



The Pileated Post

VOLUME 10 NUMBER 3 MARCH 1986

1986		MARCH					1986	
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT		
L. Q. 3rd	N. M. 10th	F. Q. 18th	F. M. 25th				1	
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23 30	24 31	25	26	27	28	29		

BOARD OF DIRECTORS dinner meeting 5:30 PM at Streeter's Korner Kitchen, Bigfork. Open to all interested members.

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING, Flathead Bank of Bigfork meeting room. 7:30 PM Business meeting. 8:00PM Program--LIFE OF THE SONORAN DESERT, slide presentation and commentary by Diane Ensign, professional photographer formerly of Arizona and recently a chapter member. Diane's photographs capture the unique and special moments of a desert day.

EQUINOX, the first day of spring.

FULL MOON, the moon when skunks come out.

EDITOR'S DESK

LEO KEANE

We're leaning toward spring up in our neck of the pines. Days are longer. The snow's thumping, dumping and dripping from the eaves. Down by the lake today I found some pussy willows. Their stalks were still half buried in snow, yet each branch was laden with fuzzy "cats-paws" as though there were some signal from within the earth they answer to, affirming the inevitable change of seasons for we winter-bound creatures of the cold light. A few redwings have shown up too, perched here and there on cattails, staking claim to still frozen wetlands. And from up on the hill, out of the gray forest, I heard the first varied thrush calling, a long, plaintive note as pure as a rivulet of meltwater.

If you are among those attuned to the tides of nature you may soon find yourself slogging through this March snow, hammer, step-ladder and birdbox in tow. Yes, it is time to prepare for the birds of summer. As early as March the cavity nesters---the bluebirds, swallows, chickadees, nuthatches, woodpeckers and wrens--- will be about, surveying the woods and fields for that perfect hole. So if you are quite dexterous, go ahead and give yourself a pat on the back, while you're up there fastening that nest box, for by providing this home for a fellow creature you are affirming their right to share the earth with us, a right that too often goes unaccounted as we hasten to provide for ourselves. There is a place for every creature, whether it be wolf or woodpecker, and it is up to us to protect these places. Welcome home Mr. Bluebird!



The Magic Pack lives in a magic place. The North Fork lands have a mystical quality about them. An ancient rhythm still beats, uniting the mountains, trees, wildlife and river. It seems that with every mile you drive north from Columbia Falls you go back ten years in time so that by the time you reach Moose City, Montana on the Canadian border, the twentieth century no longer really exists. It's a primitive land, full of wildness and beauty. It allows the eyes of a person to feast upon the majesty of the unspoiled "high places" of Glacier National Park and experience the thrill of witnessing a herd of 50-75 elk cross the road at twilight. It humbles the haughty human spirit with its spaciousness and penetrating silence. Its mountain peaks command respect, its wild inhabitants create wonder and its very winds carry the sound of tremendous applause to the Creator in appreciation for such a work of art.

Three wild inhabitants of this magic land create the most wonder for me. The first is the wily loon nesting on North Fork lakes in the summer. The second is the mighty grizzly bear. The third is the elusive Rocky Mountain Grey Wolf. Between 10-12 wolves comprise the "Magic Pack", so named because of their ability to "disappear" despite the presence of three radio-collared animals. These wolves were not "planted", nor are they simply "BIG DOGS"!!! They moved south from British Columbia, Canada along the North Fork of the Flathead River to Glacier National Park. Actually, wolf sightings have been fairly common in the North Fork throughout the years. It was these consistent reports that attracted wolf researchers from the University of Montana. Through the persistent and patient efforts of Bob Reum, Diane Boyd and Mike Fairchild, the formation of the first wolf pack in Montana in many years has been documented. I ventured into the North Fork over Christmas vacation harboring the fervent hope of making some sort of contact with the Magic Pack. To my great delight, I am happy to report that my hope was realized to a far greater extent than I ever dreamed possible.

