



The Pileated Post

VOLUME 12

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MARCH 1988

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13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

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

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING, Flathead Bank of Bigfork meeting room. 7:30 Business meeting. 8:00 is the program: Dick Hutto, Professor of Ornithology at the University of Montana will speak on the Ecology of Migrant Land Birds, specifically discussing their wintering habitat in western Mexico and the effects of land use on this diminishing habitat. This will be an important program.

FIELD TRIP: Bird feeder tour, call Robin 837-4294.

DEADLINE FOR COMMENTS Baucus/Melcher wilderness bill. Senate will hold hearings during this week.

EDITOR'S DESK

Leo Keane

The forerunners of spring are here, earlier than ever. Last week, out splitting morning firewood, the note of a familiar bird fell from the trees like a melting icicle. It was a varied thrush, but it caught me by surprise and I had to stop a moment and think--what kind of bird? The ground was still encased with old snow, the air was frosty and a weak sun glimmered through the pines. Spring seemed like it should be a long way off. Mr. Thrush knew better though, and the days following have been uncommonly pleasant, full of blue sky. The tide has turned. And this, the shortest winter in my memory, is apparently giving up without a fight. Today, I saw a flock of pintails cruising down valley, intent, or so they seemed, on finding some meltwater pond to alight in. Those ponds may be few and far between this year, given the shortfall of precipitation we're experiencing. Does this mean that Montana is going into yet another dry year? I, for one, will be keeping an eye to the western horizon, where those stormy clouds come from, and pray for bountiful spring rain. Meanwhile, the rest of me turns toward the sun, like those big faces of balsamroot flowers, and soaking up the warmth, surrounded by bird songs, I feel once again--SPRINGTIME! All is right with the world.

Springtime also means it's time to dust off the binocs and field guide for this year's birding trips. Gail is drafting plans right now for the Flathead Chapter's field schedule, which we will print in the April newsletter. How does an overnighter to Pine Butte Swamp sound for this year? If you have a place you'd like to see on our schedule, or if you can volunteer to lead a field trip, call Gail Leonard at 862-5807 by March 28.



Montana Wilderness: The Time is Now

The final struggle over the Montana Wilderness Bill may be approaching. Senator John Melcher has indicated that the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee will hold hearings on the bill during the week of March 21.

Wilderness bills offered by Senator Max Baucus and Representative Pat Williams each include about 1.3 million acres to be given wilderness protection, out of 6 million roadless acres now existing on national forest lands. Senator Baucus' bill includes additional acreages designated as wilderness study areas. The most notable of these study areas is the Badger-Two Medicine area of the Rocky Mountain Front. An alternative bill proposed by wilderness advocates would protect 2.8 million acres as wilderness.

According to Senator Melcher's press release, wilderness areas in the Rocky Mountain Front and the Gallatin Range may be a source of conflict. Flathead Audubon members who wish to have some influence on the nature of the final Montana wilderness bill should communicate with Senators Melcher and Baucus before March 21.

Much of the argument over the wilderness proposals revolves around wilderness recreation use versus timber, mining and mechanized recreation use. From our point of view this is much too narrow an approach. Of great importance, though often overlooked, are other wilderness values which would be lost through industrial or mechanized use. High among these are pristine watersheds and prime natural wildlife habitats of kinds which can only exist in wilderness.

High quality water, streams and lakes, healthy and thriving wildlife and fish populations, are absolutely essential to Montana's heritage. Having adequate wilderness is the only sure way to guarantee their survival.

Don't put it off or it may be too late. If you love wildlands and wild things, **WRITE NOW.**

Senator John Melcher
U.S. Senate Office Bldg.
Washington D.C. 20510
1-(202)-224-2644



Senator Max Baucus
U.S. Senate Office Bldg.
Washington D.C. 20510
1-800-332-6106

PLATTE RIVER FOCUS OF TWO CONFERENCES**Institute of River Ecology, July 10-15, Buffalo Creek, Colorado:**

Top experts from all phases of river ecology and stream preservation explore the wildlife and cultural heritage of the South Platte, Colorado's major mountain and prairie stream. Contact Susan Foster, Director, Institute of River Ecology, PO Box 243, Jamestown, CO, 80455, (303) 442-6333 for information and a brochure.

