



The Pileated Post

VOLUME 15

NUMBER 4

APRIL 1990

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All along the backwater,
Through the rushes tall,
Ducks are a-dabbling,
Up tails all!

Kenneth Grahame
The Wind in the Willows

BOARD OF DIRECTORS DINNER MEETING, 5:00 PM at the Korner Kitchen in Bigfork. Nominations for next year's officers.

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING, Flathead Bank of Bigfork in the meeting room. 7:30 Business Meeting (all welcome). 8:00 Program: In the spirit of Earth Day Flathead Audubon presents, **The Wonderful World of Garbage**", a panel discussion featuring three of the Flathead's garbage specialists. Gary Stempins, the county landfill director; Bruce McCallum, the county extension agent; and Dan Atkinson, director of Flathead Industries Recycling, will cover the topic from landfill problems to composting to the future of recycling. We look forward to a lively discussion!

FIELD TRIP: Lower Valley Waterfowl Excursion, with Dan Casey. Meet at 8:00 AM at the Ramada Inn (Leavengoods) for a car tour of sloughs, ponds and backwaters. Bring a lunch as the trip lasts till about 2:00. Mucho ducks!

FIELD TRIP: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Wetlands Tour, beginning at Smith Lake. Call 755-4375 for reservations. This is an Earth Day activity. See the Earth Week calendar in this newsletter for many more events celebrating **EARTH DAY 1990**.

EDITOR'S DESK

Leo Keane

There goes one woodland that the thrushes won't be returning to this spring. As I write this I'm listening to the whine of chainsaws and rumble of skidders from a logging operation down the road. It is a small woodlot, a few acres, but strikingly beautiful, and a picture-book example of forest succession. We (my dog and me) walk down that road frequently and I always enjoyed the view of the forest edge where the birch and firs overarched an old horse pasture. Pheasants ran a trail along that edge. In June I'd often hear the bubbling song of Swainson's thrush rising up out of the green shadows. Less than a month ago I followed moose tracks into the thicket and discovered chickadee holes and pileated woodpecker sign--and red paint sprayed across most of the tree trunks. I knew then there would be a change. Now, in another day or two, what was a life-giving forest will be hauled away to the mill.

Let me say that while I do acknowledge the right of a landowner to gain a profit off his property, and I can certainly appreciate the value to the logging contractor of this small timber sale, I can't help but be saddened for the change. I know too much. I know these woodlots usually don't grow back to trees--not this close to town. I know the habitat these trees offered is irreplaceable; the Swainson's thrush won't simply fly off to some other woodland home, rather, there will be so many fewer nesting thrush this year, that many less cavities for chickadee or pileated, and for me, only the memory of a peaceful place along my walk. Finally, I know it is only a few acres, but the way we reduce the richness of the earth is acre by acre.

These are the footprints we are leaving behind: cleared forests, bulldozed wetlands, acres of free parking. Since we are all participants in this frantic consumption of the earth's treasures, there must be some of us who begin to tread more lightly. As for me, I like to think the song of the thrush in June is as valuable as all the lumber on my place. I intend to plant some more trees--and save a place for wildlife.



BYE-BYE, SONGBIRD

Howard Youth



North America's migratory song-birds don't have much to sing about these days. In fact, in some regions barely a peep has been heard. That's because the number of flycatchers, orioles, tanagers, vireos, warblers and other song-

birds has declined steadily since the late 1970's.

These small birds naturally lead dangerous lives, suffering high mortality from the rigors of migration and the toll taken by predators. Undisturbed breeding and wintering areas offered them rest and a chance to rebuild populations. Now, all of that is changing.

Such familiar species as the wood thrush--which breeds in shady deciduous forests in North America and winters in Mexican and Central American tropical forests--have undergone dramatic declines over the past 10 years. The wood thrush's flute-like song has been well-known throughout its breeding range, but the spreading silence caused by a 40 percent drop troubles biologists.

More than 120 songbird species migrate between temperate North America and tropical American countries. Their conspicuous absence is a key indicator of unsettling habitat destruction at both ends of the commute. To the south, tropical woodlands are being razed for pasture and cropland; to the north, real estate development is gobbling up temperate and coniferous forests, which are the only nesting areas for most migratory songbirds.

A study released by the U.S. National Academy of Sciences (NAS) in June shows falling populations among many of North America's beloved songbirds. Of 56 species surveyed from 1978 to 1987, 70 percent experienced declines. Many songbird populations are dropping 1 to 2 percent each year. "It doesn't sound like much, but if it is a persistent loss, that percentage could be important,"

said Russell Greenberg, a researcher at the National Zoological Park in Washington D.C., and a coauthor of the NAS study with Chandler S. Robbins.