The adventure began when Mike Fairchild and I left Columbia Falls for Moose City. Enroute we encountered flocks of White-winged Crossbills, a new bird for me!! With that great beginning, we started radio-monitoring for Sage, the lone male wolf who has the largest home range of any wolf studied to date. We picked up his steady "BEEP" at Camas Creek Road, the southern boundary of Glacier National Park. The next day three of us crossed the swift and icy North Fork River in chest waders. I've always been a SPOOK at any such crossing. This time was NO exception...especially since the crossing was complicated with daypacks, cameras, skis and poles. After pawning off my camera and daypack onto a steadier companion, I shakily made the crossing. Near panic was swiftly replaced with joy as wolf tracks were immediately discovered. The lone animal (Sage?) had come down Kintla Creek to the river. We walked or slid up the creek on cracking ice until we reached Kintla Bridge in Glacier National Park. Then we skied north about six miles, discovering a "wolf highway". Evidently, a pack of 6-7 animals had traveled south about a day and a half before, leaving in their wake an abundance of sign and some enormous four and a half inch tracks.

On the third day, Mike and I radio-monitored for all three collared animals. Sage was generally by himself, but "Phyllis" and "Kay" were with the pack. Phyllis is the alpha female and Kay is one of her pups from last years litter. Vainly we tried all three channels from various vantage points. In every case..."No one was home". The Magic Pack had disappeared...again!!

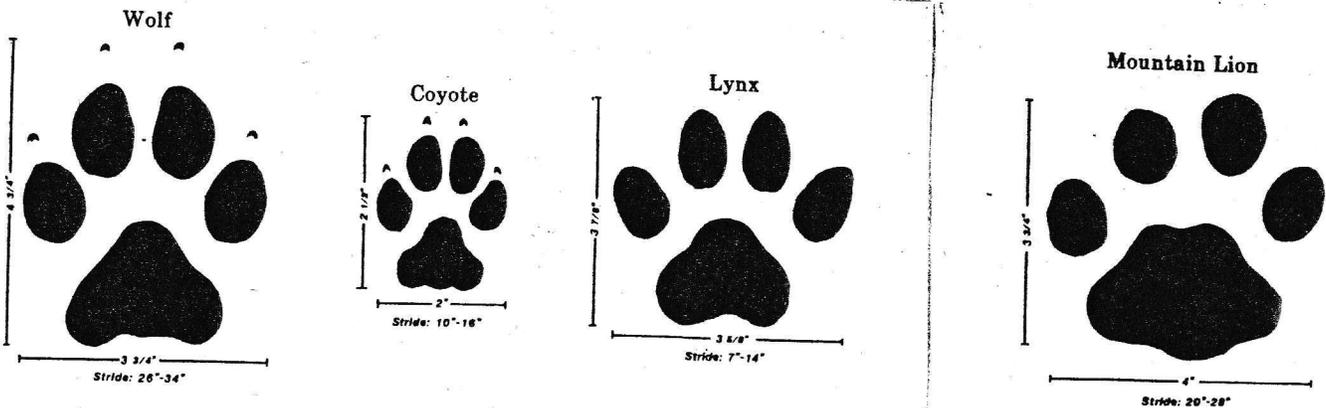
With this latest disappearance, Mike decided to use a small aircraft fitted with radio antenna in hopes of pinpointing the location of the pack. So, on the fourth day (December 31), despite a ceiling of thick gray clouds, we took to the sky. A mere twenty minutes later we picked up the signals for both Kay and Phyllis. Just four miles north of Camas Creek Road I spotted a large red stain marking a

kill site on the edge of a small meadow in Glacier Park. In the middle of the meadow were two dark circular objects which I supposed were tree stumps until I realized that none of the dog-hair lodgepole pines in the area were big enough to make stumps like that! With a tremendous sense of disbelief, I realized I was seeing two curled-up members of the MAGIC PACK!!! Circling back, we found that a third animal had joined the other two and was stretched out full length in the snow, apparently digesting lunch. They never even glanced up to give the plane the time of day. We also saw two and perhaps three other animals in the trees along the edge of the meadow. Jet black against the snow, the one really astounding thing about the wolves was their size...they were simply enormous!! This was particularly astonishing when you consider that these were "pups of the year"...about nine months old! We did not locate Phyllis, probably due to her lighter color, but her signal indicated that she was very close. What a way to end 1985!!

