



# The Pileated Post

VOLUME 14

NUMBER 3

MARCH 1989

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"Spring Birds of the Flathead"  
 Outlaw Inn, 1:00 PM  
 Jean Robocker

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 in the meeting room. 7:30 Business meeting. 8:00 Program: Rick Mase, wildlife biologist with the Mt. Dept. of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, will present his study--**Grizzlies of the South Fork**. Rick is the coordinator for this ten year study of the bears inhabiting the east slope of the Swan Range to Hungry Horse Reservoir. Grizzlies here are being captured and radio collared. Rick will show slides illustrating capture techniques and discuss results of the study thus far.

Gunderson/Flood Benefit, details inside.

"Now is the right time to build bird houses and hang up new ones. Very important too, clean out your established houses of old bird nests--it's healthier for the birds."

## EDITOR'S DESK

Leo Keane

If the weather forecast were as stormy as the wilderness forecast, our lakes and rivers would overflow this year. It seems the debate over wilderness is approaching taxes (our perennial favorite) as Montana's most argued-over issue. Indeed, here in the Flathead Valley the debate has turned divisive and vindictive. It's neighbor against neighbor as the sides trade barbs and accusations. Meanwhile the Accounts Receivables side of the ledger is looking pretty good for our local newspaper and pollster. All that advertising geared to sway public opinion this way or that is simply throwing good money after good money--"Joe Montana" either knows his mind, or doesn't give a hoot. And quite frankly, I think Joe Montana, tiring of the fight, secretly wishes the "wildernuts" and the "timber pigs" would duke it out in private from here on.

As a matter of fact that's exactly what Senator Max Baucus declared in a moment of rare eloquence when asked for his viewpoint recently. Throwing up his hands he said, "I don't know what to do. Maybe it's time the wildernuts and the timber pigs duke it out amongst themselves". Or words to that effect. At any rate, I believe Senator Baucus hit the nail square on the head. Until the two sides reach some accord, it seems unlikely that a Montana Wilderness Bill will go through Congress that anybody can be proud of. More importantly, let's not forget that once a law is on the books, we still have to live with one another. I'm not too keen on greeting a neighbor, or doing business with folks when I've just shoved my opinion down their throat.

Good citizenship suggests that we take responsibility for resolving our differences. It's not up to Big Brother. Obviously, after ten years of controversy we continue to reject that option. No, it seems the ultimate solution may be the hardest one, specifically: a committee of involved citizens who have, 1) let down their guard and accepted a little trust, 2) listened to the other guy's facts and figures, and 3) cooperatively reached their own Montana Wilderness Bill. Then we may proudly take that to Uncle Sam and see if it doesn't fly.



*(Rod Ash is away this month, tying up loose ends in California. In his absence I'll pinch hit in this his monthly column. L.K.)*

### The Chain of Lakes Project

Most of us around these parts have made the drive from Kalispell to Libby via Highway #2. Beautiful country isn't it. Particularly that area of sparkling lakes known as the Thompson Chain. From McGregor Lake on the east to Loon Lake on the western end, these glacial lakes form the headwaters of the Thompson River. Probably many of us have spent a holiday or two there, fishing the crystal waters, enjoying the abundant bird and wild life, or just loafing around the old campsite. Maybe you've always assumed this was public property--National or State forest lands. Not so. The land around these 20 some lakes and ponds, about 5,000 acres, is all owned by Champion International and Plum Creek Timber. These two companies have managed their timber holdings here while keeping access for public use. It is a system that's worked well for many years, but changes are afoot. The companies are preparing to sell their property around the Thompson Chain.