Even though migratory birds are more adaptable to habitat change than their stay-at-home cousins, the rate of deforestation is more than they can handle. Deforestation in Central and South America marches on at 1.5 percent, or roughly 25 million acres, per year. Though deforestation is more accelerated in the tropics, development to the north is slicing away at nesting areas, particularly around cities. A U.S. Forest Service study of forest depletion over the past 30 years shows that half of the forested land in areas such as those surrounding Washington, D.C., is gone.

For now, though, most migratory songbirds are widespread and relatively common. "We're still talking about millions of birds," said Greenberg. But already the survival of a few songbird species with limited ranges is threatened.

"There are going to be huge decreases in populations

and some will vanish altogether," predicts

Chandler S.

Robbins, a

wildlife

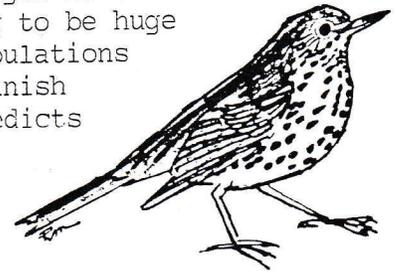
biologist at

the U.S. Fish

and Wildlife Service's Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, Maryland.

As long as forests continue to fall, there seems to be no quick fix. "The first line of defense," suggests Greenberg, "is to set up large forest reserves." Belize, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Mexico have already set aside large tracts of forest, but this land represents only a fraction of the woodland needed to stabilize songbird populations. Regulations that encourage the maintenance of forest corridors, hedgerows and even increased fallow periods could provide suitable habitat in both the tropics and to the north with relatively little economic impact on farmers or ranchers.

In the long run, saving songbirds will require wise and widespread forest management, which would also ensure the preservation of ecosystems and natural resources crucial to the survival of countless other animal and plant species.



(Reprinted with permission from *World-Watch*, the magazine of the Worldwatch Institute.)

FROM THE BOSQUE
Bob Ballou



In last month's newsletter we touched on what Nancy and I are doing as volunteers down here at the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge in New Mexico. This month I'd like to give you an update on the plight of our wintering flock of whooping cranes here on the Bosque.

The eight whooping cranes on the refuge this winter, along with the other four elsewhere in the Rio Grande Valley and the one in Mexico, face an uncertain future.

One of these futures is that they will all gradually grow old and die without producing, thus ending the exciting and hopeful experiment started 15 years ago. The dream has been to create a new flock of whoopers by having greater sandhill cranes at Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Idaho serve as foster parents. Until a year ago eggs from both the whoopers ancestral breeding grounds in Woods Buffalo National Park in the Northwest Territories, and from the Fish and Wildlife Service Patuxent Research Center in Maryland were brought to Grays Lake and placed in sandhill crane nests.

The foster sandhill crane parents did their part marvelously. The eggs hatched, the chicks were raised, and they followed their "parents" down the migration path to the cranes' regular wintering area centered at the Bosque Refuge. Expectations ran high as the population of whoopers topped 30 birds. Shortly, though, there was cause for worry. The whoopers were not pairing as they matured when reaching four or five years old. They still aren't, and drought at Grays Lake plus mortality from power lines and other causes have whittled the Rio Grande population down to its present size--12 birds. Additionally, it seems that only the adult male whoopers are returning to Grays Lake Refuge for the breeding season. The adult females have chosen to spend their summers elsewhere, mostly in Wyoming.

Another possible future may be in store for this small flock. Almost a year ago the decision was made to discontinue providing whooping crane eggs for sandhill cranes to hatch and raise. Instead, an adult female whooper from Patuxent was released last spring at Grays Lake. She almost immediately paired and mated with one of her kind, but no eggs were produced. Then last fall she refused to migrate, evidently never having learned that behavior as a captive bird. Her mate was eventually forced by weather to fly south, and she disappeared.

At the Bosque this winter attempts have been made to capture one of the adult females wintering here, but so far with no luck. If successfully captured, she will be held in a large enclosure near Grays Lake until spring and then released. Since she has already migrated a number of times, that should be no problem; but will she pair, lay eggs, and successfully raise youngsters? We Hope!

As a point of interest: visitors to the Bosque frequently see six of the whooping cranes mixed in with the thousands of sandhills feeding in the cornfields or nesting on the marshes.

