



From the President

BIRDING EXPECTATIONS

Freezout March 27, 2015, just like Freezeout 2014, Freezeout 2013, etc., the last weekend of March. It's time to go look at thousands of Snow Geese lifting off the lake or coming in to land. This year I arrive at Pond 5 at 3:30 PM, carefully walk through the rushes to the edge and set up scope, great! There is a flotilla of Snow Geese out on the pond. Estimates by other viewers is 50,000! Wow! Scan back and forth looking for exceptions. Spot a blue form and then another.

"Watching huge flocks of Snow Geese swirl down from the sky, amid a cacophony of honking, is a little like standing inside a snow globe. These loud, white-and-black geese can cover the ground in a snowy blanket as they eat their way across fallow cornfields or wetlands. Among them, you might see a dark form with a white head—a color variant called the "Blue Goose." Cornell Lab of Ornithology Web Site.

I drive back to Chateau, have dinner, then spend the evening reading the Sibley Guide to Birds and the Sibley Guide to Bird Life & Behavior, partially because of limited TV channels.

Saturday up at 6:00 AM with a quick breakfast at Stage Stop Inn and drive to Pond 5. It is 7:00 AM, 15 minutes before sun up! What?? No Snow Geese on the pond? Drive down to the Thumb but no birds there either! A very strong cold front moved in overnight with very strong winds from the West. It seems the Snow Geese read weather reports better than we did and they pulled out for Alberta during the night. Now what?

Heading East on the gravel road, I look for Geese feeding in the fields. Finally I spot a flock of 5,000 or so feeding in a field and spend an hour watching them. Yes, there were several blues. One

Goose flies back and forth looking for its mate and after 5 or 6 circuits it settles down in the flock. The wind is now 30 to 50 mph.

Blowing through Power, MT, I let the 50 mph wind blow me on to Benton Lake, north of Great Falls. Ducks, ducks, ducks! Mallards, of course, Widgeon, Pintails, Buffleheads, and many more. A new life list entry for Horned Lark which are hanging on to the ground to keep from being blown to North Dakota. Every time I go birding, there are results different from expectations and I exhilarate in them. That is the essence of enjoying nature at its fullest!

Serving as the Flathead Audubon president for the past two years has been that kind of exhilaration. You have a fabulous Board, great officers and a



Lewis Young

wonderful future. The expectations for the future are great but there will be many unexpected outcomes. Trust your board and watch the wind! Who knows from which direction it will blow!

By Bob Lopp

MAY FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

Monday, May 11, 2015. 7 PM. Flathead Audubon General Meeting and Potluck, Whitefish Community Center, 121 Second Street, Whitefish. See page 3.

Monday, May 4, 2015. 6 PM. FAS Board of Directors Meeting, 295 3rd Ave EN. All welcome.

Tuesdays May and June. 10:00 AM-noon. Wild Mile Wildflower and Bird Walks. Bigfork. See page 6.

Saturday, May 9. Family Forestry Expo. See page 6.

Saturday, May 16, 9 AM-noon. Bike and Bird the Smith Lake Area. See page 6.

Saturday, May 23, 7:00 AM-2:00 PM. Coonsa Creek Field Trip. See page 6.

Friday afternoon through Sunday, May 29-31. Warbler Weekend at Tally Lake. See page 6.

BIRD OF THE MONTH

Article and Photograph by Jeannie Marcure

The Howdy Bird

According to a recent article in the Yakima Herald Republic, the pioneers often saw the bird that we know today as the Burrowing Owl as they crossed the western prairies. Because it stood at the entrance to its burrow, bobbing up and down as if to greet them, they soon nicknamed it the "Howdy Bird." Unfortunately, these days most of us haven't had the opportunity to be greeted by these friendly little birds, as their populations seem to be declining throughout their range, which is west of the Mississippi, north to Canada and south to Mexico.

At approximately the same size as a robin and with a home underground, the Burrowing Owl is certainly unique! It is also one of the first birds that I recall from my childhood on a farm in central South Dakota. One of the daily chores that I helped with in those days was bringing the cattle in from the pasture for the night and it was during these daily treks to the pasture that I first encountered these small sentinels standing in the mouths of their burrows quietly watching us.

Recently, after spending most of my adult life in the Flathead Valley and becoming an avid birder, I began a quest to see these amazing little birds again. Since Burrowing Owls prefer an open habitat of prairie or grassland with few or no trees I realized that this search would involve travel so in the early spring of 2014 I contacted the MOB Montana online birding forum for help. After a few weeks of correspondence with some very helpful birders from Eastern Montana, I had several possible locations where I might find resident Burrowing Owls. A camping trip to the Three Forks area resulted in a memorable morning spent quietly observing and photographing these novel little birds from our car and also inspired me to learn more about them.

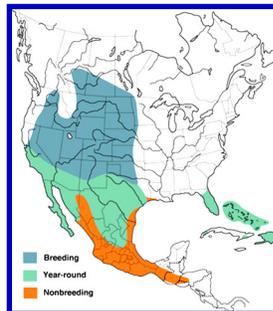
In Montana, Burrowing Owls are migratory, arriving in April and leaving in September. As I have already mentioned, they prefer an open habitat of prairie or grassland and usually live in holes made by badgers, prairie dogs or other small mammals. They are, however, capable of doing their own excavation if necessary, and even in their "borrowed" homes often do some remodeling.

