



The Pileated Post

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The regular monthly meeting of the Flathead Audubon Society will be held at the Flathead Bank of Bigfork on Monday, January 12. This month's program will be a slide presentation by Mr. Tom Ulrich, a noted wildlife photographer based out of West Glacier. He will be showing a selection of his best slides of North American wildlife, from polar bears to alligators, including a wide variety of the species of birds and mammals common here in the northwest.

Mr. Ulrich spends 6 months of the year travelling with his cameras all across the continent. He has pursued photography as a living for 12 years, since leaving his teaching position at Frontier Community College in Illinois. His credits include two books, "Birds of the Northern Rockies", and the recent "Mammals of the Northern Rockies". He has had photos published in over 30 different magazines, including Audubon and National Wildlife, and his photos can be found in about eight to ten publications every month.

The business meeting will begin at 7:30 PM, and the program will start at about 8:00. The Flathead Audubon Society urges members and non-members alike to come enjoy what should be a varied and enjoyable presentation. Refreshments following.

FROM THE PRESIDENT A BEAR TALE

ROBIN MAGADDINO

It is my view that the Constitutional Fathers intended to protect the environment and social fabric of this nation by keeping the executive and legislative terms short (in geologic terms). In another *faux pas* by the current administration, the not-so-new Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, Frank Dunkle, has promised the "energy interests" that he can have the Montana grizzly bear off the endangered species list within a year. Delisting this species would remove some restrictions from oil and gas development projects, particularly on the Rocky Mountain Front. It's too bad that Mr. Dunkle didn't collaborate with the Endangered Species Team in Helena or even read the Endangered Species Act prior to making this statement. As luck would have it, the Endangered Species Act has built in safety features that prevent enthusiastic individuals from delisting a species without guaranteeing its survival. Both grizzly population and habitat studies are lacking at this point. Perhaps if unlimited funds were devoted to these studies today, they would probably be finished in about 1993 and even then the rendered opinion might be to not delist the grizzly bear. The fact that his ill-fated speech was not a crowd pleaser to all is encouraging. We salute you, Ben Franklin, that the time remaining for Mr. Dunkle to make such statements is short

Waterfowl Migration 1986 - What Happened ? by Dan Casey



Are the "northerns" in yet? Many divers? How are those honkers doing? Such are the questions I'm faced with each fall as the waterfowl season approaches and progresses into the last few frozen weeks. Usually, I can answer these questions with confidence based on the results of the bi-weekly surveys Marilyn Wood and I conduct for Canada geese, as biologists for the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Each fall, we count all the waterfowl we see during these surveys, which cover the area from Columbia Falls south along the Flathead River to the north shore of the lake, including all river sloughs, Lower Valley wetlands, and wheatfields. Through these surveys, we are able not only to document local abundance and movements of geese, but also to provide waterfowl trend information to our local game manager, information officer, sportsmen, and birdwatchers.

The following table presents our 1986 fall survey data. It was a season of peaks and valleys in the numbers of our most abundant and sought-after game species, the Canada goose and mallard. The numbers of other dabbling duck species were generally low, although our highest totals of teal and wigeon were similar to numbers seen during the 1985 fall migration. These species tend to use sheltered, shallow off-river areas such as Ashley Creek and Weaver Slough, a large oxbow in the Lower Valley. The low totals we recorded for most dabblers can be attributed in part to their tendency to "blend in" with large flocks of mallards, when viewed from a plane going 65 mph! It is typical, however, for us to see much larger numbers and variety of dabblers during the spring migration. We have seen as many as 10,000 northern pintails in a single day. The biggest surprise of the fall season this year was the large numbers of early season divers; our highest total redhead count of 2030 was almost a ten-fold increase over 1985's highest single count!

The trends within this season's migration can be explained by a combination of weather factors and the timing of the waterfowl season. Our single highest count for all duck species combined was immediately prior to the start of the hunting season. Mallard, wigeon, and teal numbers were highest at that time, and probably consisted of local breeders and regional (short distance) migrants from southern Canada or elsewhere in western Montana. Late September is the time of the year when we're frustrated by motley ducks; most are molting (in "eclipse" plumage) and are very difficult to identify. Gadwalls and northern shovelers were present in the valley early in the season, but we missed them during our flights for just this reason.