Enter Flathead Wildlife, the Flathead Land Trust and the Nature Conservancy. These organizations are spearheading the drive to acquire the property as public domain, preferably as National Forest lands. The alternative, sale of these lands on the open market, would inevitably lead to piecemeal development, subdivision, and commercialization and effectively bring to an end free public use of the waterways and forest lands, as well as jeopardize the natural qualities and wildlife resources of the Thompson Chain. Clearly, all conservationists and recreationists must rally to support public acquisition of the Chain Lakes. Flathead Audubon at our last Board of Directors meeting voted to go on record in support of the Thompson Chain of Lakes Project, and we hope to carry the ball in promoting the project among our membership.

To this end, we ask the following: Pat Williams has declared his support for the project and promised to help get the legislative process rolling toward acquisition. It is very important that Congressman Williams and Senator Max Baucus hear from interested citizens. Write them and voice your support for public acquisition of the Thompson Chain. Addresses are:

**Honorable Pat Williams**  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2457 Rayburn Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

**Senator Max Baucus**  
United States Senate  
SH-706, Hart Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Additionally, send a photocopy of your letter to:

**John Mumma, Regional Forester**  
U.S. Forest Service  
P.O. Box 7669  
Missoula, MT 59807

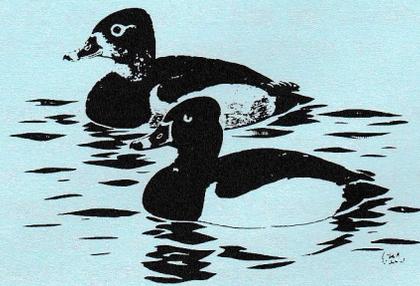
and

**Flathead Wildlife**  
P.O. Box 4  
Kalispell, MT 59901

Let's preserve the Thompson Chain of Lakes for public use, and for the enjoyment of future generations.

#### Nature Catalog

Richardson Bay Audubon Center has just published its 1989 mail-order catalog of field and site guides for birding, video and audio cassettes of birds, and environmental education books. The catalog is free. If you would like one please send a 25¢ stamp to: The Book Nest, RBAC, 376 Greenwood Beach Rd., Tiburon, Calif. 94920.



## Montana's Mountain Lion: Secretive Denizen of Wild Country

There are 28 species of small cats and this number includes the three wild cats common to North America: the bobcat, lynx and mountain lion. The small cats can hiss, purr and screech, but they cannot roar. When at rest, small cats tuck their forepaws beneath them and wrap their tails around their bodies. Small cats feed in a crouched position.

The mountain lion is the largest of the world's small cats. Mature males average 130-160 pounds, females are about 40 percent smaller. Once the mountain lion had the widest distribution of any land mammal in the Western Hemisphere--from northern British Columbia to the tip of South America. In the United States the mountain lion has been eliminated from almost three-fourths of its former range. It has survived because of the presence of wild country and its adaptable secretive ways.

Mountain lions "hole up" in secure cover during daylight hours and are most active at night. They have very large eyes with binocular and color vision. Their night vision is about six times sharper than human night vision. They also have large ears which effectively funnel sound to the inner ear. White-tail and mule deer are mainstays of a mountain lion's diet. A mature female with young in winter will consume a deer every four or five days.

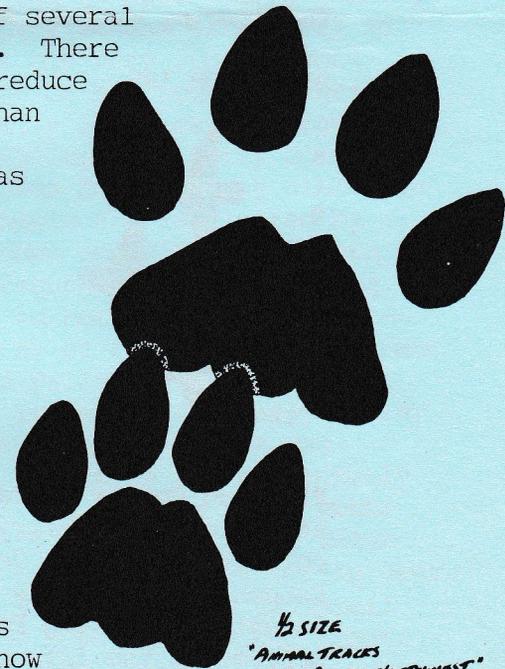
Their survival success is also based on the establishment and maintenance of a territory. The solitary cat develops exclusive access to prey within a specific home range. Given an abundant and stable prey base, resident cats will occupy a distinct area year after year. Such long-term familiarity with a hunting area gives the cat a distinct survival advantage.