Unlike other species of owls in which the female is usually larger, the male and female Burrowing



Owl are the same size, with a height of 7 to 10 inches, a wingspan of 19 to 23 inches and a weight of approximately 5 ounces. Though often thought to be diurnal because they are often seen resting on fence posts in the daytime, Burrowing Owls hunt at night and are most active at dusk and dawn. Because he spends more time out of the burrow during daylight hours, the male tends to be somewhat lighter in color than the female. Both have brown backs with white spots and underparts of white with brown barring. Distinctive white eyebrows extend to the bill and the head lacks ear tufts. Their most noticeable feature is their relatively long legs, which were probably developed because of their life in open grasslands. These enable them to sprint as well as fly while stalking their favorite prey of rodents, birds, reptiles and insects.

Burrowing Owls form monogamous pairs for the nesting season. The chosen burrow is usually 8 to 12 feet in length with an enlarged chamber at the far end. It is lined with various materials such as feathers, paper and grass clippings. If available, manure is spread around the mouth of the nest site to attract insects for future meals. Occurring in early spring, courtship consists of aerial flights, hovering and chatty calls. As things progress, the male feeds his mate near the nest site and the pair nibble each other's bills. Burrowing Owls often live in loose colonies with the adults standing guard at the mouths of the burrows. If you happen to accidentally approach a nest site the owls will dive inside rather than fly. They may also make a hissing sound that sounds like a rattlesnake. As you can imagine, this behavior is very effective in keeping unwanted visitors away!



Distribution of the Burrowing Owl, *Athene Cularia* in the Americas.

The female incubates the 3 to 12 eggs with the male bringing her food during this 28-day period. The hatchlings are covered with white downy feathers and have their eyes closed. For the first one to two weeks the female remains in the burrow with the babies while the male provides the food. After the young emerge from the burrow at about 2 weeks, they are often seen lined up at the mouth of the nest site. Flight training begins at 4 weeks and they can fly quite well by 6 weeks, although they remain with their parents until they are 12 weeks old.

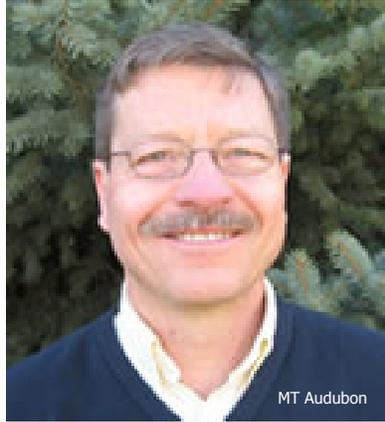
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May Program

MONTANA AUDUBON'S BIRD CONSERVATION EFFORTS

Steve Hoffman, Montana Audubon Executive Director, will present information on Montana Audubon's priority bird conservation efforts at Flathead Audubon's annual meeting on Monday, May 11. Steve will describe the organization's current program initiatives. Work on rare and declining species inhabiting sagelands, grasslands, wetlands and streamside forests will be emphasized, as well as the Important Bird Area program. Species-specific status updates will be given for the Long-billed Curlew, Greater Sage-Grouse, Golden Eagle, Ferruginous Hawk, and several water bird species of special concern.

Steve has dedicated his entire 37-year career to wildlife conservation. He has served as Executive Director of Montana Audubon (in Helena) since 2006. Steve began his career as a Wildlife Biologist for the US Bureau of Land Management in Arizona, and later served as an Endangered Species Specialist for the



US Fish & Wildlife Service in the American Southwest.

After ten years of government service, Steve founded HawkWatch International (HWI), a nonprofit organization focused on the study and conservation of hawks, eagles and other birds of prey. Steve served as HWI's Executive Director for 12 years.

In 2000, Steve returned to his birth state to become *Audubon Pennsylvania's* statewide Director of Bird Conservation, where he directed Audubon's Important Bird Area program. Steve greatly expanded Audubon PA's citizen-science programs, engaging over 100 volunteers in IBA

monitoring and conservation efforts.

In 2004, Steve moved to Bozeman to serve as Executive Director of *Predator Conservation Alliance*. Steve earned his M.S. degree in Wildlife Ecology from Utah State University (1979). He has given hundreds of public presentations on wildlife conservation and natural history topics across the U.S. and abroad.

MAY FLATHEAD AUDUBON MEETING

Monday, May 11, 2015

Whitefish Community Center, 121 Second Street, Whitefish.

Doors Open 5:00 PM, Potluck Dinner 6:00 PM, Meeting Begins 7:00 PM.

Program: Steve Hoffman, Executive Director, Montana Audubon

Be sure to arrive early enough to look over and bid on silent auction items! Officers and Board Members will be elected (see candidates below).

BRING YOUR OWN PLATES, UTENSILS, AND CUPS!

SILENT AUCTION

Don't forget 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!

Candidates for Officers and Board Members

At the May meeting, FAS will elect the President, Vice President and several Director positions. Nominees (with biographies) for these positions are:

PRESIDENT – Kay Mitchell - Here we are in the middle of a beautiful Montana spring and I can't think of anywhere better in the world! After growing up in the Midwest, of course Montana would be a step up, but even after 40+ years, I continue to be amazed, intrigued and grateful for the richness that surrounds us. How about you?

