds. The call is a soft nasal "churr" which descends in pitch, while the drumming consists of a rapid series of taps, followed by 3 or 4 taps given more slowly.

Now that spring has finally arrived, our Sapsuckers should be arriving shortly and with a little luck and some careful observation, perhaps you too will get to see a Williamson's –or maybe even a whole "slurp" of them!



April Program

DECLINING POPULATIONS OF LONG-EARED OWLS IN WESTERN MONTANA: RESULTS OF LONG-TERM RESEARCH

Denver Holt is a wildlife researcher, founder and president of the Owl Research Institute and the Ninepipes Wildlife Research Center located in Charlo, Montana. A dedicated field researcher in North and Central America, Holt believes that long-term field studies are the primary means to understanding trends in natural history.

At Flathead Audubon's April meeting, Holt will describe how, after 27 years of year-round research on Long-eared Owls (*Asio otus*) in western Montana, a clear downward trend has emerged. Reasons for this remain speculative; nonetheless, a variety of factors are implicated. Habitat change and loss are the most likely influences. The Long-eared Owl's downward trend is consistent with other open country species of temperate zone birds. Furthermore, the Long-eared Owl population estimate is the lowest for any owl species in the United States.

Long-eared Owls are highly migratory, irruptive, and perhaps nomadic – complicating monitoring and gathering of reliable population estimates. Furthermore, over time, habitat does naturally change – a fact we often forget – and this too could influence population changes. Nonetheless, local long-term studies provide valuable information for alerting conservationists and managers to changes in animal populations.

In 2000, The Wildlife Society of North Ameri-



ca named Holt Montana's "Wildlife Biologist of the Year." Since 1978, his focus has been researching owls and their ecology. He has published more than 90 papers and technical documents, including three species accounts for the *Birds of North America* project. He was also team leader for the *Strigidae* family owl species accounts for *The Handbook of the Birds of the World*, volume 5, covering 189 species of the world's owls. In collaboration with elementary school teachers, he has co-authored two children's science books on owls: *Owls: Who Are They*, and *Snowy Owls*. In 2006, he was a chapter author on owls for the book *Arctic Wings*.

Holt's research has been acknowledged and showcased numerous times by the media. His Snowy Owl research has been the focus of BBC's new *Frozen Earth* documentary series. The PBS documentary "The Magic of the Snowy Owl" aired in 2012.

When not researching owls, Holt is actively involved in ecotourism as a natural history tour guide and co-owner of Wild Planet Nature Tours. He also is a part-time trip leader for Victor Emanuel Nature Tour Company. Visit www.owlinstitute.org to learn more about Holt and his efforts in wildlife research, education and conservation.

We meet at 7 PM on Monday, April 14, in the United Way Conference Room at the Gateway Community Center, off US Highway 2 West in Kalispell.

Annual Meeting, Potluck and Silent Auction, May 12

Meet at The Whitefish Community Center. To get there from the south, go through Whitefish on Highway 93, which turns left in town. After the last light, go 2 blocks; the Whitefish Community Center is the last building on the left just before the river. There is a reader board in the parking lot of The Community Center which will say, "Audubon tonight." Bring items for the silent auction, a potluck item for dinner, and your own plates and cutlery unless you want to use the paper and plastic ones provided. There is a kitchen with stoves but no dishwasher. Doors open at 5, potluck begins at 6, program at 7 PM. The speaker will be Superintendent Mow of Glacier National Park. From Jill Fanning



Thank You!

Sustaining Member + donation
K.C. Voermans



The Flathead Audubon Board of Directors' monthly meeting in March was cancelled due to dangerous weather conditions and numerous absences of biologist/members attending the annual meeting of The Wildlife Society. Highlights of Board meetings will resume in next month's Pileated Post.

DID YOU KNOW?

