



# The Pileated Post

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**REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING,** Flathead Bank of Bigfork meeting room. 7:30 Business Meeting (everyone welcome). 8:00 Program: Jean Robocker, curator of our chapter's extensive collection of bird photographs, has organized a slide presentation entitled **The Birds of the Flathead.** Jean will emphasize birds most likely to be encountered during our upcoming Christmas Bird Count and point out key identifying features. Jean also will be available to sign up for the Christmas Bird Count.

**THE GEMENID METEOR SHOWER:** up to 50/hour visible tonight.

**FLATHEAD CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT:** sign up at the meeting or call Jean Robocker at 756-6344. The cost is \$4.00.

**NINE PIPES CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT:** Bob Ballou of Charlo is the coordinator, details page 2. The cost is \$4.00.

## EDITOR'S DESK

Leo Keane

'Tis the season to be jolly, though personally I favor hysteria. It goes without saying that the holidays create stress for most everybody, and often we don't come to our senses till sometime after Christmas. What a shame to have these first, fresh days of winter pass in a daze of traffic jams and crowded malls. In our home, we've begun a little tradition that's as good as a skating party and peppermint schnapps for bringing back the spirit of Christmastime--Gail and I and our wonder dog Buck tramp off into the snowy woods and fields and watch birds. It works like magic. You quiet down, you're mind becomes still and focused, slowly your eyes and ears adjust to nature, things happen. We've seen a dipper materialize out of rock and water and pour out its song to us. Once a large, gray hawk whipped through the trees like a wind, leaving us breathless. Sometimes it may simply be the woods coming to life with the chips and twitters of little birds going about their workaday world. It's the Christmas Bird Count and its always special. The object is to spend a day afield identifying and counting birds. May I suggest you put your anxiety on hold for a day and join us?

To participate in Flathead Audubon's Christmas Bird Count, first of all you sign up at our next meeting, December 12. There, Jean Robocker will establish an area for you to cover within a 15 mile radius of Bigfork. Then on December 17, Christmas Bird Count day, you (or you and your teammates) go out to your chosen area with binocs, field guide and a stout lunch and start watching. From that moment on it becomes a fascinating day and the time flies. You only count the birds you can positively identify so in effect you set your own pace. Some people get lots, some just a few. Everybody gets to enjoy our potluck ham dinner that evening when we reconvene in Bigfork and tally the results. Here again Jean is in charge, assembling the total count for our Flathead Chapter which will subsequently be sent to Christmas Bird Count headquarters of the National Audubon Society and tabulated with the nationwide count. In its 89th year, the Christmas Bird Count record now forms an invaluable body of information on bird populations. That's good too, but somehow for me it still boils down to a day out of doors when I need it most. Happy Holidays!



A CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT PRIMER

Did you know...

- ...the first Christmas Bird Count was in the year 1900 and has been held consecutively every year since.
- ...the Christmas Bird Count is sponsored by the National Audubon Society and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- ...this year about 42,000 bird watchers will participate in the 89th Christmas Bird Count.
- ...the greatest number of species seen in a Christmas Bird Count was 354 from the Atlantic Canal Area of Panama, while the least was one specie, a raven, from Prudhoe Bay, Alaska!
- ...all nine Audubon chapters in Montana participate in the Christmas Bird Count and last year the Flathead chapter identified a new record high number of species for the state---80.
- ...the Flathead Chapter is in its 14th consecutive Christmas Bird Count.

NINEPIPES CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

December 31, 1988

The Ninepipes Christmas Bird Count has been announced by Bob Ballou of Charlo as being held on December 31. It will start at 8:00 AM from Ruby's Cafe, five miles south of Ronan on Highway 93. Those who want to can meet earlier at the cafe for a sociable breakfast.

Everyone is on their own for lunch. However, after the count is over, around 4:30, all are invited to the Ballou's for the tally and soup. Directions for getting to the Ballou's will be given at Ruby's Cafe at the start of the Count.

"We can't promise you'll see peregrines or gyrfalcons," Bob says, "but they have been seen on previous Christmas Bird Counts on the Ninepipes Refuge. It would be great to have a good turnout from the Flathead Chapter."

