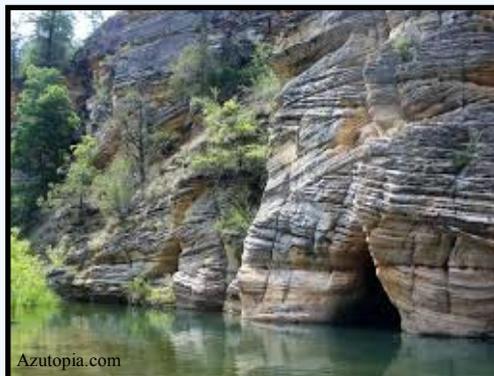


Conservation Educator's Niche

By Denny Olson

I didn't know it at the time, but I had a very lucky childhood. Actually, like most testosterone-riddled boys, I'm probably lucky to have survived it. I grew up in a tiny Minnesota town, about two blocks from what turned out to be the state's first "wild and scenic" river. North on Main Street to the last corner, there was a path, a portal, to another world, and from another age. Nine thousand years earlier, the glacial melt-water from what turned out to be Lake Superior had carved a canyon deep into hard, semi-metamorphosed orange sandstone, fluting the canyon walls with nooks, crannies and caves. They were magical to the eye, and to a little boy's spirit. Next to my town, a proverbial stone's throw, a short-lived, building-stone quarry had been blasted into the canyon walls at the end of the nineteenth century.

Sixty years after the quarry's closing, and localized economic crash, the river canyon and the fossil quarry were being assimilated by vegetation and curious boys. The hundred-fifty foot sheer quarry walls, slick with springs and moss, were the scene of many dares and daredevil exploits – some of which my Mom did not know about until decades later. Upriver, there were clear springs full of edible cresses, Gaudi-esque fluted sandstone walls, with names of hundreds of rock formations invented by us, describing the geography of our childhood. There was a large ice-crack cave, full of Little Brown Myotis bats, and the scene of many expeditions to



prove the existence of new rooms and treasures far back though some secret passage. We never found it. Old names, grandfathers and grandmothers of my cohorts, were etched into the rock at the far end, proof that the quest had been going on for many decades.

Our favorite "fort", as we always called our hideouts, had a rock floor and roof overhead, and was perched far above the lower canyon. It was only accessible by climbing a tree, and was nearly invisible from below. From here we watched deer, porcupines, beavers, foxes and once, a bear, explore and forage near the river. A small nook with a constant water drip at the far corner served as our refrigerator, proof to us that our house was just about perfect.

There were breaks in our explorations as we were distracted by other important play, but we always returned. The place had too much hold on us. We floated rafts made from logs down the river, hacked away brush and constructed elaborate toboggan runs in the winter, and generally played Huck Finn and Nessmuk year-round.

Thirty-six years later I visited the site of our most elaborate toboggan run. The old roadbed had again grown in with brush and small trees. In one of the larger trees I found my own hatchet, rusted and long forgotten, stuck in a tree exactly where I had put it decades ago. The tree trunk had grown around the hatchet to the point where it was almost swallowed. I imagined that the tree

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MARCH FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

Monday, March 5, 2018. 6 PM. FAS Board of Directors Meeting, Gateway Community Center, US Hwy 2 West, Kalispell. All welcome.

Monday, March 12, 2018. 7 PM Flathead Audubon General Meeting, Gateway Community Center, US Hwy 2 West, Kalispell. See page 3.

Saturday, Sunday, March 24-25, 2018, Freezout Lake and the Snow Geese migration, see page 5.

Saturday, March 31, 2018. Winter/spring ecology of the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area, 9 AM-3 PM, see page 5.

BIRD OF THE MONTH

American Three-toed Woodpecker

by Lisa Bate

There's an easy answer to the question: how many toes does an American Three-toed Woodpecker (*Picoides dorsalis*) have? They have three! So why give this birds such an obvious name? It turns out that having three toes in the woodpecker world is unusual; most woodpeckers have four toes. The only other woodpecker in North America to have three toes is the closely related Black-backed Woodpecker (*Picoides arcticus*), with two toes facing forward and one backwards. All other woodpeckers have four toes with two facing forward and two facing back.

