



The Pileated Post

VOLUME 14

NUMBER 2

FEBRUARY 1989

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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 Fires of Yellowstone--1988**. Rick Trembath, of the Flathead Chapter and a U.S. Forest Service employee since 1967, will present his perspective on the Park's fires last summer. Rick served with an Incident Management Team in Yellowstone and documented his experience with photographs which he will use to illustrate this timely program.

ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, Public Hearing: Proposed marina at Eagle Bend on the Flathead, Bigfork High School, 7:00 PM.

THE NONGAME WILDLIFE SYMPOSIUM, Missoula. See all the details inside.

EDITOR'S DESK

Leo Keane

Cabin fever is not a problem in our household where the winter rule of thumb is: "If you're not working, you're skiing". That usually leaves a day or two for skiing. Given this schedule, the weekends often take on a pace quite as frantic as the work days. Comes a morning like last Saturday then, and you have to enjoy it. An ocean of clouds enclosed the valley. At ten o'clock in the morning daylight still seemed tentative, and an icy drizzle spattered our deck. Sipping my third cup of coffee, I peered out the back window at Skippy, our almost-a-pet squirrel, surveying the situation from a perch atop the wood pile. Old Skippy always has some trick up his sleeve for us, and this time we had to laugh at him hunched over like a little Buddha. He seemed to be wondering what to do today too. Then a flash in the trees caught our attention. A pair of pileated woodpeckers zig-zagged out of the woods and latched onto the feeder tree not ten feet from our astonished faces. These dandies of the tall timber always surprise me, but at this range they were truly impressive. They lurched mechanically around the trunk, thumping off chunks from the suet cake or chiseling at the bark, presumably in search of sleepy bugs. We got a long look at their jaunty, red caps before they whooped off through the woods and over the hill. After that we pulled on pacs and parkas and went out to inspect some fresh tracks cutting through our snowy yard. Whitetails are frequent visitors in our neighborhood so we were amazed to come upon the huge, heart-shaped prints of two MOOSE! Following them, we saw where they had walked out into the street and returned to bed down out back of the wood pile. The "moose apples" they left behind were, of course, unmistakable, as were their beds--as big as bathtubs!

Yes, it was a rare day, last Saturday. I got to thinking: What goes on when we are not home? Who travels these ancient game trails when we are sound asleep these wintry, moonlit nights? There is so much under our noses that escapes our attention. At the very least, I decided, it pays to go for that extra cup of coffee once in a while, and dawdle around the house a morning.



In last month's "Comments" I stressed the importance of the environmental challenges we face this year and in this session of the Montana legislature. In the meantime concerns have been expressed about the commitment of Governor Stephens in dealing with environmental issues. A recent editorial in the Bigfork Eagle expressed fear that Governor Stephens newly appointed resource assistant and representative to the Flathead Basin Commission, a former assistant to Ron Marlenee, will not be supportive of the efforts of the commission. Former Governor Schwinden had given complete support to the Commission and his resource aide, Bruce Hayden, devoted much time to the affairs of the Commission.

If there proves to be substance to these fears, we must rally our Flathead and Lake County representatives to defend and expand the scope of the commission. The Flathead Basin Commission is providing outstanding leadership in our watershed and could become a model for similar efforts in all of Montana's river basins.

All of this brings me to the commercials for this month. I noted in the last Pileated Post how vital to the Audubon Cause was the work of Jan Ellis, Audubon's legislative representative in Helena. We asked you to contribute to support of the office. We now find that there is still a shortage of funds to meet expenses during this session. So, again, we appeal to Audubon Members to contribute to keeping a strong Audubon voice at the state capital for wildlife habitat, non-game species and state parks.

While we are discussing contributions, as you are making out your 1988 Montana State tax return, don't forget the check-off for a non-game species contribution on the tax form.

Contributions for the legislative office should be sent to:
Montana Audubon Legislative Fund, P.O. Box 924, Helena, MT 59624.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The pace is rapidly accelerating at the capitol. Soon we'll be facing an onslaught of legislation which could harm Montana's wildlife, wildlife habitat and the environment. Below is a list of some of the legislation we are working on.