Not only does the electronic copy of *The Pileated Post* give you color, convenience and extra pages (like this issue!), it also takes you to lots of other places with ease. On text that is highlighted in blue, hold down the Ctrl key and click once to go to the website that gives you further information. If the blue text has an @ in it, you will be taken directly to a place where you can email that person.

FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY TREASURER'S REPORT (Calendar Year 2013)

In 2013, Flathead Audubon Society continued its valley-wide education program while supporting and improving the Owen Sowerwine Nature Area. The board continues to struggle with the challenge of financially supporting these projects. The donations of foundations, local organizations, and individuals made it possible. In June of 2013 Flathead Audubon held a Bird-a-thon. It was a great success, both as a fund raiser and a way to bring members together for a fun day of birding.

The expenditures of FAS fall into one of three categories: Operations, Owen Sowerwine Natural Area, and Education.

EXPENDITURES FOR CALENDAR YEAR	2012	2013
Operating (Newsletter, Office, Insurance, etc.)	\$12,450	\$8,592
Owen Sowerwine Natural Area	\$4,892	\$801
Education Program	\$26,101	\$23,656
TOTAL	\$43,443	\$33,049

The over \$10,000 decrease in our expenses was due to a number of unusual and mostly onetime expenses in 2012. For example, it cost \$3,843 for the accessible trail at the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area, \$1000 for a new Montana Bird Distribution book, and \$1,161 for badly-needed insurance. Most of those expenses either did not occur in 2013 or will not reoccur until 2014.

The chart below illustrates how hard our members have worked to fund these programs.

INCOME FOR THE YEAR	2012	2013
Local Dues	\$4,611	\$5,250
Membership Donations and Sponsorships	\$3,653	\$3,134
Amount Withdrawn From Funds (See Final Chart)	\$5,005	\$2,142
June Bird-a-thon	0	\$9,300
End of Year Fund Drive (up to Dec. 31)	\$2,420	\$3,165
Other Income (Sales, Interest, work for Roads Scholars, etc.)	\$2613	\$2,959
U.S. Forest Service Education Grant	\$3,181	\$7,613
Other Non-reoccurring Grants to Flathead Audubon	\$5,564	
Special Grants for the OSNA Accessible Trail	\$2,800	0
Prudential Foundation	\$1425	\$1,150
Whitefish Community Foundation	\$500	\$1,000
Soroptimists of Whitefish	\$1,500	\$1,500
Art Ortenberg (Raptor Day)	\$3,620	0
Tom and Teresa Quinn Foundation	\$1,000	\$1,000
Cinnabar Foundation	\$2,000	\$2,000
National Audubon	\$1,654	\$1,889
TOTALS	\$42,546	\$42,102

Flathead Audubon Society has four funds dedicated to long term support of projects. Part of the capital monies placed in these funds were bequests. 4% or less of the Education and Owen Sowerwine Income funds are used each year so that these funds can grow to be a permanent financial support for these projects.

FUND	AMOUNT IN FUND 12/31/13
EDUCATION INCOME FUND	\$90,173
OWEN SOWERWINE INCOME FUND	\$12,549
CONSERVATION INCOME FUND	\$28,842
JACK WHITE CONSERVATION FUND	\$22,548

FIELD TRIPPING WITH THE BIRDS



Saturday Evening, April 19, 2014: AN EVENING WITH THE BARRED OWLS. Pete Fisher will host an evening of listening and calling for Barred and possibly other owls in the east Flathead Valley. Space is limited to 25 individuals. Contact Pete (250-9624 or fisherpete88@yahoo.com) to pre-register.

Saturday, April 26, 2014: EIGHTH ANNUAL COHEN STROLL. Celebrate our beautiful quality of life in the Flathead as Ferne and Marty Cohen have taught us...by getting outdoors and leaving a small carbon footprint. We will meet at 9 AM at the pond northeast of the North Valley Hospital in Whitefish. This is just north of the soccer fields on the south edge of Whitefish. In the past, we have seen waterfowl on the pond and riparian species in the wetland. We will stroll along the Whitefish River on the bike path. This two-hour trip is accessible for wheelchairs and strollers. Bruce Tannehill, leader. Call 862-4548 for information.