Bob Ballou, 168 Gunlock Rd, Charlo 59824

THE WILDERNESS OF POLITICS

Leo Keane

If you have any political idealism left after this year's election... well, you're a better man than I. What a mess. Mudslinging seemed to be the strategy of choice of so many candidates, from Bush and Dukakis on down, that we voters soon felt like spectators at a sideshow. This election blew away pride in the American way and left a whole lot of exasperation. A handful of candidates were forthright in addressing the issues and appeared to stand by their personal qualities and beliefs. Ultimately, Republican or Democrat, they were the ones to shine in my mind.

That the Montana Wilderness Bill, a hard-fought compromise, became ensnarled in this miasma of politics will be remembered as a deplorable passage in Montana history. Reagan's veto was so blatantly situated to aid Conrad Burns' election effort that it screams of foul play. If newly elected Burns now thinks he has a mandate to run roughshod over a Montana Wilderness Bill, he better think twice. Pat Williams easily won his reelection as well, and Pat worked hard to get this wilderness legislation off the ground. By the same token, Conrad Burns should be aware that Montana wilderness advocates will not roll over and play dead-- next time we hit the wilderness drawing board it will be with a sharper pencil. In fact, I am a little curious what Conrad Burns and the timber industry hope to gain by the defeat of this legislation. The Bill was so thoroughly researched, carefully drawn, precisely worded, so obviously a COMPROMISE... what more can we do?

We will surely stand our ground. The wildlands that form the texture of Montana's landscape will not be parlayed for someone's political gain. Nor will we stand by while the timber or mining industries help themselves to the last unspoiled acres. The defeat of this compromise legislation only deepens our commitment to wilderness.



## Getting Involved in Forest Plans

Early in November I represented the Montana Audubon Council in a workshop in Missoula on the " Citizen's Role in Implementation of the Lolo National Forest Plan". The workshop, involving a cross section of forest users, was organized by Don Wood of the American Forestry Association and sponsored by the A.F.A. and the Conservation Foundation.

The purpose of the two day session was to develop an effective and non-confrontational method of citizen involvement. Conservation Foundation representatives noted that the workshop was the first of a series of such workshops on National Forests throughout the U.S.

Orville Daniels, Superintendent of the Lolo National Forest, told participants that implementation is as important as the plan itself. The plan establishes broad directions for the forest. Implementation focuses on projects and activities required to achieve the objectives of the plan. Forest plan debate would deal with a question such as: How much timber will be cut? Implementation deals with a question such as: Where will timber be cut and when, and using what harvesting techniques?

Workshop discussions were frank and constructive. Everyone, including Forest Service folks, agreed the Forest Service needed to be open to citizen participation at all levels of implementation. It was recommended by the participants that the Forest Service ought to establish some sort of citizen's advisory group at the district level, where the specific implementation decisions will be made, and temporary groups should be welcomed at the area analysis level within the ranger district.

It was further recommended that citizens be involved in monitoring forest activities which follow from implementation decisions. Monitoring and evaluation of activities could lead to changes in implementation plans. In one forest, mentioned in a Conservation Foundation paper, an Audubon chapter is monitoring bird populations as part of plan implementation.

The Lolo workshop was a healthy experience for all concerned. The Lolo Forest officers present seemed thoroughly committed to open public involvement in the process. It is hoped that all National Forests in Montana could move toward a system of focused public involvement so that discussion can take place and views modified before final decisions on the management of our public lands take place.

**MARLENEE APPOINTMENT WOULD BE ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER**

A recent news story regarding a possible appointment for Ron Marlenee as Secretary of the Interior or Agriculture is enough to cast doubt on the optimism expressed last month in the Pileated Post that either Presidential candidate would be an improvement for the environment over what we have had the past eight years.

If Congressman Marlenee is under serious consideration for a top environmental post ( the National Forests are under the Dept. of Agriculture), then we may be in for problems. Marlenee is openly hostile in word and deed to reasonable conservation positions and groups. He refused to take a constructive part in Montana Wilderness Bill discussions preferring to oppose any and all wilderness additions in Montana. His votes in Congress on other conservation issues have been equally bad.

**FRIENDS OF LAWRENCE PARK:  
Update**

Flathead Audubon member Dick Kuhl serves as a negotiator for the Friends of Lawrence and reports that talks between "The Friends", The Kalispell Golf Assoc., and the Kalispell Tennis Assoc. over the Lawrence Park plan are continuing. The Kalispell Chamber of Commerce is serving as intermediary between the three groups.