We are looking forward to our return home to the Flathead, and a beautiful Nine Pipes spring.

(Bob and Nancy Ballou live near Ronan, Montana, within earshot of Nine Pipe NWR)

BIRD SIGHTINGS
From Around the Flathead

This could have been called "the winter of redpolls". Many folks were visited by **redpolls** at their feeders. Typically these little birds winter quite farther north, but perhaps severe weather up on the tundra drove them down. This is called an "eruption", when large numbers of a species invade an area. Some of the early redpoll reports came from Jeff Cornell of Whitefish, Elly Jones of Swan Lake, and Jan Metzmaker, also of Whitefish. More recently, a hundred or so of the little vagrants have brightened our feeders too. At close range a redpoll looks as though he's been dipped in raspberry juice! And makes a junco look big!

Robin Magaddino sent in a note describing a flock of 40 strutting **wild turkeys** showing up at her kitchen window each morning, bright and early. She said two of the big toms sport beards so long they continually step on them, and several smaller toms drop in and out of what looks like a circle dance at an Indian pow-wow. Robin had a **robin** debut on February 26, and a **Townsend solitaire** the day before that.

The first **song sparrow** of the year goes to Steve Zwisler who lives bankside of the Whitefish River and heard the song along about mid-February.

Rick Mace--goose hunter extraordinaire (so we must believe this report)--identified an albino **Canada goose** late this winter near his home on the Lower Flathead.

We've had lots of excitement around our feeders the past few weeks, besides the redpolls. A pair of **flickers**, one **red-shafted** and one **yellow-shafted**, come to our suet feeder at 6:30 sharp each morning, and are now investigating the flicker box which we quickly built and put up near by. This, by the way, is the first yellow-shafted flicker I've seen on this side of the Divide. Anybody else? Interbreeding of the two races is apparently common where the ranges overlap, but the yellow-shafted is not supposed to occur this far west. Also from woodpecker-land, a beautiful drake **piledated** dropped by one day for a taste of civilization. What a sight! And to my ultimate satisfaction, a rooster **ring-necked pheasant** has wandered into the backyard (no doubt lured by our vast "Acres for Wildlife", and all the commotion around the bird feeder) and now returns daily for millet and sunflower seeds which he shares patiently with several **varied thrushes** and Skippy the wonder-squirrel. What a riot watching Skippy play peek-a-boo with the rooster and finally working up the nerve for an attack. He took a flying leap off a stump, and then tumbled head over teakettle when the pheasant ducked! Brazen squirrel. The colors of a ring-necked in afternoon sun are absolutely breathtaking. We're hoping he graces our yard for a long time. Not so graceful were the two **crows** which dropped in today, also a first at our feeder.

Finally, I'd like to report the first (for me) **tree swallows** of the spring which we observed dipping and diving over Prospect Creek as we returned from a day afield on March 25.

Leo Keane

Montana Audubon Council
Raffle Prizes

1. Nikon binoculars (7 X 20, Travellite II).
2. Hummingbird of the United States poster (signed by artist John O'Neill).
3. 3-volume set of Master Guide to Birding.
4. 5-video bird guides: Audubon Society's VideoGuide to Birds of North America.
5. A Field Guide to Little-Known and Seldom-Seen Birds of North America.
6. The Bird Finder's 3-year Notebook.
7. Canvass pouch to hold field guides (by The Nature Company).
8. A ceramic pie plate by Montana artist Sara Toubman.
9. A beautiful goldfinch enamel lapel pin.



BUY YOUR RAFFLE TICKET
AT THE MEETING \$1 EACH
OR \$5 FOR SIX. OR CALL
ROD ASH AT 754-2289.

FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY 1990 SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Now in its fifth 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 "Rivers of Ice" to "After the Fires" and from butterflies to bird watching, story-telling to sketching. All of the instructors are chosen for their expertise, dedication and ability to share their knowledge. There are over 25 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 1990 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 May 1 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:

Bob Shennum 837-6208

Robin Magaddino 837-4294



APPLICATION

NAME _____ BIRTH DATE _____

ADDRESS _____ PHONE _____

COURSE NAME _____

INSTRUCTOR _____

DATE _____ COST _____

ON A SEPERATE SHEET PLEASE 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 HORSE REMINDER... Our annual field trip to Wild Horse Island in Flathead Lake is scheduled for Sunday, May 20. This is a fundraiser for the Montana Audubon Wildlife Fund. The cost is \$12.00. Call Gail Leonard 862-5807 (evenings) for reservations and instructions. Pray for sunshine!