Back in the 60s and 70s, I did what was expected – graduated from a good college twice, taught school, volunteered for noble causes, etc. It wasn't until the late 70s, when I married Brent, that my real education started. Since then, we have built a lifestyle based around animals, birds, soil, plants, weather, and quality people who respect and love the natural world as we do.

Along the way, I worked in two libraries, ran an income tax service, taught at FVCC and became a

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counselor for people who needed to find new careers when their former jobs disappeared. Both Brent and I retired “young” and began developing our tree farm outside of Kalispell. Now that we are close to maintenance level with it, we find that it has made “old” people of us.

I've been actively involved with Flathead Audubon since 2002, produced your *Pileated Post* for 13 years, helped put together Owen Sowerwine Work Days, organized the Conservation Achievement Recognitions we give to deserving local people, have done informal reviews of the FAS financial records for our great treasurer, Bruce Tannehill, and helped with development of the new website. I accepted the nomination for President because I have great respect for your Board of Directors and want to do whatever I can to help them continue with the big projects they are working on that are putting Flathead Audubon out in front as a respected organization bringing people and nature together.

VICE PRESIDENT – Gael Bissell - Gael has been on the FAS board for the last 3 years and has served as co-chair of the Field Trips Committee. During that time, she helped complete a strategic planning member survey, contributed frequently to the *Pileated Post*, volunteered for many OSNA work days, and served on several ad hoc committees. Gael is currently a wildlife biologist for Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks focusing on habitat conservation.

DIRECTORS

Lewis Young - Lewis currently serves on the Board, is co-chair of the Conservation Committee and is on the Newsletter Committee. On the board for about 10 years since he retired from the U.S. Forest Service as a wildlife biologist, Lewis and his wife Lynda live in Eureka where besides Flathead Audubon activities he stays involved in a variety of wildlife related activities including bat surveys and a project to restore sharp-tailed grouse to western Montana.

Paula Smith - Paula has been proud to serve as a Director, Vice-President, President and Past-President of Flathead Audubon. She also serves as Publicity Chair and Website Chair and would love to have more volunteers on those committees. Paula would like to continue for another term in working with other fine Board members in furthering the Flathead Audubon mission.

Doug MacCarter - Can you imagine a life that includes a twin and triplet brothers? Well, I don't have to imagine it, I lived it! My name is Doug MacCarter and I have an identical twin brother name Don and

also triplet brothers: Dean, Daryl, and Dave. Definitely a full house! Our home town was Billings, Montana, and we all graduated from Billings West High School. I attended the University of Montana and California State University Humbolt, obtaining degrees in Wildlife Biology and Wildlife Management respectively. My brother and I initiated the Osprey study on Flathead Lake in the late 60's and into the mid 70's. We have been interested in birds of prey since our boyhood days in Billings, so the Osprey study was a natural for us. In addition to my interest in wildlife, teaching certificates were acquired in Montana, Minnesota, and Arizona. I have over 30 years of teaching experience. The past seven years has been devoted to raptor rehabilitation and providing educational programs for different organizations.

Jan Metzmaker - Jan is no stranger to folks in the Flathead Valley. Since her first summer in Glacier National Park in the early 1970s, Jan has made Montana her home and has compiled an impressive legacy of community service and conservation work spanning over four decades. After eight years working in and around Glacier, Jan continued her interest in water quality by becoming a water quality specialist with the Lolo National Forest while obtaining her graduate degree at the University of Montana in Environmental Studies. During the next decade, Jan became the first staff person for Citizens for a Better Flathead, served as director of Senator Baucus's campaign, director for the Flathead's Democratic Party, and substitute taught and worked and coached volleyball at local schools. In summers, she worked for Glacier Guides. In May 1995, Jan was selected to complete a 3-year term on the Whitefish City Council. In 2000, Jan became the first Executive Director of The Glacier Fund. Jan retired from the Whitefish Convention and Visitor's Bureau in January after 7 years as Director. She isn't sure what will be next on her “to do” list, but would like it to include the Board of Flathead Audubon.

Jake Bramante - Growing up in a log home in northwestern Montana, Jake frequently ran around with his brother in the Forest Service land adjacent to their property. Armed with the blue, Golden Guide to Birds of North America, he helped an area wildlife biologist with his section of the Libby area Christmas Bird Count. After a few years away at college, he came back with a renewed commitment to enjoy the woods that he missed so much, which culminated in a summer where he hiked all of Glacier's trails. He now creates day hiking maps with guides on the back for Glacier and other national parks.

THANKS AGAIN TO ALL OUR DONORS THIS YEAR!

We again thank all our donors who have been so generous throughout the year. As a result, Flathead Audubon has been able to continue our many fine programs that reach a broad spectrum of people.

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Due to a negative short-term population trend, Burrowing Owls are considered a species of concern in Montana. This decline is blamed on the eradication of Prairie Dog towns, as well as loss of habitat due to development. In Canada as well as California and Washington, Burrowing Owls are considered endangered and some efforts have been made to stabilize existing populations with the use of artificial plastic burrows. You can read about one particularly success-

ful project near the Salton Sea in California at: <http://www.allaboutbirds.org/Page.aspx?pid=1771>.

If you happen to be lucky enough to see a Burrowing Owl during your travels this summer, be sure to stop and say "HOWDY," but also please be careful not to disturb them in any way. Disturbance of breeding birds often causes the nest to be abandoned. Remember that your car makes a great observation/photography blind.