SPRING RIVER CONFERENCE, March 25-27, Kearney, Nebraska:

Conservation of the Platte River ecosystem, the scenic Niobrara, and wetlands of the Great Plains with field trips to watch the spectacular staging of 500,000 sandhill cranes. Contact Ron Klataske, National Audubon Society, 210 South Wind Place, Manhattan, Kansas 66502, (913) 537-4385 for more information and a complete schedule. This conference is sponsored by the West Central regional office of the National Audubon Society and is held annually.

FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY 1988 SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Now in its third year, the Flathead Audubon Scholarship Program is accepting applications from members for this summer's Glacier Institute. Among the finest outdoor/environmental education programs in the Rocky Mountains, the Glacier Institute is geared for the scientist, artist, teacher or anyone with a curiosity for the natural history of this beautiful park. This summer, classes range from "Glacier Grizzlies" to "Wolves of the Mind" and from "People of the Mountain World" to "Stars and Stories". All of the instructors are chosen for their expertise, dedication and ability to share their knowledge. There are over 20 course offerings varying in cost and length so be sure to inspect the Glacier Institute brochure available by contacting The Glacier Institute, PO Box 1457A, Kalispell, MT 59903, (406) 752-5222. Peruse the brochure, then fill out the form below for a Flathead Audubon scholarship to the Glacier Institute.

REQUIREMENTS:

- Audubon members will be given preference.

GENERAL INFORMATION:

- The 1988 Scholarship is applicable to any one course offered by the Glacier Institute. One day explorations are available, as well as 2-5 day courses.
- Scholarships cover all or a percentage of the tuition. Fees for recording college credit are not covered.
- The application must be **received by April 20** by the Flathead Audubon Society, Box 715, Bigfork, Montana 59911.
- Successful applicants who are unable to attend, must contact the Flathead Audubon Society 3 weeks prior to course date so that a complete refund can be obtained and an alternate can be notified.
- Additional applications may be obtained from members of the Scholarship Committee.

SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE:

Gail Leonard 862-5807 Jim Rogers 883-3611

APPLICATION

NAME _____ BIRTH DATE _____
 ADDRESS _____ PHONE _____
 COURSE NAME _____
 INSTRUCTOR _____
 DATE _____ COST _____

ON A SEPARATE SHEET OF PAPER RESPOND TO THESE QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why are you requesting financial assistance and what percentage of tuition do you require?
- 2) Briefly describe your background.
- 3) What led you to take this course and what do you plan to do with your newly gained knowledge?

WILD MISSOURI FLOAT TRIP: Sponsored by the Audubon Fund with Lynn Kelly as trip leader, this a 10 day float in July from Fort Benton to Fort Peck on the Wild and Scenic Missouri River. Call Lynn for specifics, 883-5797, evenings.



SHORT STUFF

AUDUBON ADVENTURES: Sponsor a classroom in this exciting environmental education program developed by National Audubon for grades three through six. Flathead Audubon now spends 20% of its budget on the Audubon Adventures program, sponsoring 15 classrooms from the Swan Valley to Libby, but we still have many interested teachers waiting for sponsors. For \$25 you can ensure that these classrooms receive the monthly Audubon Adventures packet for one school year. Please contact Nancy Trembath at 837-6298 if you would like to bring the wonder of nature to the children of NW Montana.

Thanks to George Schooley who is a new Audubon Adventures sponsor for this school year.