Saturday, May 17, 2014: BIKE AND BIRD IN LOWER VALLEY. Join Flathead Land Trust and the *Flathead River to Lake Initiative*, in cooperation with the new "Bike Saturday" program. We will bike and bird for about 10 miles, from 9 AM – Noon, beginning at Fun Beverage, moving along Lower Valley Road, including Church Slough, then south to Wiley Dike Road, ending at Somers Bay Cafe for lunch. Conservation easements along the way will be highlighted as well. For more information contact, Laura Katzman with Flathead Land Trust at 752-8293 or lkatzman@bigsky.net.

Warbler Weekend at Tally Lake

 Save the dates **May 30 – June 1**. (Not June 13-15 as listed in the March Pileated Post). There will be almost continuous birding, campfire in the group camping site, and camping space for about \$15 per night. Full details in the next issue of *The Pileated Post*!

From Gael Bissell and Kathy Ross, Field Trip Co-Chairs

(Note: Several people left a message for on Kathy Ross's phone regarding Craig Hohenberger's field trip in Lower Valley last month. Due to the death in Seattle of her husband, Kathy was not able to return those calls. Please accept her apologies.)

FAMILY FORESTRY EXPO



The 25th Family Forestry Expo takes place at Stoltze Lumber's Trumbull Creek Educational Forest north of Kalispell on Saturday, 10 May, from 9 AM—3 PM. The FFE is a family event that offers hands-on experiences of the role that forests perform in our everyday lives. Expo visitors explore how the different parts of a forest are connected to make up a dynamic living system, how people and all parts of the environment are dependent on one another and how each affects the other. There will be a free "loggers lunch," demonstrations, exhibits, and forest walk with many different educational stops, including one by Flathead Audubon. Flathead Audubon has had a booth at the Expo for many years. We are looking for volunteers to help. If you enjoy being outdoors on a spring day talking to people about forests and ecosystems, please contact Ashley Mason, FAS Conservation Educator, at AudubonAshley@gmail.net. And whether you are a volunteer, participant or just want to see what it is all about, everyone is welcome to come on out on Saturday, 10 May.

From Bob Lee

TRAVELLING FURTHER AFIELD?

Epcot Features Audubon Hummingbird Garden

We're excited to announce the new Hummingbirds at Home garden exhibit at the [Epcot International Flower & Garden Festival](#) in the Walt Disney World Resort. The exhibit runs March 5 - May 18, 2014, and features walk-through hummingbird gardens, tips for attracting these magical creatures and information on how to report them through the

 Hummingbirds at Home citizen science program. Contact exhibit host [Don Kendzior](#) to schedule a guided tour. Park tickets are required for entry.

HEADING SOUTH?

Follow the new **Custer Country's Southeastern Montana Birding Trail** map to seek out sharp-shinned hawks, great horned owls, and black-capped chickadees.



(800) 346-1876

www.custercountry.com

Take a Road Trip

The [Upcoming Bird Festivals](#) webpage makes it easy to plan your next birding destination. You can look through listings by calendar or on a map, so you can start planning your road trip right from the page.

ALL ABOUT EDUCATION!

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT 2014



Results from The Flathead Great Backyard Bird Count

This year, FAS assisted three schools and three homeschool groups with completing a bird count for the Great Backyard Bird Count, as well as leading one Backyard Bird Count Field trip. Helena Flats School and Somers School each participated, starting right in their native plant gardens that were installed last school year. The Flathead High School International Baccalaureate Program also participated, as well as homeschool groups in Kalispell and Libby. It turns out that the Somers School counters enjoyed some of the best birding, despite the wind and snow!

