



Jewel Basin Hawk Watchers receive Conservation Achievement Recognition

Flathead Audubon proudly presents our Conservation Achievement Recognition to our most dedicated Jewel Basin Hawk Watch Observers. These individuals have given thousands of hours over the last eight years identifying and counting migrating raptors at the Jewel Basin Hawk Watch site. This incredible group of experienced "Jeweler's", as they like to be called, include BJ Worth, Barbara Summer, Diane Lundgren, Lisa Bate, and Barbara Boorman. Together, these folks have contributed nearly 2000 hours tracking the fall raptor migration on top of the Swan Divide from late August to the end of October, not including commute time and preparations.

The Jewel Basin Hawk Watch officially began in 2008. Dan Casey had discovered that hundreds of hawks, accipiters, and eagles use the Swan Divide during their fall southward migration and often flew within feet of the ridge making identification of species as well as age and sex fairly easy. Total fall counts range from 2,010 in 2009 to a high of 3,411 in 2015 and includes as many as 18 different species.

Last summer, Flathead Audubon agreed to take over

the management of the project from the American Bird Conservancy with continued support from the Flathead National Forest.

What is it about the watching migrating hawks that gets these folks up early and doing this physically and mentally challenging work day after day, year after year? Lisa Bate, one of the first Primary Observers, explains, "Before my first time on the Jewel Basin Hawk Watch Ridge, most of my raptor observations lasted 1-3 seconds because I worked mainly in forests. Then in 2009, I was up there during the biggest flight day that year. I will never forget watching a Peregrine Falcon two miles out in the gap,

come screaming down the ridge straight for the owl. It only took a few seconds. I had eye contact with it as it went by a few meters overhead. That was a life changer. I got the chills from seeing the intensity and beauty of that bird close-up."

"It's like being an air traffic controller", says Barbara Boorman, "At times we will have hawks, accipiters, and eagles all coming in at the same time." We find ourselves calling out to the Primary Observer, two accipiters at 10 o'clock; two birds in the notch and heading down the ridge, a bald eagle on the right."

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FEBRUARY FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

Monday, February 8, 2016. 7 PM. Flathead Audubon General Meeting, Gateway Community Center, US Hwy 2 West, Kalispell. See page 3.

Monday, February 4, 2016. 6 PM. FAS Board of Directors Meeting, 295 3rd Ave EN. All welcome.

Saturday, January 30, 2016. Winter Animal Tracking at Owen Sowerwine. See page 7.

Saturdays & Sundays, January 9 thru March 20, 2016. Explore Glacier National Park on Snowshoes. See page 7.

Sunday, February 14, 2016. Great Backyard Bird Count. See pages 4 and 7.

Sunday February 21, 2016. A Late Winter Wander in the Mission Valley. See page 7.

BIRD OF THE MONTH

BLACK-NECKED STILT

By Linda de Kort

Photographs by Frank de Kort

One of the most distinctive birds we will see returning to valley wetlands this spring are Black-necked Stilts (*Himantopus mexicanus*). They will be coming from wintering grounds on the California coast and Central America. You can't miss them. They have a striking plumage of contrasting glossy black above

and snowy white below. They have a dark needle like bill and their most remarkable feature is the long red legs on which they balance. Compared to body size, the Black-necked Stilt has the longest legs of any bird, except the flamingo. In her book, *Bird Feats of Montana*, Deborah Richie reports that the stilts are one-quarter body and



© Frank de Kort

three quarters legs. That is like a 5-foot person walking on 20-foot stilts! The long legs are, of course, a great advantage to these shore birds who forage in marshes and shallow lakes. The taller the bird the deeper it can wade, the higher its vantage point and the larger and more diverse its pantry. At close range you can catch the reflection of their large bright red eyes, which contribute to their excellent vision.

They generally probe and peck for their food in the soft mud with their sensitive bills searching for bugs, beetles, caddisflies, mosquito larvae and aquatic plants. You can sometimes see them gracefully sweeping their long necks through the water in pursuit of small fish, which they herd into shallow waters. Black-necked Stilts wade for their food, and will only swim or dive when under duress. Consequently these birds, which are over a foot (from tail to bill), are easily observed from shore if we

keep our distance.