By early October, goose and mallard numbers dropped as mild weather and hunting pressure pushed birds out of the area; several huge rafts of redheads appeared at the north end of the lake and numbers of this species and ring-necked ducks reached their peak at Lower Valley potholes. There was little change by late October as weather stayed mild, but an early November deep-freeze brought about dramatic changes. All dabblers except mallards left the area, and mallard numbers hit a seasonal low as well, as all small wetlands and the entire river reach below Kalispell froze over. The spectre of another frozen, long winter loomed as I gave a gloomy forecast to interested waterfowl hunters. The cold front did have its plus side, however, as it brought large flocks of tundra swans through the area, and goose numbers swelled as northern migrants arrived.



By late November, goose numbers had increased even more, and local waterfowl aficionados got a pleasant surprise when a thaw brought in the almost mythical "northerns" - large, fully-colored mallard drakes prized by local hunters. Most other duck species had left the valley by the end of the month, with the exception of the winter divers - goldeneyes, bufflehead, and mergansers.

Our first flight in December showed that the steady cold weather, though not bitter, forced mallards to leave the area. We saw 1253 mallards on the 10th of December, with numbers of other ducks similar to the late November flight, except that we recorded a lingering (lost?) northern shoveler and our first Barrow's goldeneyes. Ninety-five swans were still in the area, and goose numbers were surprisingly high at 1136.

If we have a typical December (whatever that is), mallard numbers will fall drastically as waters freeze further, and goose numbers should drop to our resident flock of about 600 birds. Hopefully we'll find a few stragglers of the fair weather species still around for the Christmas Bird count!

The most important question raised by these results is one which harkens back to an enlightened college professor of mine... Is the coot the bird of the future?



1986 FALL WATERFOWL SURVEYS - NORTHERN FLATHEAD VALLEY

Species	9/10	9/26	10/8	10/29	11/12	11/25
Canada goose	639	859	622	428	922	1192
Snow goose		1	2			
Tundra swan					74	56
Mallard	2152	3493	1225	1127	888	3252
Northern pintail	45	64	19	15		
American wigeon	86	210	53	73		
B-w/Cinnamon Teal	32	10				
Green-winged Teal	4	39	3			
Teal (Unidentified)	18		227	4	12	
Redhead	300	400	2030	1130	140	
Canvasback		10	4	207	20	
Ring-necked duck	232	107	303			
Lesser Scaup				5	40	
Common Goldeneye		1	2	6	207	118
Bufflehead				15		1
Ruddy Duck	1					
Wood Duck			47	56	15	2
Common Merganser	172	38	75	132	159	55
Hooded Merganser				2	8	6
Unidentified	32	44	156	85	11	
American Coot	2517	3545	19437	946		
No., duck species	9	10	10	12	9	7
Total ducks	3074	4416	4144	2857	1500	3432
Total ducks + coot	5591	7961	23581	3802	1500	3432
Total all species	6230	8821	24205	4231	2496	4680

When Congress convenes in mid-January there could be at least three different Montana wilderness bills in the congressional hopper. With the attempt to develop a consensus bill now dead and buried, each member of our congressional delegation is free to submit a bill. Congressman Williams and Senator Baucus plan to submit their bills soon--probably in January. Senator Melcher submitted the results of the now defunct consensus process in 1986 and will likely submit a revised edition in early 1987.

At the Montana Wilderness Association convention in December Senator Baucus encouraged listeners to write and phone him their wilderness proposals. He stated that people should not be afraid to ask to speak to him directly and to follow up with a second or even third call. Senator Melcher and Congressman Williams are also encouraging people to send or phone their specific comments on wilderness candidate areas.

No one is sure what the final congressional agreement on wilderness will be for the Flathead since the proposals in at least three bills will have to be evaluated. There seems to be agreement that the TenLakes, Hefty, Tuchuck, Jewel Basin and Swan Front should be given wilderness classification, but it is clear that the delegation has yet to agree on the Thompson-Seton and Swan Crest country.

Observers most familiar with the wilderness classification process agree that the most effective time to promote an area for wilderness is before the various bills are officially introduced. It is easier to get an area included in an initial bill rather than to try and get it included later in the legislative process as the bill winds its way through the various congressional committees.

The conclusion is if you want areas of the North Fork and the Swan Crest-Swan Front-Jewel Basin protected as wilderness you should write and phone now. This is the most effective time to get your voice heard. If you'd like more information call me at 257-5793.