I am grateful to Kathy Ross and Teresa Wenum, of Flathead National Forest, for their wonderful assistance with the program, as well as the enthusiasm of the teachers and students!

From Ashley Mason, FAS Conservation Educator

From National Audubon

Thank You for a Record-Breaking GBBC: Roughly 142,000 people counted 17.7 million birds in 135 countries in just 4 days—a new record for participation! See full stats at [Great Backyard Bird Count wrap-up.](#)

SPRING FUN FOR KIDS OF ALL AGES!

"Teaching children about the natural world should be treated as one of the most important events of their lives." Thomas Berry

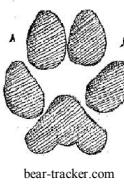
Here are some things you can do to get outside and make the most of spring!

Casting Tracks (from www.bizarrelabs.com)

Tracks of animals that have been made in soft ground can be preserved by making a cast with plaster. The easiest tracks to preserve are those found in mud, wet ground, or snow. Wet sandy areas near creek beds often provide some of the best tracks. Once a clear track has been found, the first step is to brush away small stones, twigs, and excess dirt from around it, using a brush or stiff piece of grass. If there is water in the track, use an eye dropper to remove as much as you can without disturbing the track.

Next make a frame around the track with cardboard, plastic or wood strips. The simplest and most portable method is to surround the track with a strip of light flexible plastic strip that is about 1 1/2" (2cm) wide. Cardboard can also be used, but it isn't as durable and won't release as easily. The plastic forms a circular dam around the track and is secured with a paper clip or with two locking notches cut halfway through the top and bottom near each end. The frame should be just a little larger than the track. Press the frame into the earth lightly; don't press it in if it will disturb the print. If using a square wooden frame, the outside corners can be sealed with a little modeling clay.

Mix plaster of Paris with water at a ratio of approximately 2 plaster to 5 water. (Plaster of Paris



is convenient and inexpensive, but can be a little crumbly. Modeling cement can be used if you need a more durable cast, but it is heavier and not as easy to use in the field). Add plaster to water, not the other way around. The plaster should be the consistency of thick cream. If it is mixed too thin, the cast will be brittle; if too thick it will be soft and crumbly. You will need enough to make a cast at least .75 inch (20mm) thick. Larger casts should be thicker and, if very large, reinforced with rigid metal wires or mesh.

Don't be tempted to make very thin casts of small tracks, as they will break easily. Pour the plaster gently to avoid disturbing the track, especially in loose sand or snow. Let the cast set up until it is firm enough to move. How long this takes depends on the size of the cast, but it usually requires about 30 minutes.

After the plaster is set, carefully remove the frame (which can be reused) and lift the cast. Brush away any heavy dirt remaining, but don't try to thoroughly clean it at this point. Wrap the cast in newspaper to protect it during the trip home. The cast should be allowed to set up for a few days, giving it time to completely harden. Once set, you can clean off any remaining dirt with an old toothbrush. It is a good idea to label, in pencil, the location, date found, and identification of the animal (once determined) on the back of the cast. Some collectors paint the plaster surrounding the actual track before displaying. This helps to "set off" the track from its background. If you need help identifying the animal that made the track, check with your local library for a field guide.

ALL ABOUT EDUCATION!

FVCC Senior Institute a Success!

The FAS Education Program brought Senior Institute's Birds of Northwest Montana to a successful close on Friday March 28. The class was brimming with 35 participants (and a waitlist!), who enjoyed classes on avian evolution, migration, hawks and owls, hummingbirds, bird identification, birding resources and a wonderful field trip.

Feel left out? Wish you had registered? Well, this class proved to be so popular it will probably be offered next year. Contact FVCC Continuing Education at (406) 756-3813 for more information on cost, registration and course offerings.

Thanks so much to Bob Lee, Denny Olsen and Doug MacCarter for their help with this course!