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Please welcome these new members:

From Kalispell--Dondi Aastrom, Karen Dittman, W. Mumford.
From Whitefish--Mrs. Roberta Hildner, Bonnie Hodges, A. Kinney, Jay Shaver, Richard Smith, and Fred Warf.
From Libby--Communities for a Great Northwest, Douglas Griffiths.
From Swan Lake--M/M Robert Holmes.
From Polson--Kieth and Blanche Johnson.
From Thompson Falls--Michael Mann.
From Bigfork--Peggy Russel.
From Charlo--C.E. Davis.
From West Glacier--G.R. Gregory.
From Troy--Theresa Jones.
From Elmo--Mary Ann Mushel.

Our faithful renewals:

Barbara Baxter, Mike Brennan, Roy Dimond, Phyllis Falconer, Gail Fulsaas, K.M. Grant, Nanda Ten Ham, Mindy Heinz, Flora Mae, Brent Mitchell, David Nesbitt, Randy Schwickert, Pam Smith, Elaine Snyder, I.M. Stryker, G.A. Warren, Laura Weaver, Bradford Whiting, G. Wilson, Pat Allison, Frederick Noel, Nellie Solien, William Swanson, Sherry Whig-taker, and Stephen Irwin MD.

Transfers into our chapter, please welcome:

R. Stephen Irwin MD of Polson and Ellen Sullivan of Columbia Falls.

June Ash
Membership Chair

HELP WANTED COLUMN

Earth Day Volunteers

A conservation organization with a fairly low profile in the Flathead is the Nature Conservancy. Dedicated worldwide to the preservation of natural diversity by protecting jeopardized areas of high ecological value, it is noteworthy in Northwest Montana for the presence of such preserves as Pine Butte Swamp near Choteau, Swan River Oxbow in the Swan Valley, Dancing Prairie near Eureka, and most recently Safe Harbor Marsh near Polson.

The Montana Nature Conservancy, which has its Big Sky Field Office in Helena, will be participating in the Earth Day activities with an exhibit at the Kalispell Center Mall during the week of April 22-26. Volunteers are needed to help with the monitoring of the exhibit table for as much time as can be spared during the mall hours of 10 AM to 9 PM (11-5 on Sunday).

Many of us have memberships in several different conservation organization like the Nature Conservancy and Flathead Audubon. If you are not already committed to some Earth Day activity, you are urged to get involved. It can really be a lot of fun, and one usually winds up getting more out of such activity than one puts into it--not the least of which is a great inner feeling. Please try to spare some time to help man an Earth Day exhibit. Call me!

Ed Prach
862-1350

Bird Banding

Our banding site for Monitoring Avian Productivity is ready to go. M.A.P. is a Flathead Audubon project being initiated this spring on the Nature Conservancy lands adjacent to the Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge and will be tabulating the productivity of certain song-bird species through trapping and banding. The site is riparian woodland/meadowland with shallow spring creeks. A few items we still need are: old boards to cover wet spots along the trail, a picnic table for a munching place and for recording data, and a few folks (soon) to help set up the nets for a practice run. This will take a few hours some weekend in late April or early May. Banding will then commence in mid-May and continue every two weeks through mid-August. Anyone interested in helping our project, let us know.
Robin Magaddino 837-4294, Elly Jones 886-2244

National Audubon Society Chapter Membership Application

Yes, I'd like to join.

Please enroll me as a member of the National Audubon Society and of my local chapter. Please send AUDUBON magazine and my membership card to the address below.

My check for \$20 is enclosed.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Please make all checks payable to the National Audubon Society.

Send this application and your check to:

National Audubon Society
Chapter Membership Data Center
P.O. Box 51001 • Boulder, Colorado 80322-1001
LOCAL CHAPTER



Flathead Audubon

N54

Local Chapter Code
7XCHA

Purple Loosestrife Alert

The following is a draft memo from Ray Washtak, Assistant Manager, N.W. Montana Wetland District, Creston, to Barbara Mullin, Montana State Weed Coordinator, Helena. Mr. Washtak is soliciting support to prohibit the sale of Lythrum stock (purple loosestrife) in Montana, and urges Audubon members to keep aware of this effort.

Dear Ms. Mullin,

It has come to our attention that Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) is gaining notoriety in our state. Its impact on wetlands and associated water bodies is well known, a fact which we are sure you are aware of due to its recent discovery and applied control measures undertaken in Lake County.