Editor's Note: Dick Kuhl, of Kalispell, is past chairman of the Flathead Chapter MWA and presently serves on the board of directors. For many years Dick worked as a seasonal employee of the Forest Service as a wilderness ranger in the Selway-Bitterroot.

TAKE ACTION

* Write Rep. Williams and Senators Melcher and Baucus, urging them each to introduce a balanced wilderness bill this time. Emphasize the need for **complete** protection of these most threatened Montana wildlands:

Cube-Iron, Thompson-Seton, Crazy's, Gallatin Range, Big Snowies, Smith River wildlands, Blackfoot Meadows, Nevada Mtn, Black Mtn, Rocky Mtn Front, Swan Range, Scotchman's Peak, Trout Creek, Sapphires, Bluejoint, Tobacco Roots, Big Hole River wildlands, West Pioneers, Absaroka-Beartooth Additions, Line Creek Plateau, and the Cabinet Mtn Additions.

Representative Pat Williams
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515
202-225-3211

Senator Max Baucus
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510
202-224-2651

Senator John Melcher
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510
202-224-2644

WATCH IT!

COMING SOON... The new Audubon Television Special, *"On the Edge of Extinction: Panthers and Cheetahs."* On cable SuperStation WTBS.

Thursday, January 8, 9:05pm EST

Thursday, January 15, 12:00am EST

Sunday, January 18, 5:35pm EST

Tuesday, January 20, 8:05pm EST

(Check local listings for schedule changes)

Future programs will feature alternative agriculture, waterfowl, and the wood stork of the Florida Everglades. All Audubon TV Specials are shown on the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) during the summer. Videocassettes are available. For more information: National Audubon Society, Audubon Television Programs, 801 Pennsylvania Ave., S.E., Suite 301, Washington, D.C. 20003.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT WRAP-UP

JEAN ROBOCKER

There were 26 adults and three children on the count. Skies were overcast to partly cloudy, but the day was seasonably mild with about six inches of snow cover. Seventy one species of birds were identified including 4396 individuals. This compares to last year's totals of 67 species and 4928 individuals. The most notable difference, perhaps, was this year's absence of waxwings and crossbills which were so abundant last year.

Did you know (well, five present Flathead Audubon members will remember) that the first bird count--called the BIGFORK CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT--was held in 1974! Those five members were: Elly Jones, Jack and Ruth White, Jack and Ursula Whitney. There were 10 others on that historic count reported to AMERICAN BIRDS in April 1975. The totals that year (1974) were 37 species and 1135 individuals. We have all the data from the bird counts from 1974 to present and we'll soon be able to show a chart with all this information. This is a changing world, but some things happen so slowly that without accurate records our memory bank gets overloaded and newcomers have great doubts.

Jim Rogers and companion floated the Flathead River this year, about four hours paddling providing an interesting new perspective for winter watching. Next year we'll take a quick tally of the longest walk, the longest drive, and a few other statistics and maybe a count-day photo contest. Any ideas for this SPECIAL DAY will be happily recieved. Honestly, next to Christmas with the family, Audubon Christmas Bird Count Day is the day I reach with the greatest anticipation and pleasure!

A CONSERVATIONIST'S NEW YEAR RESOLUTION

LEO KEANE

If you haven't pinned one down yet here are a few ideas for New Year Resolutions very likely to keep you on your toes in 1987 and in the vanguard of the conservation movement:

1. Write that letter! If the last time your Senator or Congressman heard from you was 1974 perhaps it's time to reintroduce yourself. One heartfelt letter from a constituent is worth thousands of PAC dollars (to an honest politician). This year is particularly critical for the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Montana Wilderness Bill.

2. Put your money where your mouth is, or, "No pain-no gain". We can no longer afford the luxury of just watching the birds--not while habitats are diminishing worldwide. This year join the list of conservation activists who pitch in to insure the preservation of wild places. Start close to home: the Friends of Lawrence Park need to raise \$26,000 within a year and a half to create a natural area along the Stillwater River at Buffalo Hills.

3. Be patient, and be persistent. We won't turn around 200 years of "Manifest Destiny" overnight, but when it comes to stewardship of the earth conservationists have the advantage of strength in knowing we are right.

4. Focus. The thought of saving the world overwhelms you? So plant a tree... Imagine the impact if each of us did one thing well.