Wildlife Habitat. In 1987, a bill passed the Montana Legislature that raises over \$2.7 million annually for critical wildlife habitat. The money is raised through hunting and fishing license fees. There are several efforts underway to take this money away from the program. A second bill, designed to improve habitat for upland game birds (many birds will benefit from the habitat improvement), is also under consideration. That bill, **SB 33**, has passed the Senate Fish & Game Committee and will be debated on the Senate floor soon.

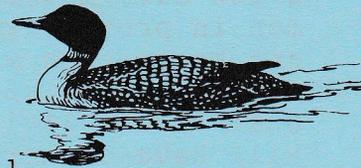
Water Quantity and Riparian Systems. Much attention has been placed on water and riparian systems in this drought-stricken year. We will be actively involved in water quantity issues, especially legislation designed to allow the purchase of water rights for fish and wildlife (purchasing water rights so the water is left in rivers and streams).

Subdivision. Subdivision reform to protect wildlife and riparian habitat is a major concern for Audubon. Up to ten pieces of legislation have been identified as either helping or hurting wildlife habitat. We will be involved in all of the debates on this issue.

WINTER LOONS
Lynn Kelly

The haunting call and striking beauty of the large black and white loons on Montana's northwestern lakes cause people to concentrate on the breeding activities of these birds. But because very little is known about the autumn and winter abodes or activities of this summer resident, participants in the Montana Loon Study initiated surveys last year to identify those lakes used by migrating loons in Montana and areas used by the birds once they leave the state. Although their final destinations are unknown, the Pacific Coast is the suspected wintering area.

Loon pairs are aggressively territorial and very intolerant of other loons and waterfowl during May and June. However, if a pair is unsuccessful in their nesting attempt, they will join other unsuccessful or nonbreeding loons in small flocks on various Montana lakes during July and August. By September, the loons are preparing to migrate by gathering in larger and larger groups. Initial data suggest that bodies of water necessary for rest stops during fall and spring migrations include lakes and reservoirs in all areas of Montana, not just the northwestern corner of the state.



Data from Ennis Lake in southwestern Montana suggests the fall migration of common loons begins in mid-September and will continue through early November. The numbers rise and fall as flights of different loons pass through the region. As many as 80-100 loons (commonly families from neighboring lakes) can be counted in these migrating flocks. This may seem trivial when compared to 100,000 snow geese, but for loons this is a real crowd.

Common loons migrating through Montana in the autumn are a motley crew. They are no longer graphically black and white as they were on their summer breeding lakes. Rather, the handsome black head is graying, the black necklace disappears and the black and white back becomes brown. When the birds arrive on their coastal wintering areas, they are of an indistinct gray-brown hue that can vanish from view in the coastal fogs.

Soon after reaching the coast, the birds will molt their flight feathers so that they are flightless for at least part of the winter. This is not a problem since this water bird is known for its superb diving abilities. In a totally aquatic environment a loon does not need to fly. They feed during low tides on small territories which they claim as their own. During high tides they drift on the coastal waters within a mile of the shoreline. At night they sleep in groups over the deepest sections of protected coves.

As winter progresses the birds repeat the daily rhythms of feeding, preening and resting. But changes are evident because they are once again becoming distinctly black and white, and they have regained their power of flight. If there are no coastal disasters such as oil spills or widespread disease, a restlessness brought about by hormonal changes will eventually result in spring migrations which will bring these beautiful birds back home to Montana.

With the breeding in store, the haunting music of the loons will once again radiate from our northwestern lakes for yet another season.

Lynn Kelly is a biologist and teacher in Polson, Montana and she is the recent past president of Flathead Audubon.

Occasionally we get requests from other environmental groups to share our membership list. The Flathead Lakers, a group promoting the wise use of our renowned lakes, has asked Flathead Audubon for our mailing list so that they may contact other concerned citizens. If you object to your name and

address being made available to the Flathead Lakers, or any other group, you may let us know by dropping a postcard to **Flathead Audubon, PO Box 715, Bigfork, MT 59911** and we will delete your name from any exchanged mailing list. Otherwise Flathead Audubon may make exchanges at our discretion.

*THE PILEATED POST OFFICE:
Letter to the Editor*

Dear Flathead Audubon,

I read in the Pileated Post about hazardous wastes in the Flathead Valley. (November 1988). I have a daughter with a 15 year old son who lives in Evergreen. Behind them is a site for something, it is fenced off and marked "Hazardous". Is this one of the sites? I sure have wondered what is behind that chain link fence! We can only see a box car, but my daughter has seen men in protective suits and gloves and boots come with barrels of something. I worry about it, and what effect living so close to this will have on her and grandson. She is self-supporting and cannot afford to move. Yes, I feel people should be involved with hazardous wastes in the Flathead and I appreciate seeing your article. I enjoy your paper.