Mountain lions will develop a large summer range (100 square miles or so for males, half as much for females) and a much smaller winter territory when deer are at lower elevations and more concentrated. The territory of a male usually overlaps the territories of several females but does not overlap the territory of another male. There is a lot of territorial marking and avoidance behavior to reduce conflict. Mountain lions have evolved a "flight" rather than "fight" behavior and are not aggressive toward humans.

Most of our current understanding of mountain lions has come from research over the last twenty-five years. This work was pioneered by Dr. Maurice Hornocker of the University of Idaho and the Idaho Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit.

Recently, mountain lion numbers have increased in response to an increase in deer numbers throughout the western United States. They also have benefited from controlled hunting programs and a shift in popular attitudes that have made the animal a desirable game species. Most states, including Montana, have adopted a very conservative mountain lion hunting program. At present, however, we know very little about how cat populations respond to harvest pressure. Mountain lions are so secretive that good survey techniques have yet to be developed. As a result, wildlife managers now depend on annual harvest figures and on sex and age information from the harvest to keep track of the mountain lion resource, but still much remains to be learned.

The North American mountain lion population hit a low in the 1950's. But populations are now on the rebound and, given a support system of wild country, a good prey base of wild game, and people who understand and appreciate the animal, the mountain lion should continue to increase.



1/2 SIZE  
"ANIMAL TRACKS  
OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST"  
THE MOUNTAINEERS, 1931

# AUDUBON BRIEFS



...**Benefit dinner and dance** for Cari Gunderson and Joe Flood whose home burned to the ground. Cari and Joe are the summer Wilderness Rangers in the Mission Mountains Wilderness. Their home, in the Swan Valley near Condon, burned and all of their possessions were lost while they were away in Missoula. The benefit will be Saturday, March 11 at the Swan Valley Community Hall at Condon. There is a spaghetti dinner from 5:00-7:00, an auction at 8:00 with the dance following. Contact Nancy McGrew at 754-2347, Star Route Box 1031, Condon, MT 59826 to either make a contribution for the auction or a direct donation.

...**More on the Christmas Bird Count:** Bob Ballou who coordinated the Ninepipe National Wildlife Refuge Christmas Bird Count relays this note---"The count this year on December 31 was our most successful by most any measure: weather--mild with good visibility and only a light breeze; observers--23, nearly double any previous year and most of them highly competent birders; total species--69, ten more than our previous best in 1984; new species--one, a northern pygmy owl, and we saw eight of these; total individuals--22,963 birds, as against the earlier record of 12,220 in 1983. Best of all, I think everyone had a good time. Many thanks to all the expert help from the Five Valleys and Flathead Chapters."

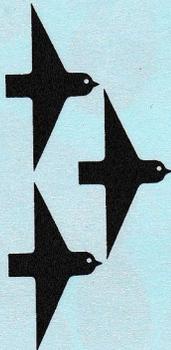
Meanwhile, here in the Flathead, Jean Robocker is making a compilation of our chapter's Christmas Bird Counts for the past ten years. When complete, we will print this CBC Log for our reader's interest.

...**Nongame Wildlife Raffle.** Sponsored by the Montana Audubon Council this raffle will benefit the State Nongame Wildlife Fund. Tickets may be purchased for \$1.00 each at our March meeting, or by mail with a check payable to Flathead Audubon Society, PO Box 715, Bigfork, MT 59911. First prize is a solid walnut table valued at \$650, and second prize is a Ned Smith bald eagle print value at \$500. The drawing will be April 29 in Miles City at the Audubon Spring Council meeting.

