



# The Pileated Post

VOLUME 12

NUMBER 2

FEBRUARY 1988

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**BOARD OF DIRECTORS** dinner meeting, 5:30 PM at the Korner Kitchen in Bigfork. Open to all interested members.

**REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING**, Flathead Bank of Bigfork meeting room. 7:30 Business meeting.

8:00 Program: "The Birds of New Zealand"--Jean Robocker will present her slides and song recordings of the birds she photographed while touring New Zealand. Jean's appreciation for bird life is evident whenever she speaks on the topic, and we expect this will be a delightful trip through New Zealand's varied habitats. Join us!

**MONTANA NONGAME SYMPOSIUM**, Yogo Inn, Lewistown. Contact Brent Mitchell, 257-8130 for information.

**NEW DIRECTIONS** in Flathead fisheries management, see meeting dates and locations page 4.

## EDITOR'S DESK

Leo Keane

It was not photos of birds or bears that captured my attention at Doug Chadwick's presentation of Russian wildlife at the Outlaw Inn recently. Doug is a photojournalist (and Flathead Valley resident between assignments) who toured Russian wildlife refuges this past autumn for National Geographic. His presentation, sponsored by the Flathead Chapter of the Montana Wilderness Association, was fascinating, and I hope you were able to attend. For myself, and I'll bet for many in the audience, the pictures I'll remember most are those of the people--the Russian scientists, naturalists and their families, that showed Doug the forests and wetlands of the Soviet Union. These were colorful, smiling people. They looked proud and delighted, not stooped and dreary, which has somehow become our Russian stereotype. In fact, they seemed quite a bit like you and me and our own bear scientists and bug watchers. I thought, these are the kind of people I'd like to get to know! Doug said it best when he summed up his impressions of the Russian lands and people, "What are we arguing about?". How true. Ideologies (or politics) aside, we have so much in common. Call me naive, but I can't help but trust a people who share my joy and curiosity in the wonders of nature. For anyone preoccupied with the songs of sparrows, the intricacies of lichens, the startling beauty of wolves or bears in wild places, the notion of blowing it all away becomes absurdly selfish. For me, these few photos of our Soviet counterparts are worth a thousand treaties.





## A Montana Angle To Alaska Land Threats

There is a Montana angle to the threats to Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and ongoing destructive clearcutting in Alaska's Tongass National Forest.

An alternative to exploring and drilling for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is to develop the full potential of existing oil fields, such as those in eastern Montana, which are now relatively idle. Opponents of opening the Arctic Refuge have asked why should we open new oil fields in the Arctic when states such as Montana are suffering from cut backs in production.

It makes no sense that eastern Montana congressman Ron Marlenee is supporting the bill to open the refuge to oil exploration. Not only will a unique and precious refuge be violated but jobs in Montana will be lost to production in Alaska.

In the same sense, the huge tax payer subsidy for excessive timber harvest in Alaska's Tongass National Forest is at the expense of timber producing states such as Montana, which are forced to compete with heavily subsidized loggers and pulp mills in Alaska.

As conservationists we believe the wilderness and wildlife values of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the Tongass National Forest should be paramount considerations in determining their destiny.

As citizens of Montana we should be concerned that unnecessary exploration and drilling for oil, and heavily subsidized logging in Alaska poses unfair competition for Montana's basic resource industries. Jobs created at great environmental loss in Alaska will be at the expense of jobs in Montana.

ACTION ALERT

Leo Keane

At the January Flathead Chapter meeting Robin Magaddino presented an Audubon film which dealt with the controversial proposal for oil exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. This film depicted the abundance of wildlife inhabiting the Arctic coastal plain, and the somber beauty of these wildlands. It also explained that impacts of oil drilling will include a 40% decline in the caribou herd--72,000 animals, a 50% decline in the snow goose population--162,000 birds, as well as significant declines in other key species--musk oxen, grizzlies, wolves and polar bears.