Cornell Lab eNews

The Best Binoculars of 2013

Good binoculars are a great way to get more out of bird watching. There's just nothing like a bright, crisp image that's bursting with color, whether you're looking for rarities or simply enjoying the birds you see every day. And fortunately, even some lower-priced binoculars are truly outstanding these days. In our first full review in eight years, we rounded up 102 binoculars ranging from \$55 to nearly \$3,000. We'll tell you which ones made our eyeballs the happiest.

- ◆ Read the [overall review](#) from our magazine
- ◆ Go further with [full details and Top Picks](#)
- ◆ Compare specs with our [price vs. quality index](#) and [close focus vs. field of view](#) graphs

Record-breaking Bird Migration Discovered

According to a recently published article and reported as a news release by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (www.rspb.org/media/releases), scientists have uncovered one of the world's most amazing annual bird migrations. Using geolocator technology, a Red-necked Phalarope was tracked on a 16,000-mile round trip from Scotland to the Pacific Ocean (via Iceland and Greenland, south along the eastern US seaboard, across the Caribbean and Mexico, to a location off the coast of Ecuador and Peru) and back again. Experts previously believed that all Scottish breeding phalaropes joined the Scandinavian population at their wintering grounds, thought to be in the Arabian Sea. A journey to the Pacific Ocean for a European breeding bird had never before been documented.

From UMBA February newsletter



Ten Ways You Can Protect Birds This Spring

As temperatures start to climb, birds begin their annual spring migration and also begin breeding. American Bird Conservancy (ABC) often gets asked, particularly during the spring, "How can I help the birds?" Here are the top ten things ABC recommends people do to aid or protect birds in their homes and yards. See: <http://www.abcbirds.org/newsandreports/releases/130410.html>.

Online Guide to North American Birds

Spring welcomes the return of migratory birds to the nation's backyards and woodlands. Learn more about your favorite avian visitors with bird ID guide, covering over 800 North American species. Explore descriptions, photos, range maps and bird songs at <http://birds.audubon.org/birdid>.

Top 10 Green Garden Books

If the weather outside is frightful, escape to warmer days by planning your spring garden. National Audubon's YardMap project suggests these [great books for green gardens](#) as inspiration.

Hummingbirds at Home has fledged!

Audubon's first all-digital, mobile citizen science program will build a continent-wide network of citizen scientists to help uncover how hummingbirds are affected by climate change. Using a mobile-optimized web portal and smart phone apps, people from across the US can report their hummingbird sightings. The data collected will guide Audubon in devising actions to help hummingbirds thrive, despite climate change and other threats. Please visit www.hummingbirdsathome.org for more information and to start logging your sightings!

September 2013: Latest Version Released for iPhones and Android

An updated version of the mobile app has just been released that features hundreds of new plants that can be sorted by ZIP code or color and the ability to add plants to personalized favorites lists for quick selection. Audubon scientists will use the data to map conservation strategies to protect hummingbirds. It's never been easier to make a difference for hummingbirds. Download and share the latest [iPhone](#) or [Android](#) version today.



PARTNERS WITH FLATHEAD AUDUBON'S MISSION

During the remainder of 2014, in celebration of the 50th Anniversary of passage of The Wilderness Act, we will offer quotes honoring our wilderness heritage, like the following:

"There are some who can live without wild things and some who cannot. These essays are the delights and dilemmas of one who cannot. Like winds and sunsets, wild things were taken for granted until progress began to do away with them. Now we face the question whether a still higher 'standard of living' is worth its cost in things natural, wild, and free." - from the foreword to A Sand County Almanac with Essays on Conservation from Round River, by Aldo Leopold, American ecologist, forester, and environmentalist, considered to be the father of American wildlife management.

CAN YOU HELP?

VOLUNTEER MONITORS FOR OWEN SOWERWINE ARE NEEDED



From Linda Winnie

Our eighth season of Volunteer Monitoring at Owen Sowerwine has begun!

Volunteers are needed to make monitoring visits to the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area (OSNA) throughout this coming summer.