The Kalispell City Council has asked the groups for a progress report to be presented at its December 19 Council meeting, and has suggested that if no progress has been made by then toward a compromise plan, the Council itself may opt to develop a plan of its own for allocating the land.

At this time a preliminary plan is being worked out by the three interested groups. Features of this plan would add another five holes to the golf course and require a road along the wetlands. Dick has stated he is extremely interested in hearing from Audubon members who are concerned about the development of Lawrence Park. You may offer your input by calling Dick Kuhl at 257-5793.

**ATTENTION!!**

One of our most popular features in the Pileated Post has been the "Portrait", a column in which we explore the natural history of a selected bird or animal. We would like to continue this feature on a regular monthly basis throughout the upcoming issues of the Pileated Post and therefore solicit your help. If you have personal experience or knowledge relating to any fauna of Montana and would like to submit a short article for publication in the Post, please call me, Leo Keane, the newsletter editor at 862-5807 and I'll get you started.

We'd also much appreciate artwork suitable for printing with an article, or simply suggestions for portraits you'd like to see in the Pileated Post. Won't you give it some thought? And remember, it's not how much you know, it is what you've seen and experienced that will make the most interesting reading for your friends in the pages of the Pileated Post.



**A Year Full of Buntings**

Have you seen a "stocky, short-tailed bird, mostly black with contrasting white patch on wings and under tip of tail, with a heavy, bluish gray bill" (A Field Guide to the Birds of North America, National Geographic Society)? If so, it may be a **lark bunting** and Jack Kirkley of the Pintlar Audubon Society wants to know. Jack has noticed an influx of lark buntings, a bird of the dry, sagebrush plains and prairies, into western Montana, and is curious about this birds apparent expansion in recent years. Perhaps dry summers on the great Plains have pushed the bird westward.

Coincidentally, we have received reports of lark buntings over this past summer. Robert O'Brien, a Flathead Auduboner who summers up on the North Fork, notified us of a lark bunting near his home on the river. Another fellow spoke of lark buntings in numbers never before seen while driving across the South Dakota prairie. If you have any experience with lark buntings in areas of western Montana, Jack would like to hear from you. You may call him at: 683-4729 or c/o Dept of Biology, Western Montana College, Dillon MT 59725.



And from the San Juan Audubon Society in Durango, Colorado this tip: "A planting of white millet (Gurney Seeds) attracts **lazuli buntings**... one observer counted 27 buntings feeding on her planting of millet." The lazuli bunting is widespread in Montana inhabiting open deciduous or mixed woodlands especially near water.

Have you seen any **snow buntings** yet? Huge flocks of these fascinating birds descend on the Flathead Valley about this time of year. Lower Valley and Farm to Market are good areas to find them feeding in stubble fields. A flock of a thousand birds looks like drifting snow as they roll and spill across a field in search of food. Did you know that the snow bunting nests further north than any other land bird? They often burrow into snow for warmth during the coldest weather and so thrive in temperatures way below zero. The Flathead is probably Club Med for these hardy fellows!