Recently, Senator John Melcher made a statement to the effect that Montanan's don't have a stake in what goes on up in the Arctic Refuge, that it's out of our sphere of concern. On the contrary, this thought provoking film about the Arctic Refuge convinced me (once again) that we all have a stake in the impacts to natural habitats wherever they remain--from the Amazon to the Arctic. Write Senator Melcher and let him know you support a bill (H.R. 39) to designate the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as part of the National Wilderness System which would disallow oil and gas development in this important wildlife area.

*THIS IS IMPORTANT! PLEASE WRITE. SEND COPIES TO MAX, PAT & RON TOO*



## TIPS FOR WRITING YOUR CONGRESSMAN...

Surprisingly few people ever write their Congressman. Perhaps 90 percent of our citizens live and die without ever taking pen in hand and expressing a single opinion to the person who represents them in Congress—a person whose vote may decide what price they will pay for the acts of government, either in dollars or in human lives.

Mail to a modern-day Congressman is more important than ever before. With the staggering problems of government and increasingly long sessions, Congressmen must not only vote on many more issues than in years past, but they rarely get to spend more than 60 days of a year in their home states.

Some suggestions that apply to all congressional mail:

1. Address it properly. "Hon. \_\_\_\_\_, House Office building, Washington, D.C. 20515," or "Senator \_\_\_\_\_, Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510."
2. Identify the bill or issue. About 20,000 bills are introduced into each Congress, so it is important to be specific.
3. The letter should be timely. Write while there is still time for your Congressman to take action.
4. Concentrate on your own delegation. All letters written by residents of one district to Congressmen of another district will simply be forwarded.
5. Be reasonably brief. A letter need not be typed, but should be legible. Grammar, etc. is unimportant.
6. Ask for a response. Don't hesitate to ask questions, since your elected representative works for you. Ask for clarification if the first answer isn't clear.
7. Write your own views, not someone else's. A personal letter is far better than a form letter or a signature on a petition.
8. Give your reasons for taking a stand.
9. Show understanding of how the proposed legislation would affect not just the environment, but your community and other people's health and jobs.
10. Be constructive. Outline the correct approach you feel will solve the problem the bill addresses.
11. Share your expert knowledge if you have it. A Congressman can't know all the answers.
12. Use personal or business letterhead if possible. Include a complete return address inside and out.
13. Give praise when it's deserved.

Adapted from "The Right to Write" by Congressman Morris K. Udall, Arizona, and distributed by the National Audubon Society, Rocky Mountain Regional Office, Boulder, CO.

## WRITE OR PHONE

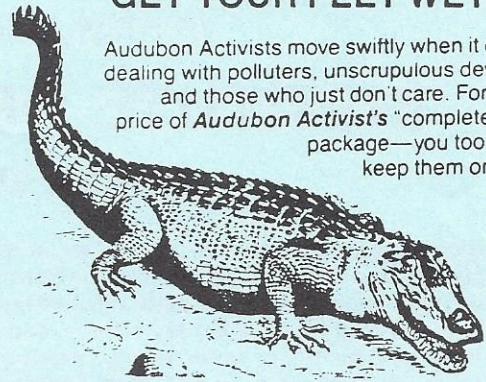
Senator Max Baucus  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
(202) 224-2651

Senator John Melcher  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
(202) 224-2644

Rep. Pat Williams  
U.S. House  
Washington, D.C. 20515  
(202) 225-3211

Rep. Ron Marlenee  
U.S. House  
Washington, D.C. 20515  
1-202-225-1555

## GET YOUR FEET WET



Audubon Activists move swiftly when it comes to dealing with polluters, unscrupulous developers, and those who just don't care. For \$9—the price of *Audubon Activist's* "complete activist" package—you too can help keep them on the run.