## ...BIRDATHON '89.

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Last year Audubon chapters nationwide contributed a record amount to the Audubon Cause through the BIRDATHON. This year 220 chapters hope to raise over \$300,000, money which goes directly toward funding Audubon programs and sanctuaries. At the Flathead Chapter, first of all we need to recruit a BIRDATHON '89 coordinator, someone with a fair amount of commitment and organizational skills. Maybe someone like you! If you've thought about becoming more active with the Flathead Chapter, this is the entry level job you've been waiting for. Robin can get you started. Give her a call at 837-4294. She's got a packet of materials that will make this a fun and rewarding job for you.

...**Flathead County Library display.** Jean Robocker has organized the March display at the county library in Kalispell which features our Chapter's bird skin collection. Also, Jean will give a program at the Spring Break of the Flathead Extension Homemakers on March 15 at the Outlaw Inn in Kalispell. Her program is entitled **Spring Birds of the Flathead**. There are many interesting programs offered at the Extension Homemakers' Spring Break all day long for a \$3.00 cover charge. Jean's "Spring Birds" begins at 1:00 PM.

...**Glasses, sweatshirts and field guides,** these are a few of our favorite things but still we'd like to sell some. The glasses are fine drinking goblets etched with famous Flathead birds, \$5 per each. Sweats and T's sell for \$13 and \$8 respectively. We have them in blue and raspberry and inscribed with our new osprey logo. The best field guide on the market, The National Geographic Society Field Guide to the Birds of North America sells for \$18. Any of these items are available at our general meetings, or may be ordered by calling Robin at 837-4294.

...**The Montana Native Plant Society**, Flathead Chapter, meets on the third Wednesday of each month from September through May at 7:00 PM in the Conference Room of Montana Power, 890 Meridian Road in Kalispell. All interested persons are cordially invited to attend the meetings. The programs coming up are as follows:

March 15: Jerry Berner from Four Winds Nursery in Polson will speak on "Gardening with Native Plants".

April 19: The Nature Conservancy presents Ralph Waladt, the summer naturalist at Pine Butte Swamp, speaking on rare plant protection efforts in Montana. Also, Ralph will introduce a new local area of concern, "The Whitefish Spruce Swamp".

May 17: Rachel Potter from Glacier Park will speak on "Revegetation Efforts in the Park".

For information on field trips or membership in the Montana Native Plant Society please call Pattie Brown at 837-5018.

...**Thank you.** Flathead Audubon was the recipient of a memorial gift of \$25 in memory of Ruth Ryan of Billings by her niece Marilyn Wilgocki of Downers Grove, Illinois. The memorial was delivered by Mr and Mrs Ben Ryan of West Glacier.

We also take this opportunity to thank Tom Ulrich of West Glacier who made a significant contribution of photographs for our bird slide collection. Tom is a professional wildlife photographer and by all accounts these photos are a remarkable addition to our collection.