The young look very much like the parents but have buffy edges on their back feathers. Last June while visiting the Bear River Bird Refuge we spotted a young stilt that appeared to be in an awkward position (see photo). It seemed to be sitting with its knees bending forward. After some reflection however, we remembered that a bird's knee is located much further up the limb, hidden underneath its feathers. The area from the ankle to the toes (actually a foot) is what we can see and what we often mistakenly interpret as the leg. So this hatchling was simply taking a rest by squatting on its bent ankles.

This little guy might have only been a day old. Fully developed young leave the nest 24 hours after hatching and are flightless for several weeks. The parents do not feed the young after they hatch; they do however fiercely defend them in their first vulnerable weeks by dive-bombing, wing flapping and high-pitched calls. Predators of adults, hatchlings and eggs include mammals (coyote, raccoons, skunks and fox) as well as other birds (hawks, owls, herons, gulls, ravens and magpies). Both parents are also very involved in nest building. While one mate stands watch, the other forms a depression about 2 inches deep by scraping into the dirt with breast and feet. The nest is then usually lined with grasses, shells, mud chips, pebbles, and bones. The normal clutch consists of 4 eggs and incubation varies from 21-30 days, depending on the temperature. On

very hot days the parents have been observed going to the water and wetting belly feathers; they then return to the nest to cool the eggs.

Both parents have also been seen submerging shell fragments from the hatchlings in nearby water probably to prevent attraction of predators.

The Black-necked Stilt is abundant in natural and man-made wetlands from the southern United States to the South America. They were first known to breed as far north as Canada in the late 1970's. Sightings in the northern range

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February Program

The Mission Valley: Charismatic Curlews, Citizen Counters, and Conservation Collaboration

Presented by Janene Lichtenberg and Amy Seaman

The Mission Valley is one of rich and varied habitats, diverse and complicated land ownership, and growing development pressures. Over the past few years, Montana Audubon and key partners in the area, such as Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes biologists, have built a collaboration focusing on key species and the area's mix of wetlands and grasslands. This area contains five Important Bird Areas notable for a diversity of shorebirds, marsh birds, waterfowl, raptors, and songbirds.

Within the Mission Valley, the Flathead Reservation contains almost 1.25 million acres of diverse wildlife habitats. Over 250 species of birds have been sighted on the Reservation. Although this area is home to many priority bird species, such as Trumpeter Swan, Sandhill Crane, and Flammulated Owl, the Long-billed Curlew has become a mascot for conservation in the valley as the Long-billed Curlew Initiative has been pioneered. Join Janene Lichtenberg and Amy Seaman on February 8 for a slide show presentation highlighting the charismatic Long-billed Curlew, how this bird is cultivating a culture of conservation, how to get involved, and what's next.

Janene Lichtenberg is Chair of the Wildlife and Fisheries Department at Salish Kootenai College

(SKC). Prior to this position, she spent almost 12 years as a Wildlife Biologist for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT). She is currently working on collaborative projects with Montana Audubon Society, SKC students, citizen scientists, CSKT, and other partners to enhance knowledge and conservation of wildlife on the Flathead Indian Reservation.

Amy Seaman is Associate Director of Conservation for Montana Audubon and primarily works on the Important Bird Area (IBA) Program. She is also Montana Audubon's lobbyist during legislative years. Her teaching experiences are varied, but include several semesters assisting field ornithology. Avian studies have been a focal point for Amy, taking her, over the last seven years to Montana locations, such as the Madison and Missouri Rivers, Charles M. Russell NWR, Bitterroot Valley, and Bridger Ridge. She has traveled widely throughout the west, and currently resides in Helena with her orange cat.

Please join Janene and Amy at 7 PM on Monday, February 8 to learn "What's Next?" for the Long-billed Curlew and conservation in the Mission Valley. We meet in the United Way Conference Room of the Gateway Community Center, off US Highway 2 West in Kalispell.

Conservation Achievement continued from page 1

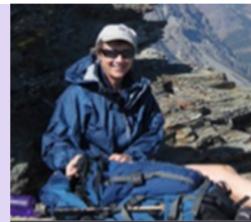
BJ Worth, outstanding wildlife photographer, stuntman, and birder has also worked as a Jeweler since the project's beginning. "I am passionate about birds, passionate about conservation, and passionate about being out in nature. I thank Dan Casey for realizing that we have this incredible opportunity in our backyard, to candidly observe these raptors doing what raptors do. And, our 'office' has the best possible penthouse view. More than anything, it puts a smile on my face!"