FLATHEAD BIRD GUIDE: Jim Rogers is still looking for your birding "hot-spots". Jim's in the process of compiling a birder's guide of the Flathead Valley to be published this year by the Flathead Chapter. We need your favorite bird watching places, whether it be mountain top or river bottom, which are available for public access. Be sure to mention the bird species, habitat type, where to look and how to get to each site. The guide will contain a map of the Flathead and adjacent valleys. If you have questions or descriptions to send, please contact Jim Rogers at Box 984, Polson, MT 59860, phone 883-3611. Let's try to have these hotspots to Jim by May 1. Thanks!

BIRD SIGHTING: Jeff Cornell of Whitefish reports a wintering Harris' sparrow at his home on the Stillwater River. The Harris' sparrow is common on breeding and wintering grounds--the boreal forests of the tundra and open woodlands east of the Rockies. They are seldom seen over here, however, so this was an exciting bird for Jeff. He relied on the distinctive black crown and bib, and the pink bill to make this a positive identification. Good work Jeff.

MAY POTLUCK AND ELECTIONS: Time to start planning for our annual May potluck. This year we'll have a raffle for an original Larry Thompson art print. The proceeds of this raffle will benefit the family of Larry Thompson who recently passed away. Larry was 39 years old and very highly esteemed for his work with the Montana Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation, and for his fine artwork. He was a Kalispell native.

Also, keep in mind that we will be electing officers at the May Potluck. Positions of President, Vice-President, Secretary and Program Director are open, as well as positions on the Board of Directors. If you've got a little time and energy to spare, we'll be pleased to put you on the slate for elections. Let Robin, or any Chapter officer know of your interest. And please, our Chapter is only as strong as our active members--so give us a boost. Get involved in Flathead Audubon. It's fun!

ANOTHER GO'ROUND FOR NONGAME: This is a pivotal year for the Montana Nongame Wildlife Program. Increased funding is vital to the future of the nongame program, and the nongame checkoff on your tax form is the key to increased funding. The Nongame Wildlife Program supports: the Bluebird Conservation Program (responsible for a 2000% increase in bluebird fledglings over the past seven years), the Montana Raptor Survey, the Montana Loon Study, and Habitat Inventories--focusing this year on the Yellowstone River ecosystem. If you consider yourself a conservationist, or simply interested in seeing the perpetuation of wildlife in Montana, donate as much as you can afford through the Nongame Checkoff. Or if you are not expecting a refund ☹️ you may make a tax-deductible contribution by writing a check to the Nongame Wildlife Program, 1420 East Sixth Avenue, Helena, MT 59620.



Catbird

THE BULL TROUT: MONTANA'S "TRAVELIN' FISH"

by John Fraley

Montana Dept. of Fish, Wildlife and Parks

When the bull elk are bugling, and the cottonwood leaves and larch are changing color, bull trout from Flathead Lake are making gravel nests or "redds" the size of a pickup bed in small tributary streams of the North and Middle forks of the Flathead River.

Montana's bull trout is larger than its coastal cousin, the Dolly Varden. Formerly called Dolly Varden, the bull trout is one of the largest native game fish in Montana. They range up to three feet in length and 25 pounds in weight. In Flathead Lake, these fish mature at age five to eight years, then migrate upstream as much as 150 miles to spawn. Young bull trout remain in their natal streams for one to three years before migrating downstream to the lake.



Montana has recognized the uniqueness of its migratory bull trout by classifying them as a "Species of Special Concern". The bull trout was so classified because of the species' limited numbers and confined U.S. distribution, as well as its sensitivity to environmental degradation. Small bull trout also have a tendency to hybridize with eastern brookies.

In Montana, trophy-size bull trout (fish greater than eight pounds) are found in relatively large numbers only in Flathead Lake and its river system (including the Swan drainage). Smaller numbers of large bull trout also live in the Kootenai and Clark Fork river systems. In fact, in November the Montana Fish and Game Commission reduced the bull trout limit in the Kootenai drainage to one per day to encourage growth in that population.

Bull trout are particular in their choice of spawning areas. They select flat sections of mountain streams which have beds of clean gravel and areas of upwelling groundwater. Hiding cover in the form of logs and undercut banks also is important. These strict requirements make good spawning habitat limited and valuable.