As a complete activist, you'll:

- Receive the bimonthly *Audubon Activist*
- Get *Action Alerts* from our Washington, D.C. office
- Be a part of our "telephone tree"
- Keep in touch with the front lines in Washington, D.C.
- Work with your local Audubon chapter on issues that are important to you

## AUDUBON ACTIVIST

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Make checks payable to National Audubon Society, *Audubon Activist*,  
950 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10022

### WANTED: YOUR FAVORITE BIRDING "HOT SPOTS"!!

Flathead Audubon is producing a birder's guide to northwestern Montana. The guide will include site descriptions, a checklist describing abundance, seasonal occurrence, and habitat requirements, as well as a map providing directions to the special places and birds of our area.

What we need are brief descriptions (50 to 100 words) from members and friends to good birding locations. Be sure to mention the bird specialties, habitat type(s), where to look, and simple directions for getting to each site. Keep in mind that all birding locations should provide public access. And if there are interesting birds during winter at your spot, please note that too.

Our chapter's goal for undertaking this project is three-fold in scope:

- 1) Educational—to increase awareness for the birds of our area.
- 2) Fund raising—the bird guide, when published, will be for sale to the public.
- 3) Sharing good birding spots with fellow birdwatchers.

The guides focus will be the Flathead Valley and Glacier National Park. However, if you know special places near Libby, Eureka or the Swan Valley, we would appreciate descriptions for those areas too. Please send your descriptions to Jim Rogers, Box 984, Polson, MT 59860. And send them as quickly as possible!

If winter birding is not your passion, and you find some time, please send some notes about the places you're anxious to visit this spring. Remember, this project will "fly" only with your help.



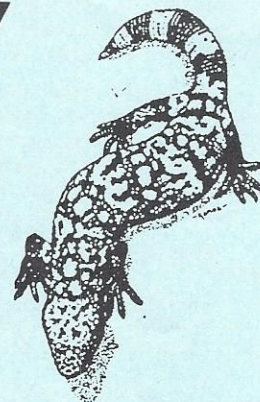
# THE TUCSON AUDUBON SOCIETY

## *invites you to its 18th annual*

# INSTITUTE OF DESERT ECOLOGY

April 28, 29, 30, and May 1, 1988

Each year sixty eager, inquisitive people gather in the shadow of the Santa Catalina Mountains to explore and celebrate the varied ecosystems of the Sonoran Desert. With the enthusiastic guidance of some of Arizona's foremost natural history authorities as teachers and guides, they discover hidden ecological treasures, find new insights in everyday scenes, and forge lifetime friendships. Whether you are newly fascinated by natural history or would enjoy a new perspective on a lifetime of experience and observations, join us at the 1988 Institute of Desert Ecology.



Dear Leo,

Robin asked if I would drop you a line for the newsletter about the Tucson Audubon, Desert Ecology Workshop.

Barbara Baxter, Mae Sudan and I went a few years ago. I believe each year their program is similar with emphasis in five areas: geology, mammals, ornithology, entomology and desert environment. A lot of the environmental discussion was on the Arizona water problems. Also, the geologist gave star talks at night.

The cater was terrific, and the whole camp was a good experience. They really have all the details worked out. It is a neat experience for anyone who can go.

Sincerely,  
Tommie Clark

**QUESTIONS?** Please contact:  
Mary Ann Chapman, Director  
Institute of Desert Ecology  
300 E. University Blvd., #120  
Tucson, AZ 85705  
Telephone (602) 823-4295

*If possible, please write. Your inquiries can be dealt with most efficiently by correspondence.*

### FLATHEAD FISHERIES: Time for Change

This fall we witnessed the apparent demise of Flathead Lake's kokanee fishery. And for the past several years there has been an increasing public concern for the status of game fishing within the Flathead Basin. In a nutshell, given the quality and abundance of water resources in the valley, we don't seem to have very good fishing. The Flathead Basin Commission and the Dept. of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks will hold a series of public meetings in February to address this problem and generate management policies that will improve our fisheries. Anyone with an interest in fish and water quality should attend a meeting.