Thanks to the **Whitefish Soroptomists Club**

With great thanks, we acknowledge a substantial donation to the FAS Education Program from the Whitefish Soroptomists Club. They have been long time supporters of the opportunities we offer to the girls and women of the Flathead for experiencing and learning about nature and science.

"The modern dogma is comfort at any cost." Aldo Leopold *A Sand County Almanac*

Conservation Education Corner

by Patti Mason

The Senior Institute class has now completed very successfully. This past month I spent a day at Bissell School with K-8. We had a lot of fun exploring cavities, nests, beaks and feathers. Beauty of Birds is in full swing now.

April will finish off with a bang – a day seeing all the kids at Head Start, Arbor Day with local third

graders, and Earth Day at Whitefish Depot Park. Our backyard habitats are so crucial to healthy bird populations that I will be focusing on Gardening for the Birds there. Hope to see you!

Next month will include some field trips and a family friendly bird walk starting at Imagine If library. Have a great summer!

Upcoming Bird Festivals

Besides the upcoming Montana Bird Festival in Helena, there are many others around the country that would make for some great road trips. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology has a website that makes it easy to plan your next birding destination. You can look through listings by calendar or on a map. Go to <http://www.allaboutbirds.org/birdfestivals>.

CASH REWARDS FOR LOON REPORTS

The Montana Loon Society is offering cash prizes for the greatest number of 2015 observations of banded and unbanded confirmed breeding Common Loons in Montana. The contest is generously funded by Plum Creek Timber Company.

One \$200 prize will go for the most observations of banded and unbanded breeding loons reported by May 31. A second \$200 prize will go for the most observations (cumulatively) reported by July 22. And one \$100 prize will be decided by a random drawing from the names of all individuals who submitted at least one observation. Federal and State employees are not eligible for a cash reward if they observe loons as part of their job.

Send band observations to Chris Hammond, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (chammond@mt.gov) before these dates. The

most useful band reports are the ones that come in to Chris as soon as possible, so send them in as soon as you observe a loon. Your report is valuable even if you are not 100% sure of your observation or have trouble reading the bands. A trained loon spotter can then be sent out to make accurate observations. Qualified observations will be determined and counted by Chris.

Winners will be announced at the summer meeting of the Montana Common Loon Working Group on July 23-24, and Chris will notify winners soon after.

Further details about the contest, including how to write a report and tips for spotting and reading loon bands, can be found on the Montana Loon Society website: go to www.montanaloons.org and click on "Click here" about half way down the home page.

SPRING/SUMMER FIELD TRIPS FOR YOU!

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 all Field Trips, dress for the weather, bring binoculars or spotting scope if you have them, wear sturdy footwear, and drive and pull off the road safely. All drivers must have their own vehicle insurance. For more information, contact Kathy Ross, 837-3738, or Gael Bissell, 261-2255, or the individual field trip leader listed below. Also, a free brochure, "Birding Hotspots of the Flathead" is available at the FAS general meetings and on www.FlatheadAudubon.org.



MISSION VALLEY AND MONTANA WATERFOWL FOUNDATION. Sunday, April 26, 9:00 AM–1:00 PM. Join Janene Lichtenberg and Amy Cilimburg to learn more about birds and conservation initiatives in the Mission Valley. First stop is Montana Waterfowl Foundation where we will walk through the spruce fen forest and visit Trumpeter Swans and other waterfowl in the aviaries. Meet at the large Salish Kootenai College parking lot in Pablo, corner of Highway 93 and Silver Fox Lane at 9:00 AM. Plan to return around 1:00 PM. Parking is limited; carpooling is recommended. Contact Janene at janene.lichtenberg@skc.edu or call 406-212-5473.

WILD MILE WILDFLOWER AND BIRD WALKS-BIGFORK. Tuesdays mornings 10:00 AM to noon through May and June. Join Anne Morley of Montana Native Plant Society and Neal Brown of Flathead Audubon to see local spring wildflowers and listen to neotropical migrants along Swan River Wild Mile. Easy two-mile (total) walks along level trails accessible to all. Meet at Bigfork Summer Playhouse, downtown Bigfork at 10:00 AM or the trailhead shortly thereafter. We try to be back to downtown Bigfork by noon. Call Neal Brown 837-5018 or Anne Morley 886-2242.

FAMILY FORESTRY EXPO. Saturday, May 9. Outdoor program for all at Trumbull Creek Experimental Forest owned by Stoltze Land and Lumber Co. northwest of Columbia Falls. This family-oriented event features a short forest walk through educational stations with demonstrations and hands-on activities; learn about important values of our forests from aquatics to loons, fiber to paper-making, and from tree growth to rehabilitated owls and eagles. Try using a cross-cut saw or bring home a seedling for your back yard. Expo will demonstrate use of logging equipment and packing of a mule string. Free logging camp lunch 10:30 AM to 1:30 PM. Visit <http://www.familyforestryexpo.org/> or contact Teresa Wenum at 406-758-5218.

BIKE AND BIRD SMITH LAKE AREA. Saturday, May 16, 9 AM - noon. Hosted by Flathead Land Trust, Flathead Audubon, Flathead River to Lake Initiative, Rails to Trails, and Bike Saturdays. Bike 8.5 miles around Smith Lake Waterfowl Production Area viewing conservation projects expanding protection of wetland complex and important migratory bird habitat. Craig Hoenberger of Flathead Audubon is bird expert on this trip. Meet at Kila Pub, and end there for lunch. Travel on paved and gravel roads; mountain or fat tire bikes recommended (can be rented from Wheaton's (Kalispell) or Glacier Cyclery (Whitefish) by the day). Wear bike helmet, appropriate clothing, bring water and binoculars. RSVP to Laura Katzman, lkatzman@bigsky.net or 752-8293.