Here are **2 ways you can help:**

1. Take an OSNA Volunteer Monitoring Form with you **whenever you visit OSNA.**

Record what you see and hear, and mail the form to Richard Kuhl (address on form).

2. Do a scheduled monitoring visit.

THANK YOU to all who have already signed up to do a scheduled visit this summer!

At this point, only **2 more** volunteers are needed to fill the summer schedule.

We still need volunteers for the periods: **June 1-15 and July 16-31**

The job is simple: Make one monitoring visit during the period you choose.

Record your observations on a Volunteer Monitoring Form, and mail it to Richard.

For more information or to sign up for a scheduled visit, please contact me (755-1406 or lindawin@centurytel.net).

The OSNA Volunteer Monitoring form can be printed from the FAS website (www.flatheadaudubon.org), and will also be available at FAS meetings. A trail map that helps you locate the places referred to on the form is also available on the FAS website and at FAS meetings. Or contact me if you want them emailed or mailed to you.

Bird Notes from American Bird Conservancy

♦ A new study by US and Canadian scientists has found that seabirds may be eating much more plastic trash than they have in the past. As plastic pollution has increased, so has the amount ingested. Seabirds that forage on the surface water are especially vulnerable. Over 95% of the ingested plastic consisted of twine, rope, fishing line, Styrofoam, hard pieces of discarded plastic, fiber sponge and sheet plastic.

♦ The first national report on the state of Canada's birds finds that since 1970, the country's bird population has dropped by 12%, with some groups of birds decreasing by 90%. Overall, more species are declining (44%) than increasing (33%). The groups that declined most severely are grassland birds, migratory shorebirds, and aerial insectivores (birds that catch insects in flight). This is similar to those in the US.

The report is significant since the state of bird population is an indicator of broader ecosystem health. A similar report, *State of the Birds*, is produced annually by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, with input from many citizen science works such as the Christmas Bird Count, Breeding Bird Surveys and the GBBC.

For more about bird conservation activities and news, visit www.abc.org.



BAT NOTES

The ordinary bat that flies around at night, a remarkable nimble creature in the air, cannot take off from a level place. If it is placed on the floor or flat ground, all it can do is shuffle about helplessly and, no doubt, painfully, until it reaches some slight elevation from which it can throw itself into the air. Then, at once, it takes off like a flash.



Wings Across the Big Sky June 6-8, 2014, Bozeman, Montana



PLEASE REGISTER EARLY for Montana

Audubon's *Wings Across the Big Sky Festival* in Bozeman, Montana, June 6-8, 2014, at the Best Western GranTree Inn.

To ensure the very best field experience this year, the **Field Trips** are limited to 15 participants (less in some cases) and they do fill up fast, so register early by mail or online at www.mtaudubon.org. For mail-in registrations, send the registration form to Montana Audubon, PO Box 595, Helena, MT 59624.

To help you support your favorite bird conservation organization, we are offering four exciting **Raffle** prizes this year (e-readers, see EPage #1):

Our **Bucket Raffles** afford you the choice of three fun prizes!

- ◆ Family stay at the beautiful Abbott Valley Homestead near Glacier National Park;
- ◆ Artistic and beautiful handmade quilt by fiber artist, Linda Parker; or
- ◆ Beginning Birder's Basket containing binoculars, books, and much more.

Our **Special Raffle** is a "Texas Coastal Birding Extravaganza," which includes 2 days of expertly-guided birding, 3 nights lodging, meals and round-trip travel from Montana to Houston, Texas, for four adults — **total value \$4,000!!!**

Tickets for the **Bucket Raffle** (\$10/each or 6/\$50)

and the **Special Raffle (\$50 each)** are included in the registration brochures sent early March. Tickets may be purchased online at www.mtaudubon.org and at the festival. **Thank you for your generosity in considering this special support of the bird festival!**

Always an exciting part of the festival, the **Silent Auction** is already gathering momentum. Sacajawea Audubon members and others have been busy soliciting items. Additional items can be brought to the festival headquarters on Friday of the event. The auction will be closed after Saturday evening's banquet and successful bidders may pay for and pick up their "winning" items at the end of the evening. Thank you for your auction contributions and participation.