Billee Howard
Silverton, Idaho

Dear Flathead Audubon,

In answer to your article about politics, ("The Wilderness of Politics", December 1988) is exposing someone's record "mud-slinging"? It's not surprising that the liberal media called it that, but Bush's ads were backed by facts; Dukakis just did a flip-flop on almost every issue when he saw which way public opinion was turning.

Is it true that no logging is allowed on wilderness acres? If so, we have about enough wilderness in Montana. Jim Fenlason receiving 39% of the vote was doing well for an unknown. The majority of Montanans spoke in the defeat of Melcher and election of Burns. I heard Conrad say what we need is access to the wilderness we have, not more wilderness. I am for wise management of our environment, but you in Audubon put animals ahead of people. Whenever there is no more market for logs, we'll know we are cutting too many. Trees must be harvested when mature or they're wasted.

Mrs. Betty Escritt
Proctor, Montana

Summer Employment Opportunities

National Audubon Society announces the following exciting positions for chapter members and others:

Instructors: Qualified individuals with teaching experience in a wide range of natural science subjects and ecological disciplines can become a part of the prestigious staff at one of Audubon's camps and workshops. The programs run for eight weeks from late June to late August at our sites in Connecticut, Maine, and Wyoming. The positions include a starting salary of \$1,300 plus room and board.

Student Assistants: College-age students interested in a summer filled with learning opportunities, hard work, and comraderie in beautiful surroundings should consider joining the staff at the Camp in Maine or the Audubon Ecology Workshop in Connecticut. Students assist in the kitchen or with maintenance. In return they are provided with an opportunity to participate in the programs throughout the summer, room and board, and a salary of from \$600 to \$1,170, depending on the position and camp season.

Interested persons should send their resumes to Philip Schaeffer, Executive Director, National Environmental Education Center, National Audubon Society, 613 Riversville Road, Greenwich, Conn. 06831.

Those selected for consideration will receive a detailed job description and application form.

AUDUBON ACTIVIST
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My check for \$9 is enclosed. (Make check payable to **National Audubon Society, 950 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10022.**)

"There is simply no substitute for the Audubon Activist when it comes to good, hard reporting on wildlife issues. The Activist Network is speaking out and winning environmental battles. I urge all Audubon members to subscribe!"
-Peter A.A. Berle, President



Audubon Institute of Desert Ecology

Each year sixty eager, inquisitive people gather in the shadow of Arizona's 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.

Participants camp at Catalina State Park and take part in camp and field sessions which focus on the relationships between plants, wildlife, and the desert environment. The intensive daily schedule begins at dawn and ends with owling, blacklighting for insects, and star talks. Anyone who is newly fascinated by natural history or who would enjoy a new perspective on a lifetime of experience and observations should consider joining us at the 1989 Institute of Desert Ecology, April 20-23.

For more information, contact Mary Ann Chapman, Director, at the Tucson Audubon Society, 300 East University Blvd., #120, Tucson AZ 85705. Telephone (602) 881-1660.

THE FIFTH ANNUAL MONTANA NONGAME WILDLIFE SYMPOSIUM

February 22, 1989
Holiday Inn-Parkside
Missoula, Montana



The Fifth Annual Nongame Symposium promises to be an exciting one, with speakers on owls, herons, ferruginous hawks, The Montana Bird Hotline, Loons, and a panel discussion on the role of Federal, State, and Private organizations in Nongame Wildlife management and research. Our Montana Audubon Council President, Margaret Adams, will be a participant in the panel discussion.

The evening presentation will be **WILDTHINGS**, by the Vigilante Players, a professional northwestern repertory theatre at Montana State University. **WILDTHINGS**, through juggling, music, and mime, acquaints us with the people and powers involved in the issues surrounding the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

Cost for symposium registration is \$4 per person, which includes admission to **WILDTHINGS**. Persons not registered at the Nongame Symposium can pay \$2 at the door for **WILDTHINGS**, which will start at 7:30 PM, in the main meeting room at the Holiday Inn-Parkside. For more information, contact Dale Becker, 675-2700, ext. 562, Dennis Flath, 994-6354, or Kristi DuBois, 452-5851.