Diane Lundgren, an enthusiastic birder and hiker, has helped with these surveys since 2008. She has a huge appreciation for both the physical challenge of reaching the site as well as the challenges in rapid bird identification. Sometimes the Jewelers have only a few seconds to identify a species as it passes.

Our latest Jeweler, Barbara Summer began helping in earnest in 2012. "The first time I went up to the site in 2009 as a volunteer," says Barbara, "I was

totally enthralled by the beauty and majesty of being so close to this raptor migration. I would come home and pick out one of the species that I saw and read raptor books, especially "Hawks in Flight." Soon I became an official "Jeweler". I hope to be up there as long as my legs can carry me. It is truly an inspiring experience that I wish for anyone who can hike the trail."



Flathead Audubon board and members want to thank these Jewelers and all the other volunteers who have made his trek for their incredible contributions to this outstanding and important bird project.

If you want to join this outstanding team as a volunteer or become a "Jeweler", contact Gael Bissell (gbissell535@gmail.com) or Joe Batts (jbatts@me.com). You can find Hawk Watch data, posts, and photos online by joining Yahoo Groups-Jewel Basin Hawk Watch. Also, watch for our summary of the latest Hawk Watch data in an upcoming Pileated Post.

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are now more numerous which may be a result of global climate change as well as altered land use.

You can soon start looking for these returning migrants to our valley. Typically mating pairs arrive in small numbers in early April. Gael Bissell reported spotting one Black-necked Stilt in the Lower Valley alkaline wetlands during Fish Wildlife and Parks spring waterfowl surveys as early as the last week in March. Bob Lee reports that they have been seen at the Lost Trail Wildlife Refuge, and the Winnies observed them

in early May at the West Valley ponds. Local ornithologist Craig Hohenberger has also seen them at Blasdel Waterfowl Production Area near Somers where they have built nests. The largest numbers observed have been on the north shore of Flathead Lake in mid-to-late April. Eggs are laid in May and hatch in June, and young begin flying in July. Parents and young are usually gone by late August. So we have a few months ahead to spot these elegant stilts along our shores and in our wetlands. They are unmistakable and unforgettable. Good luck.



June 3-5, 2016 Missoula, Montana

guided by knowledgeable birders and naturalists familiar with the species and their habitats in the Missoula area. **Keep watch in early March:** Festival Registration Brochures with all field trip information, speakers and schedules will be in the mail, and the online system for registration will be active.

For more information please contact Montana Audubon Bird Festival Coordinator, Cathie Erickson, cerickson@mtaudubon.org, or call (406) 443-3949.

AMERICAN PRAIRIE RESERVE--A UNIQUE FLATHEAD AUDUBON FIELD TRIP

May 20-22, 2016

Flathead Audubon is offering a weekend filled with the breathtaking beauty and wide open spaces of eastern Montana grasslands and the American Prairie Reserve (APR).

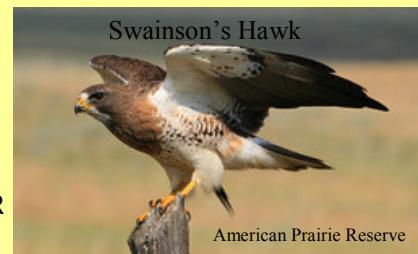


American Prairie Reserve

The Reserve is working to link together thousands of acres of private and public land on Montana's legendary Northern Great Plains, protecting critical habitat for

mating Sage Grouse, Bison calves and spring bird migration. Kathy Ross, will be coordinating the trip and can be contacted at 406-837-3837 or email, mtkat67@gmail.com.

Also Michael Wainright, spokesman for the APR, will be guest speaker at the March 14, 2016 public meeting of Flathead Audubon and will be available to answer questions about the APR and upcoming field trip. Space is limited to 20 for the May field trip.



American Prairie Reserve

native flora and fauna. According to the APR brochure, we will "discover the power of dark skies, quiet trails and remote, unbroken land." It will be a time of

The Great Backyard Bird Count February 12-15, 2016

The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event that engages birds watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot where the birds are. Everyone is welcome—from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes a little as 15 minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event.