COONSA CREEK FIELD TRIP: Birds, Bears and Native Plants. Saturday, May 23, 7:00 AM - 2:00 PM. Sponsored by Flathead Audubon and Flathead Chapter of the Native Plant Society, lead by wildlife biologist, Steve Gniadek, and botanist, Betty Kuropat. Bird rich riparian habitat along Coonsa Creek near Firebrand Pass trailhead and look for wildflowers on the ridge. Willow wetlands and aspen groves contrast with open, rocky talus east of trail. Meet at Columbia Heights Park N Ride at 7:00 AM to car-pool to trailhead (about 1 to 1.5 hours). Return to Park N Ride around 2:00 PM. To sign up, contact Steve at 892-7406.

WARBLER WEEKEND AT TALLY LAKE. Friday afternoon through Sunday, May 29-31. Come join Flathead Audubon at the Tally Lake Campground for an extraordinary weekend of birding and relaxing. The pavilion campsite at the campground has been reserved for the weekend. There is a covered pavilion for rainy weather. Throughout the weekend, we will be focusing on bird identification, birding by ear, and photography. This is an ideal time of year to find a wide variety of migrant and resident birds; most notable is that all of the warbler species which can be found in NW Montana are found here. Expert birders will be available to lead us around the campground.

Plenty of other activities can be enjoyed at Tally Lake as well: you can bring canoes and kayaks, play volleyball or horseshoes, go hiking on one of the numerous trails found close to the campground, or bring board games. We are also looking for someone to give a lecture on a subject of general interest Saturday afternoon. We like to have an optional potluck meal Saturday evening around 6 PM. Please bring something to share if you want to join in. All other meals are up to you. Someone will show up Friday afternoon to get a fire

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going, scout the area and start creating a bird list. Bring camp chairs for sitting around the fire and firewood if you have them.

Cost of camping is **FREE**, courtesy of FAS. Just tell them at the gate that you are with Flathead Audubon at the pavilion. Contact Jill or Mike Fanning at 862-8070 or shrdlu@centurytel.net if you have questions about this outstanding adventure into the world of birds.

TOBACCO VALLEY BIRDING. Saturday, June 6, 8:00 AM—noon. Join wildlife biologist Lewis Young to tour portions of the Tobacco Valley near Eureka and search for species such as Lewis' Woodpecker and Long-billed Curlew and visit a riparian area along the Tobacco River where species expected include Black-headed Grosbeaks, Lazuli Buntings, Catbirds, and various warblers. Hiking is 1-2 miles on easy terrain. Meet near Eureka at 8:00 AM and return around noon. Contact Lewis Young at 406-889-3492 to sign up.

LAWRENCE PARK BIRD WALK. Sunday, June 7, 8:00-10:00 AM. Kalispell's Lawrence Park is home to a wide variety of migratory and resident songbirds, woodpeckers, small raptors, and water birds. Join amateur naturalist Karen Nichols and wildlife biologist Jane Adams for a two hour bird walk along the Stillwater River to the north end of Lawrence Park and back. Families with young children are welcome, also those who may have difficulty walking or driving long distances, and those with busy schedules who want to learn about our birds and their habitats. Some binoculars available or bring your own. Meet at Lawrence Park Picnic Shelter. Contact Karen Nichols at karenben@montanasky.net or 406-261-6230.

COMMON LOONS AND LOON CHICKS. Saturday, June 20, 8:30 AM—2:00 PM. Join Loon Ranger from MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks to see recently hatched common loon chicks and adults on local nesting lakes. Destinations depend on timing and success of this year's loon hatch. Trip is ideal for all ages and young families. Walking short distances and down hills to observation points. Loon Ranger provides an excellent spotting scope and information about northwest Montana loons, loon behaviors and interactions with each other and humans, and results of years of banding efforts. Meet at 8:30 AM at MT FWP, 490 North Meridian Road in Kalispell. Bring lunch, binoculars, warm clothes, boots and rain gear. Return between 12:30 and 2:00 PM, depending on distance to the lakes. Contact Gael Bissell at 406-751-4580 or gbissell@mt.gov.

LOST TRAIL NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE. Sunday, June 21, 8:30 AM—2:00 PM. Join refuge wildlife biologist Beverly Skinner to tour incredible wetlands and grasslands of this hidden jewel west of Kalispell. See restored Dahl Lake with nesting Trumpeter Swans, Black Terns and an abundance of waterfowl, and many bird species associated with Palouse prairie, riparian/wetland, and larch/pine forest habitats of the 9,000+ acre Lost Trail National Wildlife Refuge. We may see one of the Refuge's rarest plants, the threatened Spalding's catchfly, and may find/view boreal toads. We will drive and walk the refuge's closed roads with short hikes to the best viewing sites. Carpoolers meet at Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 490 N. Meridian Rd. in Kalispell between 7:00-7:15 AM; carpool to Refuge Headquarters, about an hour+ west of Kalispell. Or you can meet at Lost Trail Refuge Headquarters between 8:15-8:30 AM. We will return to Kalispell early afternoon. Bring snacks, foul weather gear, and binoculars. Contact Beverly at 406-858-2286 or beverly_skinner@fws.gov.