Suitable stream habitat for rearing bull trout also is limited. Young bull trout require cold, clean water, as well as tributaries with good cover (rocks and woody debris) and little sediment. Most young bull trout in the Flathead system are restricted to tributaries that have average summer afternoon temperatures cooler than a chilly 59 degrees Fahrenheit.

Each year, biologists employed by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks monitor the health of the bull trout population in the Flathead River system by counting the number of spawning sites, or redds, in key index streams in the North and Middle fork drainages. Biologists believe that the number of redds in the creeks reflects the number of bull trout migrants from Flathead Lake which successfully spawned (at a ratio of about three spawners per completed redd). The same creeks are surveyed each year, so the redd counts serve as an index over time of the spawning run from Flathead Lake.

The redd counts just completed for 1987 are encouraging. The count of 276 redds in North Fork index streams is about 30% higher than the 1979-1986 average of 216. The survey streams in the Middle Fork turned up 149 redds, slightly better than the 1979-1986 average of 140. It seems that better than average numbers of bull trout from Flathead Lake migrated upstream and successfully spawned in 1987.

(continued next page)

BULL TROUT... continued

Nearby, redds in the Swan drainage, built by bull trout migrating upstream from Swan Lake, also are up. Biologists found 289 redds in four index tributaries, 38% more than the 1982-1986 average of 209.

A second index concerning the status of the bull trout population is the number of juvenile bull trout in two key nursery streams of the North and Middle fork drainages. Each year biologists electrofish the same section of each stream and estimate the number of one-to three-year-old bull trout. The estimate for 1987 in Coal Creek was 180 young bull trout, the highest number yet recorded. Previous estimates from the 1982-1986 period ranged from 89 to 167 fish. Morrison Creek, in the Middle Fork drainage, also supported a record number of young bull trout in 1987.

The 1987 estimate of 138 was higher than the range of 91 to 114 fish recorded from 1980-1986. these 1987 estimates indicate that good numbers of young bull trout will be migrating downstream to Flathead lake in the next several years.

This good news in the nursery streams should mean stable populations for the travelin' fish in Flathead lake. Although the numbers look promising, continued vigilance will be required to protect the bull trout from habitat loss and over-fishing.

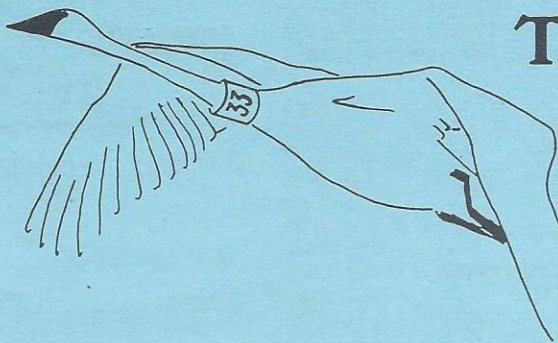
Flathead Audubon is now offering for sale stemmed goblets etched with four unique bird motifs: **black-capped chickadee, red-breasted nuthatch, pileated woodpecker** and **western meadowlark**. The pileated is from our logo developed by Elmer Sprunger and now seen on our newsletter. The chickadee is from a photo by Lee Kaiser. Robin Magaddino drew the nuthatch, and the meadowlark is by the Birkholmes of Classic Glass who are our suppliers for these glasses. They will sell for \$5.00 each and are available at meetings. Use in your dining room, or as a gift.