It's free, fun, and easy—and it helps the birds.



Participants tally the number of individual birds of each species they see during their count period. They enter these numbers on the GBBC website. Participants may also send in photographs of the birds they see for the GBBC photo contest.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is led by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, with Canadian partner Bird Studies Canada and sponsorship from Wild Birds Unlimited.

CHIRPS & SQUAWKS

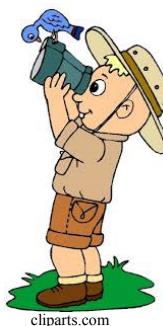
Highlights from January 2016 Board Meeting:

- ◊ Heard Treasurer's Report that generous donations and memberships continue to arrive and that a full report will be emailed to board members.
- ◊ Heard Education Committee report that more work with Flathead High School is expected. New Conservation Educator Lisa Flowers reported she had a good transition with Patti Mason and is looking forward to the work.
- ◊ Heard that a field trip to the American Prairie Preserve in eastern Montana is being organized and more details are forthcoming.
- ◊ Approved suggested changes to the Memorandum of Understanding between Montana Audubon and Flathead Audubon for the management of Owen Sowerwine Natural Area. It will now be sent to Montana Audubon for their approval.
- ◊ Discussed some options for E-commerce on the Website and agreed to have the Website Committee further review options and bring them back to the Board.
- ◊ Heard that the decision whether to pursue a calendar fundraiser project for next year is pending and partially dependent on finding a volunteer(s) to take on the sales, marketing, and distribution aspects.



Conservation Education Corner

by Lisa Blood Flowers, FAS Conservation Educator



Being given the opportunity to work for and with the Flathead Audubon Society (FAS) is indeed a pleasure, with exceptional opportunities to continue the great work of the conservation educators who have built the solid path for FAS; I will strive to stay the course with an eye on future possibilities. Continuing to offer meaningful and effective place-based programming in 2016 is essential and will be guided by the Education Committee's leadership, commitment, and updated FAS Education Program Strategic Plan 2015 - 2019.

The New Year began with the Winter Trails Day event at Blacktail Mountain X-country trails near Lakeside. The two-hour snowshoeing event included 10 adults and one youth snowshoeing and 4 adults and two youth skiing from the trailhead the morning of January 9th. FAS collaborated with the USFS Swan Lake Ranger District, and the Foys to Blacktail group to coordinate and lead this outdoor opportunity. The snow was good and learning the skill of snowshoeing was really experienced by stepping off the groomed trail to explore a short trail in the deeper snow. Making new acquaintances, while trudging along in the snow and keeping an eye out for birds in the forest habitat was a great way to spend the morning. Hopefully, these folks of all ages will continue to enjoy the winter season getting outside in the Flathead Valley.

The Great Backyard Bird Count will take place from February 12 – 15th. Schools participating this year will be Flathead High School and Somers School. Kathy Ross will be coordinating with the Somers School and Linda de Kort and Lisa Flowers will be offering their assistance to Renee Cordes at Flathead

High School.

The Birds of NW Montana – FVCC Senior Institute course will again be offered in February and March. Specific dates will be forthcoming and announced on the FAS website.

The DEQ Wetland Education Grant will provide two elements aligned with the FAS conservation education program. The first is the opportunity for elementary and high school students to participate in a cross-age mentoring field project at Owen Sowerwine Natural Area. The second is the update and repair of the FAS Wetland and Riparian Area Studies educational trunk which is housed at the NW Montana Curriculum Cooperative in Linderman School.

Together with FAS volunteers Jan Metzmaker and Mary Jo Gardner the educational trunks and associated supplies are being reorganized for ease of using in our educational programs and for teachers who check the trunks out on a year-round basis. It is a pleasure to work with these ladies and I appreciate their time and effort to help improve the effectiveness of the FAS program.

Creating and implementing an innovative education and community outreach program involving adults, families, youth, and children to foster knowledge, increase appreciation of birds, wildlife habitat, and ecosystem diversity is a team effort. If you are interested in volunteering with any aspect of FAS's conservation education program, or would like to learn more about the program please contact Lisa Flowers, conservation educator, 406-781-1721, auduboneducator@gmail.com anytime.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT SUMMARIES

Upper Swan CBC

By: Jody Wolff

On Saturday Dec. 19th 11 of us either ventured out or watched our feeders or both. It was a reasonably nice, cloudy day with a high of 34, a low of 25 degrees and about 8" of snow on the ground.