Each year, Montana Audubon recognizes individuals who work for the conservation and protection of birds and other wildlife by presenting **Awards** at the Saturday evening banquet. We are seeking nominations in the following categories: Lifetime Achievement Award, Educator of the Year, Conservationist of the Year, Citizen Scientist of the Year, and Special Achievement Award. To make a nomination, download a nomination form from www.mtaudubon.org/about/awards.html. Nominations are due at the office by May 23, 2014. Mail completed forms to **Montana Audubon, PO Box 595, Helena, MT 59624**.



THE BEAUTY OF BIRDS

Spring is one of the most exciting times of the year if you are a birder or interested in birds! Come join the spring birding fun at Flathead High School, Wednesdays, April 9, 16, 23 and 30, from 6:00-8:00 PM. The 2014 line-up includes:

- ◊ April 9 - Lisa Bate of Glacier National Park will talk about cavity nesters of northwest Montana.
- ◊ April 16 – Doug MacCarter of Montana Wild Wings Recovery will bring live owls and hawks for a fascinating talk on raptors of northwest Montana.
- ◊ April 23 –Intensive bird identification and local birding resources.
- ◊ April 30 – Field trip to a local birding hotspot.

The fee for this class is \$10. Please contact Debbie Newman at Flathead High School at (406) 751-3461 to register. For more information on the course, please contact Ashley Mason at AudubonAshley@gmail.com.



male Mountain Bluebird
by James Coo

West Valley Naturalists

Because of Spring Break, the April meeting of West Valley Naturalists will be held on the SECOND Thursday (rather than the usual first Thursday) of April. "DRAT THOSE MOSQUITOES" is the topic for the April 10 meeting, which will be held in the school library beginning at 7 PM. Bruce Gunderson, Project Director for the Flathead Mosquito Control District, will speak about the life cycle of local mosquitoes, as well as benefits and risks of various methods of mosquito population control. Of special interest is the presentation of a teaching trunk, developed locally by Conservation Educator Ashley Mason, which contains wonderful teaching puppets designed and created by Kalispell artist, Howard Jacobson. "Know Mosquitoes," is an exciting interactive curricular trunk that teaches the principles of ecology, pollination and life cycles through a look at mosquitoes. The trunk has textbooks, games, costumes, puppets and dozens of curricular activities and supports Montana Science Standards. Students, teachers, parents, grandparents, anyone whose curiosity is tweaked by the buzz of the mosquito are encouraged to come. There is no charge. For information call Linda de Kort at 755-3704.



Pileated Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

P.O. Box 9173
Kalispell, MT 59904-9173

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 PM and include a featured guest who presents a conservation or nature program. The Board of Directors meet the Monday preceding the general meeting, at 6 PM 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
Conservation Educator - Ashley Mason: AudubonAshley@gmail.com

APRIL 2014



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FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY DIRECTORY

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Vice-President	Kay Mitchell	kbmitch@centurytel.net	756-8130
Secretary	Marylane Pannell	kuhlpan@cyberport.net	257-5793
Treasurer	Bruce Tannehill	tanneland@bresnan.net	862-4548
Past-President	Paula Smith	paulabobsmith@centurytel.net	837-0181