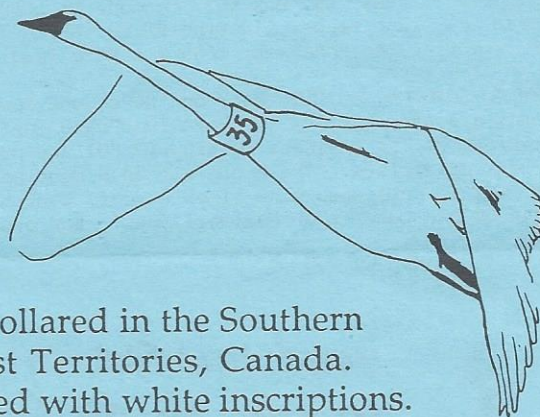
ARCTIC UPDATE: Two recent developments may deserve your comments to Senators Melcher and Baucus.

- 1) The Worth/Bumpers Bill passed a committee hearing on a vote of 10-9 with Melcher voting for. Unfortunately, amendments attached to the bill would go ahead and lease the Arctic Wildlife Refuge for oil exploration while allowing for a study of our National Energy Policy. This is a weak bill and not supported by conservationists, which Melcher should be made aware of.
- 2) Baucus' committee on Public Lands has decided to abandon a wilderness bill for the Arctic Wildlife Refuge in favor of some other form of protection. Baucus needs encouragement for a strong bill.

Collared Trumpeter Swans



The Canadian Wildlife Service requires your assistance in locating Trumpeter Swans wearing neck collars and stainless steel leg bands.



Trumpeter Swans have been collared in the Southern Mackenzie District, Northwest Territories, Canada. The plastic collars are bright red with white inscriptions.



Yellow collared Trumpeter Swans are being released at Elk Island National Park, Alberta, Canada as part of an effort to reintroduce Trumpeter Swans to an area formerly occupied.

Should you observe collared swans—PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:

- colour, number and/or letter on the collar or band,
- date of sighting,
- location of sighting,
- include observer's name and address,
- other swans, uncollared.

This information is vital in determining time, route and rapidity of migration and habitat utilization of the Trumpeter Swan.

Send observations to, or call:

Len Shandruk
Habitat Biologist
Canadian Wildlife Service
2nd Floor, 4999 - 98 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T6B 2X3 • (403) 420-2525

Terry Winkler
Park Warden
Elk Island National Park
Site 4, R.R. #1
Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta
T8L 2N7 • (403) 992-1796

Canada



1988 FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY DIRECTORY

OFFICERS

President	Robin Magaddino, 2100 Swan Hwy, Bigfork, MT 59911	837-4294
Vice-President	Jack White, 1235 Swan River Road, Bigfork, MT 59911	837-6157
Secretary	Barb Baxter, 255 Oldenburg Road, Somers, MT 59932	857-3738
Treasurer	Tommie Clark, 231 Pine Needle Lane, Bigfork, MT 59911	837-6615

DIRECTORS

Bob Ballou, Box 11881, Route 1, Charlo, MT 59825	644-2365
Brent Mitchell, 960 Kienas Rd., Kalispell, MT 59901	257-8130
Lynn Kelly, P.O. Box 2289, Polson MT 59860	883-5797
Jim Rogers, Box 984, Polson, MT 59860	887-2492

CHAIRS

Conservation	Rod Ash, Box 957, Condon, MT 59826	754-2289
Education	Jim Rogers, Box 984, Polson, MT 59860	883-3611
Field Trips	Gail Leonard, 514 Pine Place, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-5807
Hospitality	Susannah Casey, Box 2922, Kalispell, MT 59901	857-3143
Library	Nancy Trembath, 6065 MT Hwy 35, Bigfork, MT 59911	837-6298
Membership	June Ash, Box 957, Condon, MT 59862	754-2289
Newsletter	Leo Keane, 514 Pine Place, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-5807
Schools/Clubs	Jean Robocker, 1655 Montford Road, Kalispell, MT 59901	756-6344

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.

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 _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery of your first issue.

7XCH8



MARCH FIELD TRIP

SATURDAY, the 19th

*} A bird feeder tour of the lower valley
AND a duck hatchery in Kalispell!!*

CALL ROBIN FOR DETAILS 837-4294.



FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY

P.O. BOX 715

BIGFORK, MONTANA 59911

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