5. Listen, listen, listen! And not only to the birds (although that's a good one too) but remember, those with opposing viewpoints usually feel as strongly about issues as you do. As a community we are all neighbors and the decisions we make must be based on a spirit of cooperation, not confrontation because it is true: "A house divided can not stand".

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 1986

Compiled by Jean Robocker

Below is a list of species known to occur within our Christmas Bird Count boundaries and the numbers of each actually seen that day.

Common Loon
Red-throated Loon
Red-necked Grebe
Pied-bill Grebe
2 Western Grebe
Horned Grebe
Eared Grebe
Double-crested Cormorant
2 Great Blue Heron
American Bittern
35 Whistling Swan
877 Canada Goose
Snow Goose
Gadwall
558 Mallard
Green-winged Teal
American Wigeon
1 Canvasback
Greater Scaup
Northern Shoveler
Wood Duck
Redhead
Ring-necked Duck
8 Lesser Scaup
197 Common Goldeneye
16 Barrow's Goldeneye
9 Bufflehead
Ruddy Duck
10 Hooded Merganser
108 Common Merganser
3 Red-breasted Merganser
1 Harlequin Duck ♀
1 Goshawk ♂
1 Sharp-shinned Hawk
Cooper's Hawk
2 Red-tailed Hawk
8 Rough-legged Hawk
Golden Eagle
13 Bald Eagle 11A 2I
Marsh Hawk
Gyr Falcon
Prairie Falcon
Peregrin Falcon
1 Merlin
American Kestrel
1 hawk sp
1 Blue Grouse
2 Spruce Grouse
15 Ruffed Grouse
White-tailed Ptarmigan
Sharp-tailed Grouse
27 Ring-necked Pheasant

count week:
kestrel - long-eared Owl

Chukar
18 Gray Partridge
Bobwhite
403 Turkey
Sora
131 American Coot
2 Killdeer
Common Snipe
Herring Gull
24 California Gull
84 Ring-billed Gull
59 Rock Dove
5 Mourning Dove
Screech Owl
4 Great Horned Owl
Snowy Owl
Hawk Owl
3 Pygmy Owl
Barred Owl
Great Gray Owl
Long-eared Owl
Short-eared Owl
Boreal Owl
Saw-whet Owl
10 Belted Kingfisher
26 Common Flicker Red-sh
10 Pileated Woodpecker
24 Hairy Woodpecker
36 Downy Woodpecker
Black-backed Three-toed
Woodpecker
Northern Three-toed
Woodpecker
1 Horned Lark
Gray Jay
Blue Jay
41 Steller's Jay
76 Black-billed Magpie
75 Common Raven
28 Common Crow
Pinon Jay
1 Clark's Nutcracker
44 Black-capped Chickadee
91 Mountain Chickadee
Boreal Chickadee
13 Chestnut-backed Chickadee
4 White-breasted Nuthatch
79 Red-breasted Nuthatch

2 Pygmy Nuthatch
18 Brown Creeper
9 Dipper
Winter Wren
Long-billed Marsh
Wren
Varied Thrush
2 American Robin
Western Bluebird
Mountain Bluebird
4 Townsend's Solitaire
18 Golden-crowned
Kinglet
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Water Pipit
Bohemian Waxwing
Cedar Waxwing
4 Northern Shrike
119 Starling
203 House Sparrow
Western Meadowlark
Yellow-headed
Blackbird
111 Red-winged
Blackbird
Northern Oriole
Rusty Blackbird
Brewer's Blackbird
198 Evening Grosbeak
Cassin's Finch
1 House Finch
19 Pine Grosbeak
Gray-crowned Rosy Finch
Hoary Redpoll
Common Redpoll
5 Pine Siskin
5 American Goldfinch
Red Crossbill
White-winged Crossbill
Rufous-sided Towhee
7 Dark-eyed Junco 15 Oregon Junco
24 Slate 6 Pink sided
40 Tree Sparrow
1 Harris' Sparrow
White-crowned Sparrow
White-throated Sparrow
12 Song Sparrow
8 Lapland Longspur
3 Snow Bunting
1 Others Gray Catbird
120 un. "probably redpolls"