We had hoped to surpass our lowest count last year of 21 species, but ended up setting a new all-time low with only 19 species this year. We added 4 more species during count week, Northern Goshawk, Black-billed Magpie, Townsend's Solitaire and Pine Grosbeak. We counted fewer species but saw more birds with 295 individuals. As usual, Common Raven was the most common species at 63 birds. No new species were seen this year, but we saw 2 Red-tailed Hawks and 1 Sharp-shinned Hawk, which are uncommon visitors here in the winter. Many thanks to all who participated in this year's count and maybe we'll do better next year.

2015- 2016 Glacier National Park Christmas Bird Count

By: Lisa Bate

On December 20, 2015, 23 observers on 11 field routes and one feeder site (West Glacier) recorded 406 birds of 33 species. This count marked the 42nd Glacier National Park Christmas Bird Count (CBC) since

1973, contributing to the 116th year of the National Audubon Society's CBC.

The main comment we heard from returning observers this year was, "it was SO quiet", and it really was with few forest birds detected. This may have been a result of the 12 inches of unexpected snow that fell through the night cushioning sounds from even a short distance away. The new snow, however, made for a magical outing in a winter wonderland with moderate temperatures and calm winds.

The resident Black-capped Chickadee was the most commonly detected species on count day with 60 individuals recorded. Waterfowl species were the next numerous with counts of 53 Canada Geese, 50 Common Goldeneyes, and 49 Mallards. No swans were detected. An unusual

Common Loon was observed on count day and count week (3 days before and 3 days after count day) on Lake McDonald. No additional species were observed during count week this year.



Observers along Lower McDonald Creek by Karen Chickering

We had new record highs for two species in 2015. Four Belted Kingfishers and two Black-backed Woodpeckers were detected, up from a count of three and one, respectively. The feeder count gave us four additional species: Northern Pygmy Owl, Northern Flicker, Dark-eyed Junco, and Song Sparrow.

Thanks to all participants for contributing their expertise, time, and energy for this annual event. Your efforts are invaluable in tracking long-term changes in species abundance and diversity in Glacier during the early winter season! Enjoy the photos of the Winter Wonderland from Glacier's 42nd Christmas Bird Count.

Eureka CBC

By: Lewis Young

The 23rd annual Eureka Christmas bird count was held on Sunday December 20 in mild weather. Twenty people went to the field and 19 people counted at their feeders. Sixty-two species were recorded which is the 5th highest. The total number of individual birds was 3222 which is the 6th highest. There were record high counts for 4 species (Canada Goose, Wild Turkey, Eurasian Collared-dove, Pine Grosbeak). One new species was found—Greater White-fronted Goose. Three species were seen only during count week: Ferruginous Hawk, Wilson's Snipe, and Great-horned Owl. It was only the second year that Snowy Owl and Varied Thrush have been seen on count day and only the 3rd year for Hoary Redpoll. Finch numbers were variable with a record high for Pine Grosbeaks (142 versus 58 previous high), good numbers of House Finches and Common Redpolls, but very low numbers of Pine Siskins, Red Crossbills, and Evening Grosbeaks. Thanks to all the participants for making this another enjoyable CBC!

Bigfork CBC Totals 2015

By: Craig Hohenberger

The 42nd annual Bigfork Christmas Bird Count was held Saturday, December 19th, under cloudy skies with snow late in the day, and temperatures of 27-35°. Thirty volunteer participants counted 14,352

WINTER/SPRING FIELD TRIPS FOR YOU!

All Flathead Audubon 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 Flathead Audubon general meetings and on www.FlatheadAudubon.org.