The memory of that day has deepened the magic and mystery of the North Fork. I now have an even greater appreciation for the wildlife values of this area as well as an increased concern for its protection. It faces many perils. Summer residents are demanding a paved road for greater accessibility which can only lead to more and more human development. Timber companies continue to remove valuable old growth stands and destroy riparian areas essential to many species of wildlife. More and more logging roads allow deeper and deeper human penetration into wildlands once inaccessible and undisturbed. Finally, the ominous possibility of an active Cabin Creek Coal Mine just seven miles north of Moose City remains a very real concern. Any one of these activities would threaten the integrity of the Magic Pack's habitat. Combined, they could destroy the natural rhythm of this Magic Land altogether. It will take great vigilance on the part of the Flathead Audubon Society and many others to see that these degradations do not occur.

In the meantime, I continue to marvel at what I saw. Emerson once said, "Each moment of your life has its own beauty...a picture which was never seen before and which will never be seen again." I hope to see the wolves again, but the memory of that first encounter will live on as a very special picture. The thrill of that moment will not soon be forgotten.

***A great big THANKS goes to Mike Fairchild for inviting me to the Magic Land of the Magic Pack!

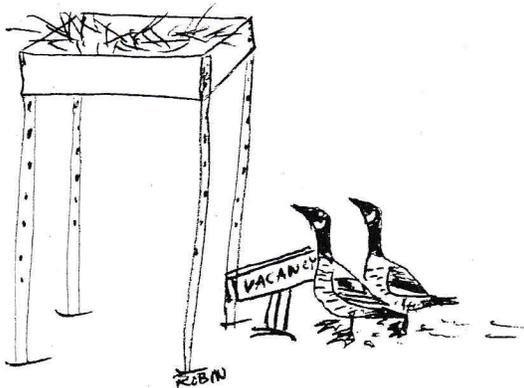


PHOSPHORUS CONTENTGOOSE POOP

ROBIN MAGADDINO

A chance has arrived for you to personally help out our Adopted Refuge, the Swan River National Wildlife Refuge. Last month we contributed \$100.00 to the Fish and Wildlife Service toward construction materials for goose nesting platforms. This month we're going to build and install them. A construction party will begin on Wednesday, March 19, at 6:30 PM (or whenever you get there) at the Creston National Fish Hatchery shop. Ray Washtak, Refuge Manager, will be there with all the tools.

On Saturday, March 22, meet at Streeter's Korner Kitchen at 8:30 AM to install the nest platforms on the refuge. Bring a lunch and snowmobile if you have one. If you have any questions call Ray at 755-4375 or Robin at 837-4294. Hope to see you!

FOR THE BIRDS

CHEERY CHICKADEE

By the time you receive this newsletter many of us are already celebrating the regenerative powers of spring. Bald eagle, Canada geese and great horned owls are either preparing or have already begun to nest and lay eggs. The Federal Wildlife Refuge lands will be closed to all public entry beginning March 1 to allow us to nest in peace. I've been singing "spring's here" or "pee dee" for some time now. Nut-hatches are appearing in pairs. Even coyote pups will be born soon. Remember to clean out your birdhouses by the end of the month. So long!

RESULTS OF A SHELF SURVEY OF ONE STORE IN HELENA, MONTANA
ON JANUARY 24, 1985 BY ABE HORPESTAD, WATER QUALITY BUREAU,
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

Granular Laundry Products:

	<u>% Phosphorus</u>
Fab	6
Bold 3	6.1
Purex	0
White King	0
Dreft	8.2
Tide	8.4
Ivory Snow	0
White King D	0
Buttrey	6.1
Cold Power	2.5
Arm & Hammer	0.25
"Generic"	0
Cheer	8.2
Oxydox	7.4
Fresh Start	14.7
Sun	0
Ajax	2.5
All	0 (less than .5)
Woolite	0

Liquid Laundry Products:

	<u>% Phosphorus</u>
Spray and Wash	0
Clorox Prewash	0
Shout	?
Tide	0
ERA Plus	0
Dynamo	0
Purex	0
Wish	0
Yes	0
Arm & Hammer	0
Generic	0
Woolite	0

Cleaning Compunds Liquid:

	<u>% Phosphorus</u>
Spic and Span	3.1
Top Job	2.3
409	0
Scrub Free	2.8
Fantastic	0
Grease Relief	0
Tough Act	Not clear from lab
Big Wally	0
Lysol	Not clear from lab
Soft Scrub	0

Cleaning Compounds Solid:

	<u>% Phosphorus</u>
Ajax	0.9
Comet	2.9
Bon Ami	0
Zud	0

Chemical Water Conditioners:

	<u>% Phosphorus</u>
White King	0 (?)
Calgon	Some
Rain Drops	Some
Borax	0 (?)