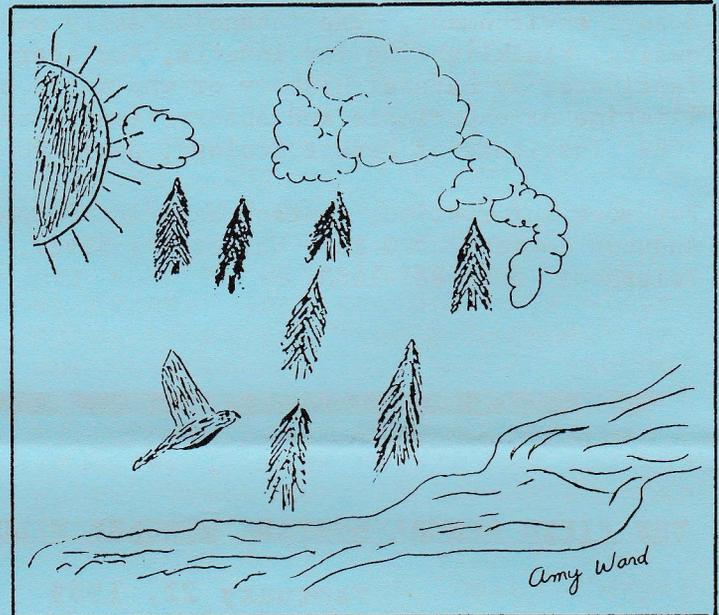
The Nongame Symposium will be followed by the Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society Annual Meeting on February 23 & 24, also at the Holiday Inn, Parkside. The theme for this year's meeting is **The Effects of the 1988 drought and fires on wildlife.**

BIRD STUDY SKINS AND SLIDE COLLECTION: Status Report
Jean Robocker

Flathead Audubon holds both state and federal permits to possess our bird skin collection. The regulations pertaining to bird skin collections are extensive, and the permit is renewable every two years. A state permit holder must first obtain the federal permit. Every year we report to the U.S. Dept. of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, and to the Mt. Dept. of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. The report contains information such as the number of children and adults who view the skins during the year, as well as a list of the study skins in our collection.

The birds have a busy season: in 1988 about 510 children and 320 adults viewed and handled the bird skins during presentations in which the bird skins and slide program were used to further knowledge of and appreciation for bird life in the wild. Here is a list of the bird presentations we gave last year:

Glacier Lilies Extension Homemakers
 Century Club, garden section
 Cross Currents Christian School
 Columbia Falls Lions Club
 Bison Range, teachers workshop
 St. Ignatius Garden Club
 Polson High School
 Cornelius Hedges School
 Glacier Institute
 Thompson Falls School
 Kalispell Rotary International
 Edgerton School
 Kalispell Good Sams
 Polson Middle School
 Montana Wilderness Association Convention
 Elrod School
 Eastside Grange
 Flathead Audubon Society meetings



So you see, our programs are being viewed by many. Perhaps the bird seed sales reflects some of the interest in birding generated by our education activities--and surely some new members have resulted.

Some of the viewer responses are worthy of note: One of the Rotary Club officers referred to the study skins as "North Dakota pheasants"! Some of the school children, a bit squeamish, shudder, "Dead birds!". But everyone is impressed with the beauty of plumage, the size of the hummingbirds and their nests, and the skin preparation.

A number of 1989 presentations are already booked. The Extension Homemakers Spring Break will include **"The Importance of Birds"** March 15 at the Outlaw Inn. And March 21 at the Kalispell Library at 7:00 PM we will show **"Our Spring Arrivals"**. Both will have slides and the study skins and a display of "bird things", and the County Library will have a display all the month of March.

Attention, Cranewatchers!

Audubon's annual River Conference celebrates the arrival of the sandhill cranes on Nebraska's Platte River during their northward migration. This year's conference, held as usual in Kearney, Nebraska, will run from March 16-20. As always, the highlight of the conference will be dawn and sunset trips to the river for spectacular cranewatching. For information, contact Audubon's West Central regional office, 200 South Wind Place, Manhattan, Kan. 66502; (913) 537-4385.