EXPLORE GLACIER NATIONAL PARK ON SNOWSHOES. Saturdays & Sundays, January 9 thru March 20, 2016. Enjoy a two-hour ranger-led snowshoe walk and take an intimate look at the park in winter. Search for signs of wildlife, discover the plants and animals of the park, and enjoy the solitude of winter during this unique experience. Not recommended for children under age 6. Meet at Apgar Visitor Center. Trips leave at 10:30 AM & 2:00 PM. Participants may use their own snowshoes or rent snowshoes for a nominal fee at the Visitor Center. Snowshoe rentals are also available elsewhere in the Flathead Valley. If you have questions regarding this offering, please call on weekdays 406-888-7931, weekends, 406-888-7940.

WINTER ANIMAL TRACKING AT OWEN SOWERWINE. Saturday, January 30, 2016. Meet 9:00 AM. Join us for a day of exploring and identifying the tracks, scat, and sign our local wildlife leave for us to decipher! We'll start with an approximately one-hour classroom session at Snappy's Sports to discuss the basics of tracking. Then we'll head to Owen Sowerwine Natural Area to spot, identify, study behaviors and have fun figuring out what wildlife is up to in winter! Please come prepared with a carpenter's tape, cameras, binoculars, lunch, water, and proper clothing. If you have snowshoes bring them, we have several pairs; pack-boots will work also. Co-sponsored by Montana Wilderness Association, Snappy's Sports, and Montana and Flathead Audubon. Children over 10 years with adult supervisor welcome. Meet at 9 AM at Snappy's, 1400 Hwy 2 E, Kalispell. **Registration is required.** Register at <http://www.wildmontana.org/walks> or call Brian Baxter at 406-291-2154.

THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT IN BIGFORK, SWAN RIVER AND SURROUNDING AREA. Sunday, February 14, 2016. 10 AM-1:30 PM. Treat your Valentines young and adult, to a morning of experiencing our local avian residents in their winter world in the Bigfork/Swan River area. We will be learning about our winter songbirds and counting at feeders, but will also explore other local areas for wintering residents, such as Trumpeter Swans and Pygmy Owls. This is an excellent outing for families with children as well as birders of all ages. Dress warmly and bring binoculars and/or spotting scopes. Meet at 10 AM at the east end of Swan River School main parking area. Contact Kathy Ross at mtkat67@gmail.com or 406-837-3837 to sign up.

A LATE WINTER WANDER IN THE MISSION VALLEY. Sunday, February 21, 2016. 8:00 AM-5:00 PM. Join us for a late winter birding day in the beautiful Mission Valley searching for raptors, various owls, snow buntings, and waterfowl on Flathead Lake and other open waters. Meet at Somers Park 'n Ride at the intersection of Hwy 93 and MT Highway 209 at 8:00 AM. Bring lunch and winter weather gear. To sign up, get more information, and/or coordinate with field trip leaders for those coming from other areas such as Polson or Missoula, contact Bob Lee at 406-270-0371 or rml3@centurytel.net.

THEY'RE BACK! EARLY SPRING WATERFOWL AND OTHER MIGRANTS - EAST FLATHEAD VALLEY. Sunday, March 20, 2016. 10:30 AM to mid-afternoon. Explore Creston and East Valley wetlands with premiere birder Craig Hohenberger. This is the peak time for migrating Tundra Swans, Canada Geese, Mallards, Northern Pintail, American Wigeon, and Green-winged Teal heading north to breeding grounds. We will also be able to find good numbers of Greater and Lesser Scaup, Ring-necked Ducks, Common and Barrow's Goldeneyes, Canvasbacks, and Redheads as well as some of the later migrating waterfowl and songbirds. Meet at the Creston elementary school, located one block north of Highway 35 on Creston Rd. north of the Creston Fire Hall. Bring lunch and foul weather gear and do plan to carpool. Please sign up by contacting Gael Bissell at 406-261-2255 or gbissell535@gmail.com.

SOARING OF THE SNOW GEESE AT FREEZOUT LAKE.