EVERY SINGLE BREEZE  
Donald Stoecker, Georgetown Lake, Mt

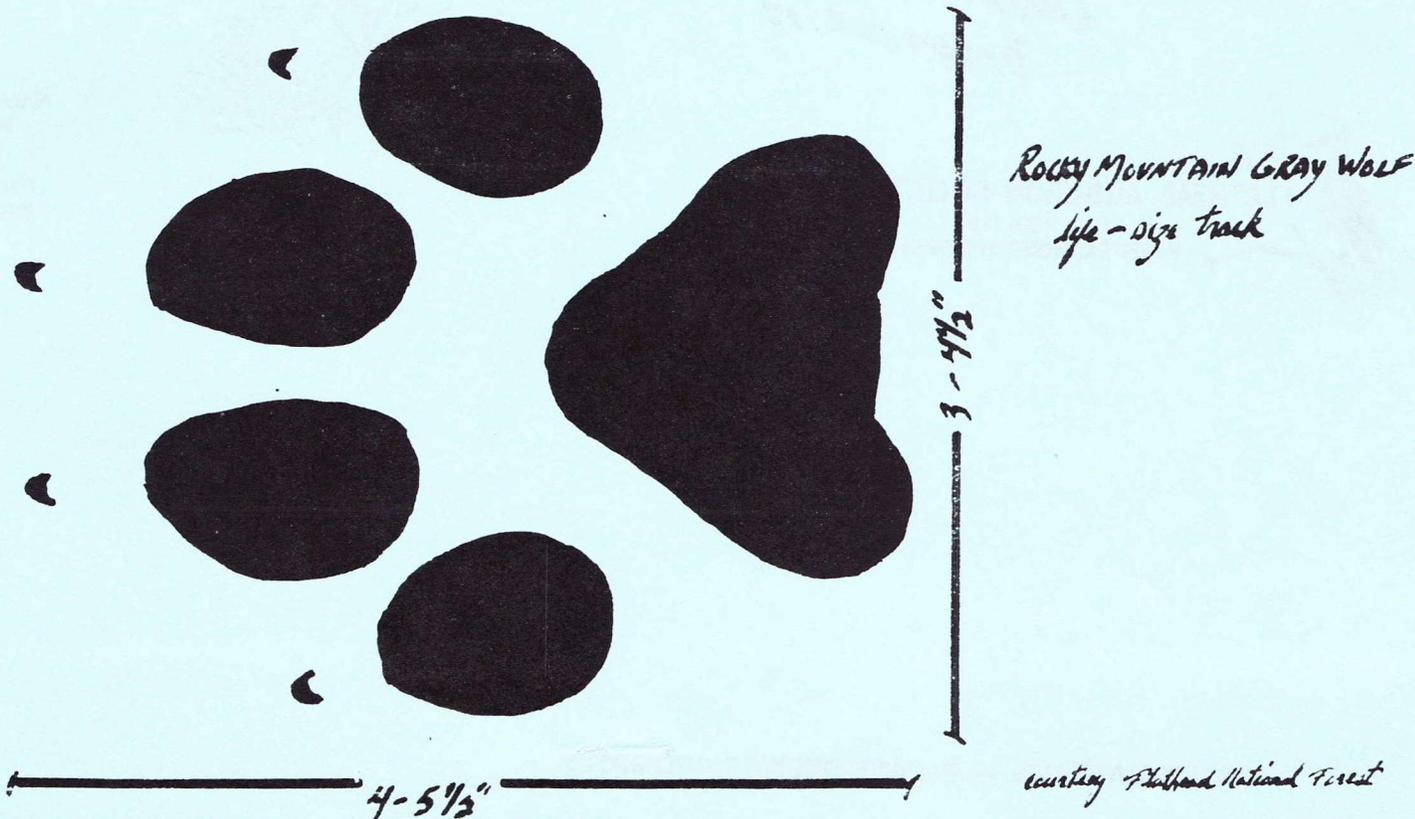


What are trees good for? Lumber, firewood and a little shade in the summer right? True, but also much more.

You may remember from high school biology that trees and all green plants absorb carbon dioxide and release life giving oxygen through photosynthesis. Green plants use water and sunlight for energy, take up carbon dioxide and convert these into sugar (a carbohydrate). The oxygen released into the atmosphere is essential for all living creatures. For each molecule of carbon dioxide absorbed by green plants, one molecule of oxygen is released. Virtually all plants and animals depend for their existence on this process. The entire organic world runs by the gradual use of this original energy built up through photosynthesis.

Here are a couple of important facts to consider in light of deforestation of the tropics and the impending "greenhouse effect": "...plants can fix atmospheric carbon by photosynthesis, and trees are able to fix more carbon per acre than any other plant." (Science, February 26, 1988) and "...carbon dioxide is produced when coal, oil and natural gas are burned. When carbon atoms, which make up the bulk of these fuels, combine with oxygen molecules from the atmosphere, an amount of carbon dioxide weighing roughly three times more than the fuel burned is generated." (Natural History, October, 1987)

So you see, trees are more than an economic or esthetic benefit. We are dependent on the worlds forests for every breath we take.





1989 FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY DIRECTORY

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Bob Ballou, Box 11881, Rt.1, Charlo, MT 59825	644-2365
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Lynn Kelly, P.O. Box 2289, Polson, MT 59860	883-5797

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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 \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Please allow 4-6 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.

*CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT!*  
*DECEMBER 17*



FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY

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