The schedule is: 7-10:00 PM each night

Feb. 9, Pablo, Tribal Complex  
Feb. 16, Bigfork, Flathead Bank  
Feb. 23, Polson, Senior Center  
Feb. 24, Kalispell, Outlaw Inn

### TICKLER: FLATHEAD AUDUBON T-SHIRT CONTEST

See our January newsletter for full details but remember, entries are due no later than March 12, and must be a design suitable for silk-screening on a T-shirt (we suggest a bird or wildlife theme which contains the words "Flathead Audubon"). The winning design will receive a copy of the exquisite **NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS**. So, all you artists, aspiring or professional, check your January Pileated Post, or call Robin Magaddino, 837-4294, for details.



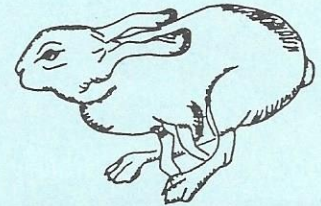
FIELD REPORTSis Ketcher

## January 23, Lupine Lake Cross Country Field Trip

Today was one of those mid-winter energizing days. I had the feeling that a good many northwest Montanans were out and about enjoying the sunshine and temperatures that seemed rather reasonable for January.

I joined Leo and Buck, the Wonder Dog, for a ski into Lupine Lake, a few kicks and glides north of Bitterroot Lake. The Lupine Lake trail does not fool around. Right off the bat the descent begins and before you know it you are committed. But what a lovely commitment! In fact, I've already signed up to return in the summer when I can explore that intriguing chasm which appears, seemingly from nowhere, not far from the trailhead. Thanks to Leo's warning, and a fancy technique known as the controlled fall, I did not have to explore it in winter. Gingerly approaching the edge and peering into the depths was enough for now. On a precipice below were some lovely wing patterns in the snow. Feather writing.

On the drive up we had talked about bunny tracks--how often we see them and how seldom we see the hares. Not so on this outing. In the first quarter mile we found a nice, squat evergreen ringed with tracks and complete with snowshoe hare nestled beneath. We had a long look before it took off in zippy, helter-skelter fashion. On the return trip we found a larger hare just across the trail. This time I had a great view of its powerful rear legs and big "shoes" as it darted off. Counting the one we saw up above the lake made it three for the day. Leo and I were delighted, Buck was unimpressed.



I stood at an opening in the trees later in the day, the sun reflected off the snow onto my face. Thoughts reflected on the day, the experience of one field trip: making new friends, a midday snack on Lupine Lake and exploring a new trail, the sounds of the winter woods--creaking trees, globs of snow melting and falling, gray jays and chickadees--ermine tracks and roller coaster trails and whatever ski style works best.

A little exercise is good for the body, and all the blessings of nature are so good for the soul. It was truly one of those mid-winter energizing days.

**Audubon Specials Available on Tape**

Chapter members may now buy National Audubon Society Television Specials on videocassettes for educational purposes. These hour-long programs can be used at special events, and they make a great addition to your local *Audubon Adventures* classroom library.

The available programs are: *Galapagos: My Fragile World*, *The Mysterious Black-footed Ferret*, *Condor*, *Ducks Under Siege*, *Common Ground: Farming and Wildlife*, and *On the Edge of Extinction: Panthers and Cheetahs*. The one-half-inch VHS cassettes are \$30 each (four for \$100), and the three-quarter-inch tapes are \$50 each. Contact WETA/TV, Education Activities, Box 2626, Washington, D.C. 20013. Or call toll free: (800) 445-1964.

Produced by National Audubon Society, Turner Broadcasting System, and WETA, these shows offer dramatic and exclusive scenes of the wonders and beauty of nature, including some of the world's rarest creatures. The specials stress the importance of conserving our natural heritage and protecting our wildlife and environment.