Saturday-Sunday, March 26-27, 2016. There is nothing quite like 100,000 Snow Geese swirling against the backdrop of the Rocky Mountains. The annual Flathead Audubon trip to Freezout Lake will be over the last weekend in March with Bob Lee again leading. We will meet at the K-Mart parking lot (on the corner of

CBC Summaries continued from page 6

individual birds of 83 species, plus another three species seen count week but not on count day. While we found no species that were new to the count, two Pacific Loons were re-found at Wayfarer's State Park, three Gray-crowned Rosy Finches were observed (only 2nd time on the count) and one Western Meadowlark was located on the north shore of Flathead Lake. We had record high numbers of another seven species: Pacific Loon (2); Bufflehead (272), Great Blue Heron (20) (tie), Merlin (4) (tie), American Coot (6100), Eurasian Collared-Dove (160), and Northern Pygmy-Owl (10). Other count week species included American Kestrel, Spotted Towhee, and Brown-headed Cowbird. Thank you to all the great participants who helped make this a wonderful count! Contact: Craig Hohenberger, asoleado2003@yahoo.com

2015-2016 Kalispell CBC**By: Pete Fisher**

The 17th annual Kalispell CBC was held on January 3. Forty-one intrepid observers braved single digit temperatures to count 76 species of birds. A major highlight was a dark-phase Gyrfalcon found at West Valley Ponds (junction of West Springcreek Road and Clark Road). The Gyr is only the third ever for this CBC! Also, three new species were added to the Kalispell CBC list. These included Snow Goose, Cackling Goose and Red-breasted Merganser. This brings the all-time total number of species to 125! Many all-time records were broken as well. We counted the most ever Bald Eagles (95), Sharp-shinned Hawks (12), Ring-necked Pheasants (223), Wild Turkeys (359), Eurasian Collared Doves (564), Downy Woodpeckers (69), Blue Jays (48), Chestnut-backed Chickadees (6), Western Meadowlarks (7), Brewer's Blackbirds (100), and Common Redpolls (867). Thanks to all who participated! And Happy New Year!

Field Trips continued from page 7

Highways 2 and 35 in Kalispell) on Saturday morning at 10 AM and caravan/carpool to Choteau, arriving in time for the afternoon "fly-out" of the geese. After dinner and a night in Choteau, we will head back out before daybreak to watch the "mass ascension" from the ponds of Freezout. After the morning's birding, we, too, will head home in the early afternoon arriving in Kalispell around 5 PM on Sunday. Bob will provide a suggested schedule and route, and will be in the front of the group, but attendees may choose to follow the geese as much or as little as they, the weather and birds allow. The various Choteau accommodations fill fast so make your reservations early. The 3 most popular motels in Choteau are: Stage Stop (406-466-5900), Gunther (406-466-5444) and Big Sky (406-466-5318). Be sure to mention that you are affiliated with Flathead Audubon. If you have any questions, please contact Bob Lee at 270-0371 or rml3@centurytel.net.

Don Snow Memorial

By Denny Olson

The Flathead Audubon community was saddened to learn of the passing of Don Snow. Our thoughts and condolences go out to Phyllis, his talented wife, and their family. Don had great interest in birds--birds of all kinds. His interest began when he was a youngster, growing up on the coast of Washington, in the Gray's Harbor area. Shore birds were abundant. He enjoyed them immensely. He spent spare moments in his college years in eastern Washington and western New York studying birds of those areas.

His main career was teaching music to children in the Seattle public school system for 30 years. He also played bass in the Seattle Symphony and in several dance bands. It was in the Seattle area that he

became heavily involved with Audubon. Whenever possible he would join with Audubon field trips or lectures as well as go birding by himself. When he retired and moved to Kalispell, he expanded his interest in birds by being part of the local chapter of Audubon. He always kept a bird book and binoculars on the dining room buffet so he could reach over and pick up one or both items to watch, and identify when needed, birds that came to feeders at mealtime.

Don was a great supporter of Flathead Audubon and was instrumental in expanding the Rails to Trails system. We will miss his great wit and intelligent conversations.

**EXTRA BINOCULARS LAYING AROUND?**

EXTRA binoculars? Frank and Linda de Kort are heading to Ecuador this spring and will spend two weeks volunteering at a rural school. We are bringing lessons on birds and would like to leave some binoculars for field studies. If you have some binoculars sitting around that you are seldom using, could you kindly bring them to the February or March general meeting or call 755 3704 and we will pick them up. Thank you.