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2013-2016	Jan Wassink	janwassink51@gmail.com	249-6590
2012-2015	Steve Gniadek	grayjaybro@yahoo.com	892-7406
2012-2015	Lewis Young	68 Garrison Dr., Eureka 59917	889-3492
2011-2014	Richard Kuhl	kuhlpan@cyberport.net	257-5793
2011-2014	John Hughes	birdwatcher.hughes@gmail.com	261-2506
2011-2014	Gael Bissell	gbissell535@gmail.com	755-8709
2011-2014	Denny Olson	docwild.mt@gmail.com	249-3987
2013-2014	Ben Young	younghb@sd5.k12.mt.us	257-2286
2013-2014	Kathy Ross	mtkat@montanaport.net	837-3837
2013-2014	Bob Lee	rml3@centurytel.net	837-4467

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

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	Steve Gniadek	892-7406			
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	Gael Bissell	755-8709			
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MONTANA AUDUBON
P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624
443-3949
www.MTAudubon.org
Executive Director: Steve Hoffman
hoffman@mtaudubon.org
Board President: Fred Weisbecker
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 Conservation Education and Owen Sowerwine Natural Area)

Additional Donation of \$ _____

to Education Fund

Owen Sowerwine Fund

Wherever needed

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How do you wish to receive the Pileated Post?

Electronic copy/email Paper copy/U.S. mail

Mail this form with your check to:

Flathead Audubon Society Membership
20 Hanson Doyle Lane
Whitefish, MT 59937

FESTIVAL SPECIAL RAFFLE!!

What : Texas Coast Birding Extravaganza

When: April 14-17th, 2015

Where: Lodging close to downtown Houston with field trips to High Island, Anahuac NWR, and Katy Prairie!



This \$4000 package for four adults and includes round-trip airfare from Montana to Houston, two full days of birding with local experts and three days of luxury accommodations! Don't miss out on the opportunity to win this item! Special Raffle tickets are only \$50! This package was generously donated by John Whitmire and Susie Maclin!

FESTIVAL BUCKET RAFFLE FOR THE BIRDS!!

Here is a chance to win 1 of 3 graciously donated items!

Tickets are \$10 ea or 6/\$50

#1



Abbott Valley Homestead near Glacier National Park

Two-night stay for 2 Adults or Family

#2



Sunshine Bird Quilt by fiber artist Linda Parker

#3



**Beginning Birder's Basket
Binoculars, Bird ID Books and much more**

FROM THE OWL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Project: Short-eared Owl Breeding Biology Visual Surveys

Purpose: Volunteers supports the Owl Research Institute's mission of owl conservation through research and education through work on the Short-eared Owl Breeding survey project.

Volunteers are trained by Owl Research Institute field biologists on all aspects of the Short-eared Owl breeding project including, but not limited to: visual surveys, recording data, nest searching, trapping, banding and public education.

Location: Work will be based out of Charlo, Montana



Objectives of the Short-eared Breeding Project:

- Conduct surveys of potentially suitable Short-eared owl habitat for inclusion in large-scale monitoring program
- Locate and monitor nests of Short-eared owls
- Follow individual movements of Short-eared owls through satellite telemetry to gain insight on Short-eared owl migration, site fidelity, and habitat use throughout the year

Key Responsibilities:

- Conducts visual surveys for breeding Short-eared Owls
- Accurately records and enters data

Reports to: Research Project Coordinator (Matt Larson)

Length of Assignment: Visual surveys begin 15 March and run through 15 May.

Commitment: Volunteers adopt-a-route by surveying the route three times during the 15 March – 15 May time period. Surveys begin 90 minutes before dark and end at dark.

Qualifications: All volunteers must be at least 18 years old. A willingness to learn, work hard, and work well with others is mandatory. Previous trapping experience preferred but not necessary

Training and Support: All volunteers will be trained and supervised by Owl Research Institute field biologists. Additional questions and specific skill interests may also be addressed by the Research Project Coordinator when possible.

Benefits: Opportunity to develop or increase field skills of a raptor biologist while working closely with trained raptor field biologists who have lengthy field experience from 6-35 years and will be providing interns with supervision and ongoing hands-on training opportunities.

For more information please contact the ORI at owlinstitute@hotmail.com