## A PLAN TO REINTRODUCE FISHERS

Mike Aderhold, Dept. of Fish, Wildlife and Parks

State and Forest Service biologists have been working on a project to reintroduce a rare furbearer in the Kootenai National Forest of north western Montana.

The current proposal involves releasing 25 fishers from Minnesota over a two-year period. The animals would be placed in the Bull River drainage of the Cabinet Ranger District north of Noxon, Montana. Fifteen fishers would be released in 1988 and another 10 in 1989. In the area of release, voluntary or regulated suspension of marten and fisher trapping may be necessary for five years to give the new population a chance to increase and disperse. All the released animals will be fitted with tracking instruments and closely monitored by University of Montana wildlife students to determine movements, habitat and reproduction.

The plan to replace this unique forest-dwelling mammal that is part of our natural heritage and native fauna is also tied to the fisher's historic and economic value as a furbearer. There is also evidence that fishers could reduce unusually high porcupine populations and benefit forest management.

Fishers are found only in North America and have probably been present in western Montana for at least 10,000 years. A member of the weasel family, fishers are the largest of eight species in the genus Martes, which includes the American and Japanese marten, the European pine marten and the Russian sable.

The fisher has the build of a stocky weasel-- a long, lean body and short legs which set the animal low to the ground. A bushy tail, large paws with hair-covered soles and sharp, semi-retractable claws make it the best tree climbing predator on the continent. Adult male fishers, which weigh up to 15 pounds, are almost twice the size of female fishers.

Fishers, like their weasel cousins, are active throughout the winter. To solve the problem of conserving heat in their small bodies during months of bitterly cold temperatures, family members have developed long, dense, water repellent coats. In recent centuries these "furs" have been highly sought by humans for their beauty and have become symbols of luxury, wealth and rank.

During the 1800s, the exploitation of furbearers was fueled by a seemingly insatiable demand. High prices caused overtrapping and as a result, populations of the larger, less productive mustelids, like the easily trapped fisher, were greatly reduced by 1900.

It was the early trappers that first called the "big marten" a "fisher". The name is inappropriate since the animal does not fish. There is speculation it may have acquired the name because it raided traps baited with fish or was confused with the otter, an expert fish catcher, or resembled the European polecat which in old English or French is called a fiche or fichet. Rather than fish, the opportunistic fisher prefers snowshoe hares, cottontail rabbits, tree squirrels and other small mammals, birds, and the carrion of deer.



(continued next page)

\* Drawing by Francis Lee Jacques, from Mammals of North America, by Victor H Cahalane, Macmillan Company, 1961.



Montana's first State Fur Biologist, Fletcher Newby (1951-58) wrote that he often visited Montana's fur dealers. Only a few of the older dealers had ever handled fishers, and none had been traded since the late 1920's when fisher skins sold for more than \$100 apiece.

In 1959 and 1960, Newby and his successor, Vern Hawley, with the cooperation of the U.S. Forest Service and the British Columbia Wildlife branch, transplanted 36 Canadian fishers into three areas of western Montana. The first plant of nine fishers took place in the Pinkham Creek drainage of Lincoln County in March, 1959. The second release of 15 occurred near Holland Lake in the Swan Valley during April, 1959 and January 1960. Twelve more fishers were released in 1960 near Moose Lake in the Rock Creek drainage east of Missoula.

Seven of these animals were recaptured at intervals of up to 73 months following release. Carcass analysis showed evidence of normal reproduction. Fourteen untagged fishers, which were probably the offspring of the transplanted animals, were turned over to Montana game officials between 1962 and 1968. Despite this evident restoration success, no more fisher were released in Montana. Fur prices dropped during the 1960's and with them interest in fishers waned for nearly 20 years.

However, in 1984, because fishers were occasionally being caught in marten, fox and coyote traps, and because of renewed interest, the Dept. of Fish, Wildlife and Parks allowed trappers to take one fisher (up to an overall quota of ten) in the Department's Missoula region. Trappers have been required to submit the carcass for research. In 1985, this trapping program was extended to the Kalispell region and it remains in effect today.