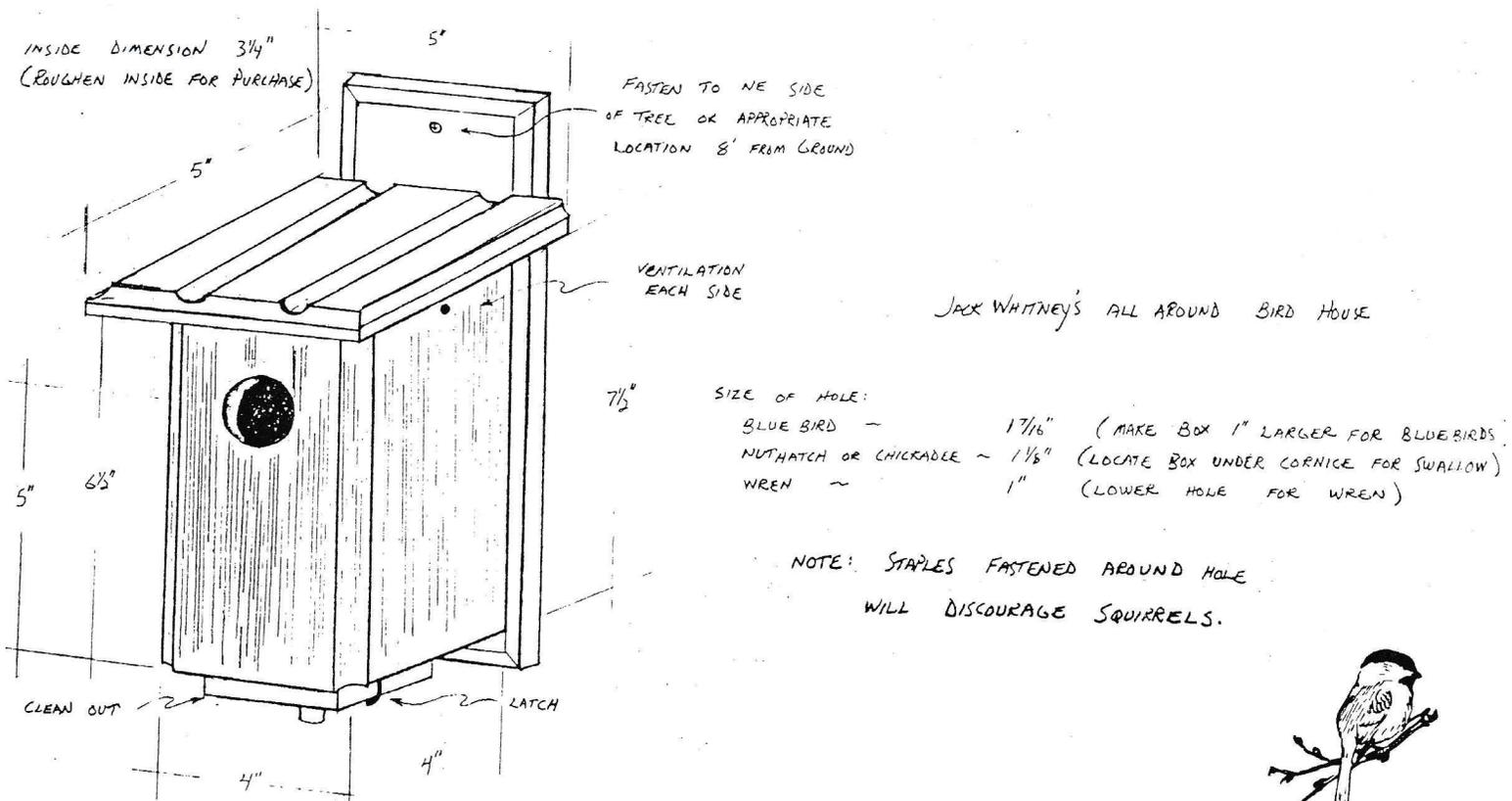
Granular Bleach:

	<u>% Phosphorus</u>
Borateem (bleach)	0
Purex (bleach)	0
Biz (bleach)	17.6
Chlorox (bleach)	0

I paid a visit to Jack and Ursula Whitney last Sunday. Their home is at the edge of town in Bigfork, up at the end of the lane, overlooking the Swan River. It is a working home, rough-hewn and weathered as the surrounding tamaracks, a rare sort of home that belongs to it's place as naturally as though it had roots. Jack and Ursula surely appear to have grown here. As we talked out in the yard I sensed their watchfulness. Ursula spoke of ruffed grouse and wild turkeys, flying squirrels and whitetails as if they were kin. They know where the squirrel holes up, how the turkeys like to sail off the bluff, they've watched the whitetails slip back into the forest at daybreak for years now. It is evident that the Whitney's have accumulated not so much wealth from their place on earth as a lifetime of wisdom.

I had come to garner just a portion of that, specifically to find out how to build the ideal bird house for the cavity nesters which are so abundant around my home. So as dark settled Jack took me into his shop. His shop, the lower story and more or less an annex to his home, is a breathtaking assemblage of tools and tackle, stoves and snowshoes and smoked fish, benches, baskets and, ah yes, birdhouses. We talked at length and not just about the nesting boxes. Jack knows as much about bird behavior---at least of the cavity nesters, these denizens of the mountain forests which have so captured his heart---as any Cornell ornithologist, and this gleaned from years of personal observation.

Later that evening I drove home with a page of specifications and a genuine Jack Whitney birdhouse, which I offer here as a plan for your own, compliments of Jack. Or if you prefer an original call Jack at 837-4459, or write Box 236 in Bigfork. He sells the chickadee/nuthatch house for eight dollars and the bluebird for five.





1985 FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY DIRECTORY

OFFICERS

President	Lynn Kelly, Box 2289, Polson, MT 59860	883-5797
V-President	Robin Magaddino, 2100 Swan Hwy, Bigfork, MT 59911	837-4294
Secretary	Sherry Jones, Box 984, Polson, MT 59860	887-2492
Treasurer	Tommie Clark, 231 Pine Needle Lne, Bigfork, MT 59911	837-6615

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1985	Robin Magaddino, 2100 Swan Hwy, Bigfork, MT 59911	837-4294
1986	David Hudak, 6100 MT Hwy 35, Bigfork, MT 59911	755-3752
1987	Brent Mitchell, 960 Kienas Rd., Kalispell, MT 59901	257-8130

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	Bob Ballou, Box 11881, Rte 1, Charlo, MT 59825	644-2365
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Program and		
Publicity	Dan Casey, 265 Breezy Pt., Somers, MT 59932	857-3143
Refuge	Gail McGlothlin, 348 Somers, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-7072

NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Membership Application

Please enroll me as a member of the National Audubon Society and of my local chapter. Please send Audubon magazine and my membership card to the address below.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

INTRODUCTORY MEMBERSHIP

FLATHEAD AUD. SOC.
\$20 N54

Please make checks payable to the National Audubon Society. 7XCH

Mail to: Susan Cahill
6100 Montana Hwy 35
Bigfork, MT 59911

THE FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY meets on the second Monday of each month from September through May. Regular monthly meetings are preceded by an Executive Board meeting, the time and location of which are published in the preceding newsletter. The business meeting (7:30 PM) and program (8:00 PM) are held in the downstairs meeting room of the Flathead Bank of Bigfork. These are all open meetings and all interested people are invited to attend. THE PILEATED POST is published nine times a year, September through May, and is sent to all members of the Flathead Audubon Society as one benefit of National dues. For others who would like to receive the newsletter, cost is \$1.50/yr.

Chapter member Kris Lierboe of Whitefish saw a great gray owl in her backyard. Kris' home is in the forest at the edge of the Haskill Basin area. Great grays are only rarely residents of NW Montana and occasional visitors from the Far North where they inhabit the vast boreal forest.



FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY
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