Osprey

Joyce Schaub

...to those below who have made donations to Flathead Audubon through mid-January 2016



Snowy Owl

Bruce Tannehill



Merlin

Brent Mitchell
Jeanette Oliver
Linda Newgard



Kestrel

Karin Connelly
Phyllis Snow (in memory of Don Snow)
Linda & John Winnie (in memory of Don Snow)
Monica Jungsten & Chuck Brasen
Richmond & Sarah Thomason
John & Ann Collins
Charles Zucker



Supporting Member + donation

Joel & Barbara Vignere
Mayre Flowers

My Own Vision

David & Janet Downey
Donna Pridmore
Elaine Snyder
Jim Cunningham
Tiffany Edwards
Robert E. Smith



THANK YOU to JACK JAY

Jack Jay has generously donated his time and expertise, as well as the cost of materials used, to contribute significantly to weed control at Owen Sowerwine in 2015. This is the second year that Jack has contributed to the Owen Sowerwine weed effort in this way and in prior years, has also helped in variety of ways with the upkeep and maintenance. Thank you Jack, from Flathead Audubon and the Owen Sowerwine Committee, for all your support and help.

MONARCH MYSTIQUE

Endangered Monarch butterflies need Milkweed plants in open, sunny areas. They can smell it up to 20 miles away! To obtain "showy milkweed" seeds for suggested germination indoors in February, please phone Lois Drobish at 756-7405.

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 _____
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Please send a notification of this gift to:

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Please do not acknowledge my gift
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Please make checks payable to:

Flathead Audubon Society
P.O. Box 9173
Kalispell, MT 59904

Your gift is tax deductible.

Board Challenge Results

The 2015 end-of-year Board Challenge has closed. This year the Board of Directors won the Challenge. (Last time, the membership won.) Many thanks to our Directors and to our members for your generous donations. All contributions go to support our Conservation Education Program, which helps kids and adults of all ages experience Flathead Valley nature and birds. Thanks for all the help!



Pileated Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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.

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 - Lisa Flowers: audboneducator@gmail.com

FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY DIRECTORY

OFFICERS

President	Kay Mitchell	kbmitch@centurytel.net	756-8130
Vice-President	Gael Bissell	gbissell535@gmail.com	261-2255
Secretary	Marylane Pannell	kuhlpan@cyberport.net	871-7613
Treasurer	Joe Batts	jbatts@me.com	844-0299
Past-President	Bob Lopp	boblopp@bresnan.net	752-7026

DIRECTORS

2014-2017	Jim Rychwalski	james_rychwalski@yahoo.com	755-3229
2014-2017	Denny Olson	docwild.mt@gmail.com	249-3987
2015-2018	Lewis Young	68 Garrison Dr., Eureka 59917	889-3492
2015-2018	Paula Smith	paulabosmith@centurytel.net	837-0181
2015-2018	Doug MacCarter	dsmaccarter@gmail.com	602-663-8611
2015-2018	Jan Metzmaker	jmetzmaker@hotmail.com	862-7960
2015-2018	Jake Bramante	jake@hike734.com	250-8394
2015-2016	Jill Fanning	shrdlu@centurytel.net	862-8070
2015-2016	Mike Fanning	shrdlu@centurytel.net	862-8070
2015-2016	Kathy Ross	mtkat67@gmail.com	837-3837
2015-2016	Bob Lee	rml3@centurytel.net	270-0371

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Christmas Bird Count	Vacant		
Conservation	Lewis Young	889-3492	
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	
Hospitality	Lois Drobish	756-7405	
Membership	Mike Fanning	862-8070	
	Jill Fanning	862-8070	
Owen Sowerwine	Linda Winnie	755-1406	
Natural Area	Bob Lee	270-0371	
Newsletter	Linda Winnie	755-1406	
	Kay Mitchell	756-8130	
	John Hughes	261-2506	
Nominations	Lewis Young	889-3492	
Program	Bob Lee	270-0371	
Publicity	Bob Lee	270-0371	
Sales	Paula Smith	837-0181	
	Jill Fanning	862-8070	



MONTANA AUDUBON
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443-3949
www.MTAudubon.org
Executive Director: Steve Hoffman
shoffman@mtaudubon.org
Board President: Fred Weisbecker
443-4229
Board Member representing FAS
Bob Lee rml3@centurytel.net 270-0371

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 _____

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Mail this form with your check to:

Flathead Audubon Society Membership
P.O. Box 9173
Kalispell, MT 59904



Four species of woodpeckers at Lewis and Lynda Young's suet feeder. December 2015.