MONTANA WILD WINGS RECOVERY CENTER. Sunday, June 14, 10:00 AM – noon. Get close and personal with eagles, hawks, owls, and other injured or recovering birds at the only federally permitted rehabilitation facility in the Flathead. Tour the recently remodeled facility and visit with "ambassador" raptors commonly used for education. See how these birds are fed, exercised, cared for, and eventually released (if possible) and learn how this organization serves the wildlife of the Flathead Valley. All ages and families are welcome. Field trip limited to 25 individuals; to sign up, contact Beth Watne 406-250-1070. Those signed up meet at Shopko parking lot on Highway 2 east of Kalispell and carpool from there.

GOING BATTY! Saturday, August 15, 8:30 PM -11:00 PM. Join wildlife biologists Lewis Young and Lisa Bate to learn more about the bats in the Flathead Valley. At a site with known bat activity, we will have electronic equipment to detect the ultrasonic calls of bats flying overhead and have mist nets set up to capture bats for closer inspection. Lewis and Lisa will demonstrate the equipment, handle bats captured in mist nets, and talk about the amazing adaptations bats have for navigating, catching food, and hibernating. Participants are not allowed to touch or handle bats. Headlamps or flashlights are necessary; wear suitable clothing for evening temperatures and possibly mosquitoes. Meet at 8:30 PM in lower Flathead Valley area to travel to the site; plan to finish around 11 PM. Call Lewis Young (889-3492) to sign up and get details on the meeting site.

RAPTOR DAY. Saturday, September 12, 9:30 AM—3 PM. The 10th Annual Raptor Day at Lone Pine State Park is a fun-filled day of activities, programs and educational exhibits for kids and adults. Sponsored by Flathead Audubon and Lone Pine State Park, this event celebrates northwest Montana birds of prey and their

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habitat needs. All programs are free to Montana residents; there is a \$5 Lone Pine State Park fee for non-residents. Contact Lone Pine State Park at 755-2706 or Patti Mason at AudubonEducation@gmail.com.

WEST VALLEY SANDHILL CRANE BIKE/WATCHING. Saturday, September 19, 4:00-7:00 PM. Learn about sandhill cranes around many unique West Valley wetlands and see up to 100 of these magnificent birds with Flathead Land Trust, Flathead Audubon, the West Valley Naturalist's Association, and Bike Saturdays. Meet at 121 Crane Drive (off Clarke Dr. between Stillwater Rd. and West Valley Dr.), then bike about 7.5 miles to view these spectacular birds, standing four feet tall with a wingspan over six feet, at close range. Bruce Tannehill of Flathead Audubon is the bird expert to help lead this trip. After biking (6:00 PM), view cranes from the home, enjoy hors d'oeuvres, and socialize as the sun sets. Come for the bike tour and/or the evening crane watch. Mountain or fat tire bikes recommended (can be rented from Wheaton's (Kalispell) or Glacier Cyclery (Whitefish) for the day). Wear bike helmet and appropriate clothing; bring water and binoculars. Please RSVP to and obtain maps from Laura Katzman at 752-8293 or lkatzman@bigsky.net.

CHIRPS & SQUAWKS

Highlights from April 2015 Board Meeting:

- ◇ Approved Bruce Tannehill producing an additional 40 bird song CDs to meet current demand
- ◇ Learned that Flathead Audubon's summer Field Trip list will be in the "Go Local" guide
- ◇ Discussed ways to integrate FAS education principles with field trips
- ◇ Set the upcoming Birdathon competition for Saturday, June 13, and will organize it by email
- ◇ Heard reports and plans to submit comments from Conservation co-chairs on Ninepipe WMA and Flathead National Forest Management Plans
- ◇ Received progress report on plans to build a bird blind at Wiley Robbins Homestead, starting in May
- ◇ Got "sneak peek" and progress report on the new FAS 2016 calendar
- ◇ Heard Conservation Educator's review of recent education activities and very busy schedule for remainder of school year

Farmer's Markets

Keep an eye out for the local farmer's markets to get fresh produce and support local producers!

Montana Audubon's Annual Bird Festival

"Living on the Wind" – what a great theme for our 2015 Bird Festival featuring keynote speaker Scott Weidensaul who will be speaking on migration patterns. He will also be signing his books which will be sold at the festival.

Field trips are filling fast, so please register as soon as possible. Register by mail, or online at www.mtaudubon.org. Also—be sure to reserve your

rooms at the Red Lion Colonial Hotel by calling 1-406-443-2100 or book online with the code MONT0604. (Be sure to mention that you are part of the Montana Audubon Bird Festival to get the group rate if you call.)

Recognize Your Peers!

Each year Montana Audubon recognizes individuals who work for the conservation and protection of birds and other wildlife by presenting Awards at the banquet. We are currently seeking nominations for: 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 22, 2015. Mail completed forms to Montana Audubon, PO Box 595, Helena MT 59624.



West Valley Naturalists

Low impact recreation opportunities in the Tally Lake area is the topic for the May 14 West Valley Naturalist program. The program begins at 7 PM in the science lab of West Valley School, 2290 Farm to Market Road. Becky Smith-Powell, Forest Recreation Program Leader for the Flathead National Forest, will talk about hiking/recreation on the Tally Lake Ranger District. Becky has served as the recreation manager on the Tally Lake district for many years, and has much information to share. The program is free and open to the public. For more information, please contact Linda de Kort at 755-3704.