At a recent meeting of the Committee for Rural Development (a group of state, federal and private timber companies concerned with the prolific spread of weeds in Flathead County) it was made known to us that *Lythrum salicaria* does exist in Flathead County. At the present time its known locations are limited to commercial greenhouses or ornamental gardens. A few *Lythrum* plants were discovered along Ashley Creek in 1988 but have apparently been eradicated due to the efforts of several individuals.

As agencies concerned about the quality of our natural resources in Flathead County we feel that *Lythrum* has the potential to become the equivalent of spotted knapweed by escaping from these locations. Its impact on the 320 lakes, 1100 miles of streams and countless acres of wetlands in this county could be devastating. We are therefore encouraging the Dept. of Agriculture to prohibit the sale and planting of *Lythrum* plants within the state of Montana. Other states have resorted to legislative action in order to halt the spread of this prolific weed. Minnesota now spends \$5 million annually on control measures. In Montana we have the unique opportunity to take action to prevent potential serious outbreaks before they occur by prohibiting the sale of all *Lythrum salicaria* and all varieties of *Lythrum* stock.

We are aware of your active involvement in control efforts in both Lake and Cascade counties and commend your actions. We would also appreciate your support in this matter. Our state and its natural resources will surely be the benefactor.

Sincerely,
Ray Washtak

WHAT ON EARTH ARE WE GOING TO DO WITH OUR GARBAGE?
Lecture by Ferne Cohen, Lone Pine Visitor Center
April 18, 10 AM to Noon, FREE

What is Earth Day. Presentation of Calendar of activities scheduled in the Flathead to celebrate Earth Day. Discussion of recycling and environmentally sound practices. Handouts provided. Bring sack lunch.

TONGASS TIMBER REFORM ACT

The U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee has adopted compromise legislation reforming timber management on the Tongass National Forest in Southeast Alaska. The Bill, H.R. 987 would repeal the mandated timber supply goal of 4.5 billion board feet per decade, repeal guaranteed minimum funding, modify the two 50-year timber contracts, require a minimum 100' buffer along salmon streams, and set aside 12 areas of prime fish and wildlife habitat in a protective status.

YOUR HELP IS STILL VITAL!

Ask your Senators to push for quick action on H.R. 987 (our goal is passage by Earth Day).

Urge your Senators to support strengthening amendments.

SE Alaska Conservation Council



If You Don't, Who Will?



Plug into the Audubon Activist Network and join citizen-activists who are doing something about big environmental problems.

You'll receive the *Audubon Activist*, a bi-monthly newspaper that gives you the insider's perspective on the environmental scene. You'll also receive Action Alerts on impending votes in Congress — and learn how you can plug into the process. After all, if you don't make a difference, who will?

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

AA22

It costs only \$9 a year. If you would like to help us make a difference, please add \$10, \$25, or whatever you can afford, to your check and mail to: Audubon Activist, 950 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10022



1990 FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY DIRECTORY

OFFICERS

President	Robin Magaddino, 2100 Swan Hwy, Bigfork, MT 59911	837-4294
Vice-President	Brent Mitchell, 960 Kienas Rd, Kalispell, MT 59901	756-8130
Secretary	Gail Leonard, 514 Pine Place, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-5807
Treasurer	Tommy Clark, 231 Pine Needle Lane, Bigfork, MT 59911	837-6615

DIRECTORS

Bob Ballou, Box 11881, Rt 1, Charlo, MT 59825	644-2365
Jack White, 1235 Swan River Road, Bigfork, MT 59911	837-6157
Bob Shennum, 2888 Swan Hwy, Bigfork, MT 59911	837-6208
Lynn Kelly, 905 B 5th Ave E, Polson, MT 59860	883-5797
Dick Fretheim, 904 Woodland Ave, Kalispell, MT 59901	755-5768

CHAIRS

Conservation	Rod Ash, Box 1129, Condon, MT 59826	754-2289
Education	Jim Rogers, Box 984, Polson, MT 59860	883-3611
Field Trips	Dan Casey, Box 2922, Kalispell, MT 59901	857-3143
Hospitality	Susannah Casey, Box 2922, Kalispell, 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 Mitchell, 960 Kienas Rd, Kalispell, MT 59901	756-8130
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 preceeded by an Executive Board meeting, the time and place of which are published in the preceeding 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 the National dues. For others who would like to recieve the newsletter, the cost is \$5.00 per year. Our address is FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY, P.O. Box 715, Bigfork, Montana 59911.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING FOR EARTH DAY?
Schedule Enclosed!



FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY
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