REPORT FROM THE FIELD

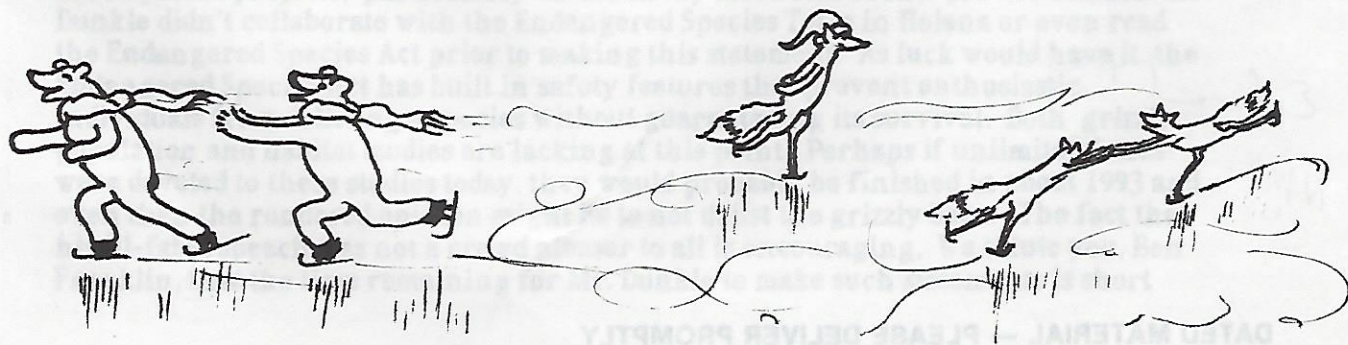
LEO KEANE

Southern Minnesota. Home for the holidays. And there is no place I'd rather be at Christmas than right here in the land of cornfields. Big Yawn Country compared to Montana, but native home, imprinted forever on my soul. It's a gentle landscape and quietly beautiful, often sparingly so. It's a rolling, ocean of fields. But the tilt and lift of the land breaks against the occasional island--a rough hillside, thick sloughs. Nature abounds here, in these islands of wildness, and here the eye and soul alight as well. But it takes time. I guess it takes years of growing up in search of places to get lost in.

My parents have a lakefront home which makes it our favored location for family get-togethers. Every season of the year there is something new out on the lake. This Christmas we've been busy flooding a skating rink. This sounds redundant, building a skating rink on a frozen lake, but this year the ice is too bumpy for good skating, and smooth ice here is as rare, and as sought after, as virgin powder in the northern Rockies. So sister and I shoveled off the skiff of snow and made a patch right in front of the house, spraying on a thin layer each day from the garden hose. Within a few hours or overnight we've got Olympic class ice (almost) at the front door. Best of all, this year I recieved a good old fashioned Christmas present from dad--a new pair of skates! I haven't had skates that fit since seventh grade, since I took up skiing. And so, after a long hiatus, I'm back on the blades again participating in the relaxing and graceful sport of figure skating. My particular version would not give the impression of being either relaxing or graceful, but deep down in my bones I still sense that sparkle with a fast turn and an easy glide. It's amazing how the body remembers--like riding a bike, you never forget how to skate.

That's what we told mom (who just celebrated her... uh, well, who just celebrated a birthday) as we shepherded her out onto the rink yesterday. She kept a fleet of guards busy as bees around her, and even if she never did let go she cut a few laps around the rink and looked for all the world like a latter day Peggy Fleming. Like dance, women seem to be naturally born to figure skating. My sisters have got me going backwards and trying spins now. But when it comes to the sheer exhilaration of eye-watering speed, well it's the men in the family who shine.

Home for the holidays, here in the land of blue jays and cardinals, gray squirrels and muskrats, ice houses and walleyes. All the little familiarities are like old friends who haven't changed. And when the whole family is out there zipping around the rink, the years and the changes drop away and we're simply "us kids" again. For me that is the magic of Christmas days.



1986 FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY DIRECTORY

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NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

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☐ 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 _____

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Membership category

INTRODUCTORY MEMBERSHIP
\$20

☐ STUDENT/\$18

☐ My check for \$ _____ is enclosed.

N54

☐ Bill me, please.

CHECK PAYABLE TO: NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

MAIL TO: BETTY ROSE
 1066 STEEL BRIDGE RD
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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 FLATHEAD 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 \$3.50/yr.

** Drawing for an after Christmas gift at January Meeting **



FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY

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