WARBLER WEEKEND at TALLY LAKE

Friday afternoon through Sunday: May 29-31

Come join Flathead Audubon at the Tally Lake Campground for an extraordinary weekend of birding and relaxing. Throughout the weekend, we will be focusing on bird identification, birding by ear, and photography. This is an ideal time of year to find a wide

variety of migrant and resident birds; most notable is that all of the warbler species which can be found in NW Montana are found here.

See page 6 for further details.



Third Annual Flathead Audubon Birdathon

For the third consecutive year, the Tannehill Tanagers, headed by Bruce Tannehill, and John's Jays, with John Hughes as their leader, will face off, searching mountains, meadows, streams and backyard bird feeders to see which team can find the most bird species on June 13. After two consecutive years in second place, John's Jays are saying, "Third time's the charm." Tannehill's Tanagers are saying, "No, it is not!" Will the Tanagers continue their winning streak or will the Jays take flight?

But the real question of the day is who will have the most fun? Of course, it is the team finding the most species of birds from morning to night on that momentous Saturday or the team member finding that rare species. There is no doubt, fun will be had! Flathead Audubon invites you to join in supporting one of its teams. Each team must complete the count within 24 hours. The competition will end in a tallying of spe-

cies, a declaration of a winning team, as well as a discussion of favorite sightings.

The Birdathon works like any other "athon," where teams seek donations either per bird species seen or as a pre-determined amount. In the last two years we had exceptional days for birding, with teams seeing 130-160 species. We hope to repeat these high numbers, but weather is always an issue we can't control. Funds from pledges received will be applied to our education and conservation efforts: our education trunks, workshops and Beauty of Birds classes, as well as the licensing and maintenance of the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area.

When contacted, we hope you will support Flathead Audubon's efforts. If you would like to join one of the Birdathon teams or support a team with a donation, email Bruce Tannehill at tan-neland239@gmail.com.



New Timing for OSNA Workday

Flathead Audubon's annual workday at the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area will be in August this year – instead of the usual fall date. This allows for a more timely treatment of trails and weeds.

On Saturday August 22, we will meet at 9 AM at the Montessori School on Willow Glen Drive to divide into job groups, and then carpool to the trailheads. Jobs will include trail maintenance, weed pulling and clipping, refurbishing of the kiosk, mounting of signs, and fence maintenance.

The new Weed Control Committee is currently developing an aggressive 3-year weed control plan for

OSNA. Their goal for this workday is to pull/clip houndstongue and Canada thistle in certain heavily infested areas. Weed workers should bring gloves and hand clippers if they have them. Bags and extra clippers will be provided.

A Workday reminder will be in local newspapers and the FAS website, and email reminders will be sent out. If we don't have your email address, please send it. To get on the email reminder list or to obtain further information, contact Linda Winnie (755-1406 or lindawin@centurytel.net).

Avian Influenza in Our Area

Neil Anderson, Wildlife Manager for MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks in Kalispell, reports that with the finding of highly pathogenic avian influenza near Kalispell, they have been getting calls regarding dead birds. In short, FWP will not be testing individual birds that people find, unless it is a raptor and it has recently died from unknown causes. For other species there is a list of criteria that must be met. Some criteria examples are:

1) Mortality events involving waterfowl, other water birds, 2) More than 5 dead at one time in 1 location with some exceptions, 3) Mortality events involving individual raptors or other avian scavengers (ravens, crows, or gulls), particularly those observed near locations with on-going waterbird mortality, 4) Endangered or Threatened species or species of special concern, or 5) found in close proximity to facilities harboring domestic birds (or wild/captive) in which avian influenza has been detected.

Contact FWP at 406-752-5501 for more information.

TREASURER'S REPORT (Calendar Year 2014) by Bruce Tannehill

In 2014 the Flathead Audubon Society continued its valley wide education program while supporting and improving the Owen Sowerwine Nature Area. The board continues to work with the challenge of financially supporting these projects. The donations of foundations, local organizations, and individuals make it possible. In 2014 Flathead Audubon produced and sold a truly unique calendar. The printing cost about \$5500. This was offset by income of \$6000 from sponsorships and \$10,690 in sales. Flathead Audubon also received a bequest of \$5,500 from the estate of Roy Dimond. Roy was a strong supporter of our programs, and we will miss him.

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

EXPENDITURES FOR CALENDAR YEAR	2013	2014
Operations (Newsletter, Office, Insurance, etc.)	\$8,592	\$14,732
Owen Sowerwine	\$801	\$950
Education	\$23,656	\$22,167
TOTAL	\$33,049	\$37,849

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

INCOME FOR THE YEAR	2013	2014
Local Dues	\$5,250	\$4,690
Membership Donations and Sponsorships	\$3,134	\$3,575
Amount Withdrawn From Funds (See ** below)	\$2,142	0
June Bird-a-thon	\$9,300	\$5,766
Sponsorships of FAS Calendar pages		\$6,000
Calendar Sales		\$10,690
Other Income (Sales, Interest, etc.)	\$2,959	\$1,680
Grant from COCEEC		\$500
U.S. Forest Service Education Grant	\$7,613	\$1,815
Sustainability Fund		\$1,000
Estate of Roy Dimond		\$5,500
Prudential Foundation	\$1,150	\$1,100
Whitefish Community Foundation	\$1,000	\$1,000
Soroptimist International of Whitefish	\$1,500	\$1,500
Montana Chapter of Wildlife Society		\$913
Tom and Teresa Quinn Foundation	\$1,000	\$1,000
Cinnabar Foundation	\$2,000	\$2,000
National Audubon	\$1,889	\$1,889
TOTALS	\$42,102	\$50,618