...**Bird sightings:** You are doing a good job of calling in those interesting bird sightings folks. We like to here from you, so keep those eyes peeled and let us know what you see. Bernie Tingle of West Shore reported 19 **bald eagles** feeding on that flock of **American coots** entrapped in the ice of Flathead Lake early in February. Loren Kreck of Columbia Falls told us about one very lonely **coot** trying to make friends with a floating log out in front of his house on the Flathead River. Many **robins** in the valley already. Elly Jones saw a large flock lingering near bare ground by the Courthouse East in Kalispell. Betty Rose saw eight **robins** at her home and Jean Robocker had one. Jean Robocker may also have the most interesting bird feeder around. On a daily basis she is visited by 175 **red-wing blackbirds** and about 75 **American goldfinches** as well as **flickers** and **ruffed grouse**. **Sharp-shinned hawks** and a **pygmy owl** frequently swing by for a quick meal. Jean invites any interested birders down to her home on the Flathead River for a cup of tea and a fascinating hour or so of feeder watching. Her phone is 756-6344. Here's a most unusual sighting. A fellow called in to report two **flying squirrels** feeding at his daughter's feeder in the Happy Valley area near Whitefish. Not only did she get a good look at them, but it was shortly before midnight! They are strictly nocturnal creatures and so probably more abundant than we expect. Robin and Joe Magaddino had a **snipe** and a **water ouzel** out in the creek that runs past their home east of Bigfork. These water birds seem to be surviving the long winter just fine. Speaking of wintering over, a flock of about 40 **tundra swans** have remained on the Flathead below Kalispell since December. Robin Magadinno and Jean Robocker, who have watched the flock, are quite certain there are three **trumpeter swans** with them. And finally, you remember the **moose** that paid us a visit in the last newsletter? Well they have since been dubbed Margurite and Martha, the cow and calf moose, the moose that came to dinner--we can't get rid of them. They have been in our yard, or in our neighborhood for over a month now and to tell you the truth, they have stretched out their welcome. We could go on and on with moose stories, but to put it in a nutshell let's just say we won't have to prune any of our shrubs or small trees this spring! That's life out here in the wild West. If you have any bird, or wildlife, sightings you'd like to share with your fellow readers, call the newsletter editor, Leo Keane, at 862-5807 and we'll print it.



### MARCH FIELD TRIP

**March 18, Saturday:** Those interested in cleaning out bluebird boxes in the Ronan area on this date should contact Art Aylesworth, during the day at 676-0300. Art has been building and maintaining bluebird trails for both mountain and western bluebirds in the Mission Valley and across Montana. This will be a great opportunity to learn some tips for placing your own bluebird houses, as well as a chance to spot these beautiful spring arrivals.

Some of the other trips we're planning for this spring and summer include:

Wild Horse Island of Flathead Lake.

The Red Bench Fire in Glacier Park.

The Raptor Room bird rehabilitation clinic.

A Warbler Walk during the migration.

If you have any ideas for field trips or would volunteer to lead one (or more!) please contact Gail Leonard at the March meeting or by phone (862-5807) no later than March 20. You do not have to be an expert at bird identification, just willing to share your knowledge of an area with fellow bird and wildlife watchers.

### TV Special Looks at Perishing Platte

Every year, in March, half a million sandhill cranes—80 percent of the world's entire sandhill population—stop over in the Platte River in Nebraska on their way from their wintering grounds in the south to their nesting grounds in northern Canada. Nowhere else is there such a gathering. Dean of birders Roger Tory Peterson has called it "one of the wonders of the world."

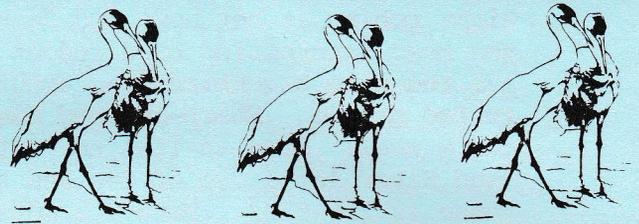
"Crane River," the newest Audubon Television Special, takes viewers to this rare and awesome happening. It also takes a hard look at the problems that threaten to make the crane spectacle a thing of the past.

The historic Platte River was described by early explorers as "a mile wide and a foot deep." It was a lifeline for settlers and wildlife alike. But today the river's flow has been reduced by nearly 70 percent. Cranes and other waterfowl are crowded into increasingly tight stretches of river. If some of the dozens of proposed water projects in the river basin are built, the once-great prairie river will virtually dry up.

Saving the Platte River is one of National Audubon's high-priority campaigns. Don't miss Audubon Television's program on this vital issue. "Crane River" can be seen on SuperStation TBS on the following dates:

- Sunday, May 28 at 10:00 p.m. (Eastern)
- Saturday, June 3 at 10:05 a.m. (Eastern)
- Sunday, June 11 at 8:00 p.m. (Pacific)
- Saturday, June 17 at 8:05 a.m. (Eastern).