Missouri River Audubon Float Trip

Sponsored by Montana Audubon Council

To benefit Audubon Wildlife Fund of Montana

June 26th - July 1st 1989

For more information contact Lynn Kelly, 905B Fifth Avenue East,
 Polson, Mt. 59860; (406)-883-5797.

Dear Mrs. Robocker

Thank you for coming to our school and talking to us about birds. Those slides were really neat! I also liked being able to touch those birds and those nests. One of the things I learned was how small the humming birds were.

Thanks Again,
Amy Ward

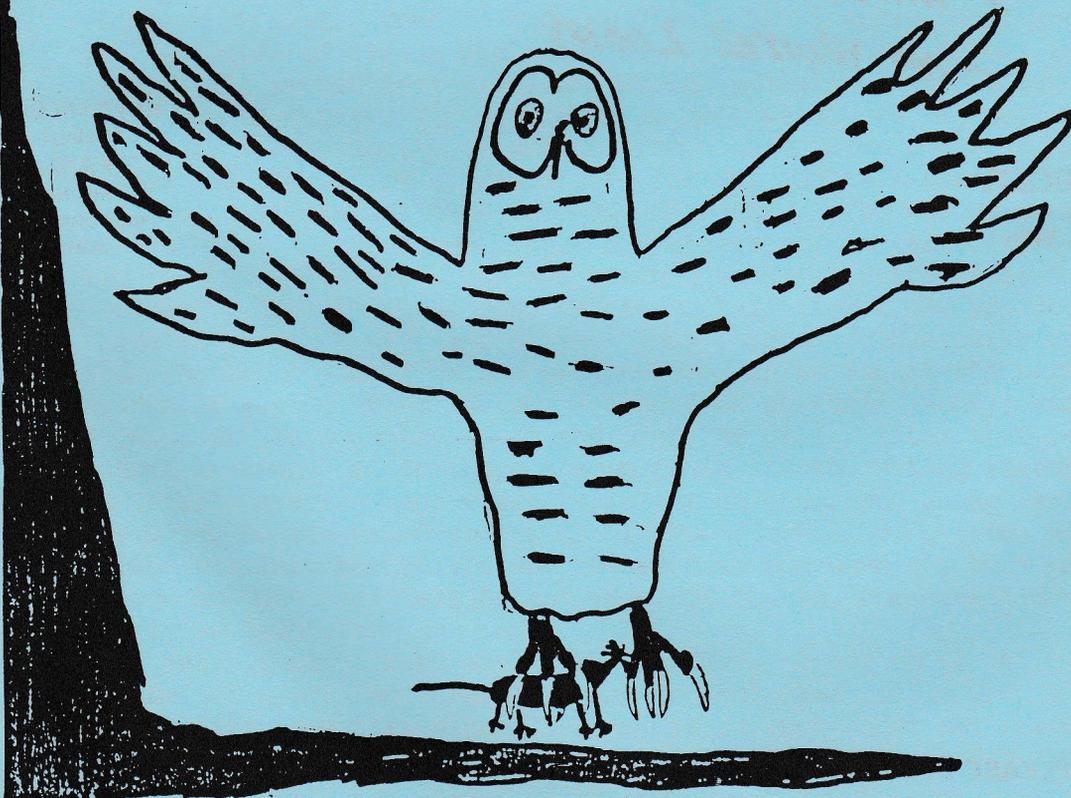
November 1, 1988

Dear Mrs. Robocker,

I really liked the presentation you gave! Especially the stuffed birds. Those owls were really cool. Our group did a report on the Great Gray Owl.

by Lance Casey

Thompson Falls MS



1989 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, Rt.1, Charlo, MT 59825	644-2365
Bob Shennum, 2888 Swan Hwy., Bigfork, MT 59911	837-6208
Lynn Kelly, P.O. Box 2289, Polson, MT 59860	883-5797

CHAIRS

Conservation	Rod Ash, Box 1129, 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, Kalsipell, MT 59901	857-3143
Audubon Adventures/ 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
Program	Brent Michell, 960 Kienas Rd., Kalsipell, MT 59901	756-8130
Schools/Clubs	Jean Robacker, 1655 Montford Road, Kalispell, MT 59901	756-6344

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 _____

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 \$5.00 per year. Our address is Flathead Audubon Society, P.O. Box 715, Bigfork, Montana 59911.

~ MOOSE POOP
~ WATCHABLE WILDLIFE
~ AND WINTER LOONS



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