The Flathead Audubon Society's board maintains four funds dedicated to long term support of projects. Part of the capital monies placed in these funds were bequests. **Four percent 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 12/31/14
Education Income Fund	\$100,437
Owen Sowerwine Income Fund	\$13,276
Conservation Income Fund	\$32,701
Jack White Conservation Fund	\$22,695
Operating Fund	\$25,360



Thank You!

to those below who have made donations to Flathead Audubon through April 18, 2015.

Merlin

Flathead Valley Bridge Center
Prudential Foundation

Kestrel

Mayre Flowers



Please remember to TAKE ALONG AN OSNA MONITORING FORM when you go to Owen Sowerwine this summer.

Use the form to tell us what parts of Owen Sowerwine you visited, and what you saw and heard there. Feedback from Volunteer Monitors helps Flathead Audubon do a better job of managing Owen Sowerwine.

Get the form and a trail map from www.flatheadaudubon.org or ask Linda Winnie to email it to you (lindawin@centurytel.net).



THANK YOU to ALL who are helping with OSNA Monitoring!

Save the Date!

Join us on Tuesday, July 28, 2015 for Waterton-Glacier Science & History Day!



This year's Science & History Day will take place at the West Glacier Community Building in Glacier National Park from 9:30 to 3:30 p.m. See you there!

SPECIAL GIFTS

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

- Eagle Donation, \$1000+
- Osprey Donation, \$500+
- Snowy Owl Donation, \$250+
- Merlin Donation, \$100+
- Kestrel Donation, \$50+
- My Own Vision, amount of my choice



The FAS activity which most interests me is:

- Education Programs
- Owen Sowerwine Natural Area
- Scholarships and Grants
- Field Trips and Outdoor Events

I want my gift to recognize another:

In memory of _____

In honor of _____

Please send a notification of this gift to:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Donor's Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Please do not acknowledge my gift in the Pileated Post

Please make checks payable to:

Flathead Audubon Society

P.O. Box 9173

Kalispell, MT 59904

Your gift is tax deductible.

Flathead Lake Research Cruise—July 14, 2015

Reservations required. \$50/person. For information or to RSVP, contact Tom Bansak at events@flbs.umn.edu or 406-982-3301 X229.

THIS IS YOUR LAST PILEATED POST UNTIL SEPTEMBER

Until then, enjoy your summer!



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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 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 - Patti Mason: auduboneducator@gmail.com

FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY DIRECTORY

OFFICERS

President	Bob Lopp	boblopp@bresnan.net	752-7026
Vice-President	Kay Mitchell	kbmitch@centurytel.net	756-8130
Secretary	Marylane Pannell	kuhlpan@cyberport.net	257-5793
Treasurer	Bruce Tannehill	tanneland239@gmail.com	862-4548
Past-President	Paula Smith	paulabobsmith@centurytel.net	837-0181

DIRECTORS

2014-2017	Jim Rychwalski	james_rychwalski@yahoo.com	755-3229
2014-2017	Gael Bissell	gbissell535@gmail.com	755-8709
2014-2017	Denny Olson	docwild.mt@gmail.com	249-3987
2014-2017	Richard Kuhl	kuhlpan@cyberport.net	257-5793
2013-2016	Jan Wassink	janwassink51@gmail.com	249-6590
2012-2015	Steve Gniadek	gravjavbro@yahoo.com	892-7406
2012-2015	Lewis Young	68 Garrison Dr., Eureka 59917	889-3492
2014-2015	Kathy Ross	mtkat@montanaport.com	837-3837
2014-2015	Jill Fanning	shrdlu@centurytel.net	862-8070
2014-2015	Mike Fanning	shrdlu@centurytel.net	862-8070
2014-2015	Bob Lee	rml3@centurytel.net	837-4467

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Christmas Bird Count	Vacant	Refuges	Kathy Ross	837-3837
Conservation	Lewis Young 889-3492	Website	Paula Smith	837-0181
	Steve Gniadek 892-7406	Wetlands	John Hughes	261-2506
Education	Denny Olson 249-3987			
Field Trips	Kathy Ross 837-3837			
	Gael Bissell 755-8709			
Finance	Mike Fanning 862-8070			
Donations	Mary Nelesen 755-7678			
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Membership	Mike Fanning 862-8070			
	Jill Fanning 862-8070			
Owen Sowerwine	Rick Mace 755-8709			
Natural Area	Linda Winnie 755-1406			
Newsletter	Linda Winnie 755-1406			
	Kay Mitchell 756-8130			
	John Hughes 261-2506			
	Lewis Young 889-3492			
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Program	Richard Kuhl 257-5793			
Publicity	Paula Smith 837-0181			
Sales	Jill Fanning 862-8070			



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www.MTAudubon.org
Executive Director: Steve Hoffman
shoffman@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

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____ - _____

Email _____

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