No discussion of fishers would be complete without mentioning two very interesting biological traits of the animal.

Fishers usually breed in mid-April. In most mammals, after mating the fertilized egg is almost immediately implanted in the uterus and within a few days the development of an embryo proceeds. However, in the fisher and some other mustelids implantation is delayed for ten months. Implantation usually occurs in January, and after a 30-day gestation period, two to four young are born high up in a den in a hollow tree. It's believed that this adaptation allows mating and birthing to each take place at a time that will best ensure survival.

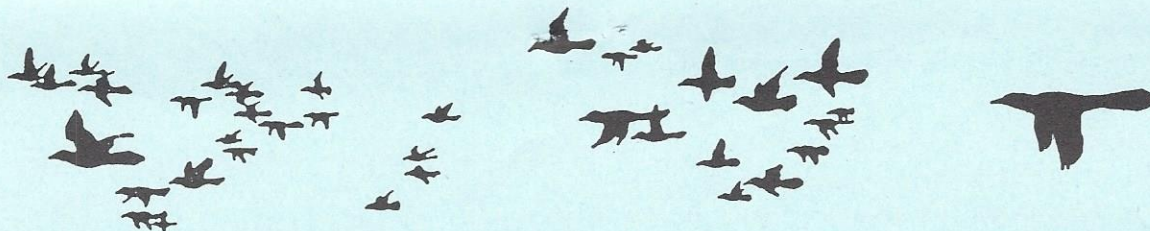
A second interesting feature is the fisher's ability to prey on porcupines. While at least five other carnivores (the wolf, coyote, mountain lion, lynx and bobcat ) are known to prey on pocupines, the fisher is by far the best adapted predator. This adaptation provides fishers a prey for which they have almost no competition. In addition, many captured fishers exhibit one or more porcupine quills in the forelegs or chest but show no signs of infection or other ill effects.

The sharp quills on a porcupine protect it from an attack to the back of the neck, where most predators strike. Fishers, however, have the speed and diminutive size to effectively mount a frontal attack. The fisher circles the porcupine avoiding the animals back and active tail.

A successful kill may take a half hour, but a single porcupine can provide a fisher with enough food for two weeks. Where porcupines are common, they make up form one-quarter to a third of the fishers diet. The law of diminishing returns prevents the fisher from exterminating this valuable food source.

The reintroduction of fisher into the Bull River country may seem a relatively minor wildlife management effort. Nevertheless, it represents a big step in making Montana's wildlife scene whole again.





# 1988 FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY DIRECTORY

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## National Audubon Society

CHAPTER  
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Yes, I'd like to join. Local Chapter:

FLATHEAD AUDUBON N 54 7XCH8

Mail to: NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY  
Chapter Membership Data Center  
P.O. Box 51001  
Boulder, Colorado 80322-1001

## INTRODUCTORY MEMBERSHIP \$20

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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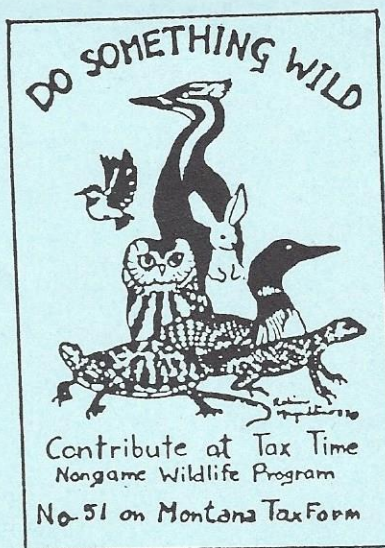
Please allow 4-8 weeks for delivery of your first issue.

7XCH8

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) and program (8:00) 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, the cost is \$4.00 per year.



**FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY**  
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