The special will air again in August on PBS stations. All dates and times are subject to change, so check your local listings.



#### ELECTIONS REGIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Two years ago each National Audubon member was given the opportunity to vote for a regional representative to the NAS Board of Directors. The term of our elected representative, Harriet Marble of Chester, Montana, is now drawing to a close and we are asked to vote again. This time, however, we will vote as a chapter. We have been assigned one vote, based on our membership of less than 500 persons. This is the first of two notices about the elections.

A brief description of the candidates follows. After voting for one, please clip the ballot and mail to Flathead Audubon, PO Box 715, Bigfork, MT 59911. After we tally the votes, the Flathead Chapter will send our selection into the Regional Office.

**Harriet M. Marble**

I am a member of the Upper Missouri Audubon Chapter in Great Falls. I am an active member of the Montana Audubon Council serving as President for three years, and presently helping with fund raising projects for the Montana Audubon Wildlife Fund and serving as representative to the Waterton-Glacier Ecosystem Coalition.

My master's degree is in wildlife management from the University of Montana. For two years I was a seasonal naturalist at Glacier National Park. I have been appointed to two state councils by the Governor. I served six years (two terms) on the Montana Environmental Quality Council representing the public. I also served on the Montana Fish and Game Non-game Advisory Council working to establish nongame programs. Through the years I have served on the following boards: The League of Women Voters of Montana (natural resources chairperson); the Montana Environmental Information Center; and Chester Public Schools.

I will bring to the Board: two years experience on the National Audubon Board; visitations to State Councils in the Rocky Mountain Region (AZ, CO, MT, WY); familiarity with chapter concerns through your newsletters; and an understanding of the Regional issues.

My goals include the hiring of more staff in our regional office so that our chapters can receive more services to further the Audubon Cause. A stronger regional office will enable ideas and information to flow between the "grass-roots" and National Audubon. I would also like to see improvements in membership management, as well as clarification of the direction of NAS publications.

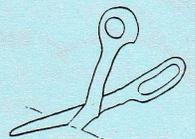
**Randall L. Gray**

Randy has been a member of the National Audubon Society for 19 years. He has a B.A. and M.A. in biology and is presently working on a PhD in wildlife ecology, natural resources, and environmental policy at the University of Arizona.

Randy worked for the California Dept. of Fish and Game for two years, and for the last 12 years has worked as a biologist, environmental specialist, and district conservationist for the USDA Soil Conservation Service. For the past four years he has assisted the Navajo and Tohono O'odham Indian Nations in developing conservation programs for wildlife, erosion control, range management and environmental education. He has also been a part-time instructor with two colleges and one university.

Randy has served as conference chairman and steering committee member in the formulation of international and regional conferences on riparian issues, captive propagation of reptiles and amphibians, and ecological field studies. He has a strong commitment to conservation education and has taught numerous workshops for teachers.

In 1987 Randy received the Arizona Governor's Award for Soil Conservationist of the Year for his involvement in conservation and environmental education. In addition to his professional pursuits he is interested in the impacts of overpopulation, the global loss of biological diversity, and the protection and management of riparian areas and other wetlands.



**Regional Representative to the National Audubon Society  
Board of Directors. Please vote for one.**

**HARRIET M. MARBLE (Incumbent)** \_\_\_\_\_

**RANDALL L. GRAY** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail to: Flathead Audubon Society, PO Box 715, Bigfork, Montana 59911.**

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, Kalsipell, MT 59901	756-6344

National Audubon Society

CHAPTER  
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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

FLATHEAD AUDUBON N 54 7XCH

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.

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*- Election Ballot, page 7*  
*- Mountain Lions and Bird Sightings*



FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY

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