Another claim to fame for the American Three-toed Woodpecker (Three-toed Woodpecker) is that they have the northern-most range of any woodpecker species in North America, extending into the boreal forests and taiga across Alaska and Canada up to tree limit. Their counterpart, *P. tridactylus*, has this same claim to fame in Eurasia. Three-toed Woodpeckers in North America range south into New Mexico and Arizona, following the Rocky Mountains, and down to Oregon in the southern Cascades and the Blue Mountains. Isolated populations also occur in the Black Hills of South Dakota. In eastern North America, their range extends down into the Adirondacks.

Three-toed Woodpeckers are a medium-sized (20 cm [8 in]), black-and-white woodpecker. The head is mostly black with a white line behind the eye and white-mustache stripe. They have mainly black upper parts, except in the center of the back, where you will see variable amounts of white. Even from a distance, this is the easiest way to distinguish this species from the Black-backed Woodpecker, which has a solid black back. Three-toed Woodpeckers have a white throat, breast, and belly and heavily barred with black on flanks and sides. The male can be identified by its yellow crown. In juveniles, both sexes may have yellow crowns, but it is minimized in the females. Their scientific name *Picoides* comes from the Latin word *Picus* meaning "woodpecker" and the Greek word *-oides* meaning "resembling". *Dorsalis* refers to the 'back' where they have white.

Three-toed Woodpeckers are found in mature, or old-growth forests with high densities of snags and dying trees containing insects. They are strongly associated with spruce forests, or pine forests with an aspen component. They are year-round residents, with some exhibit-

ing only small migrations to lower elevations in the winter. They also exhibit irruptive tendencies, with large numbers migrating and congregating in areas recently disturbed by fire, floods, or drought where trees die and attract insects. Numbers of Three-toed Woodpeckers are greatest in forests with high densities of beetle-killed trees and in moderately burned forests where trees retain their bark. They are a species of least concern given their extensive range, but are negatively affected by timber harvesting and forest fragmentation in localized areas due to loss of nesting substrates and reduced food availability.

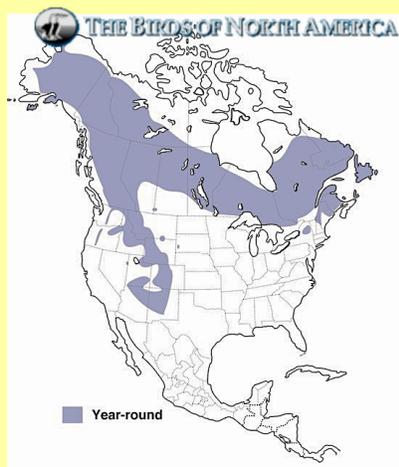
Three-toed Woodpeckers are primary cavity-nesters, meaning they are capable of excavating a cavity with their chisel-like beaks in a snag or tree for nesting. They are also a keystone species. A keystone species is one that makes up only a small number of the animals in an area, but whose presence allows for the presence of many other animals. After they finish using the nest cavity for breeding, the cavity becomes available to other species incapable of excavating a cavity, like swallows and bluebirds. These non-excavators are called secondary cavity-nesters.

Three-toed Woodpeckers nest in snags, or live trees, containing heart rot. Heart rot does not kill live trees, but slowly decays the heartwood softening it and making it easier for the bird to excavate. The fungi responsible for heart rot, does not affect the sapwood, leaving a hard shell around the nest cavity. This protects the breeding birds from weather and predators. On average, Three-toed Woodpeckers nest about 5 m (16 ft) above the ground. The diameter-at-breast height of nest trees average about 25 to 30 cm (10 to 12 in).

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March Program

COMMON LOON CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT A SUCCESS STORY THAT BEGAN 35 YEARS AGO presented by **CHRIS HAMMOND**

Join us Monday, March 12, 7-9 PM at the Gateway West Community Room, US Highway 2 West, Kalispell, for an informative and entertaining program on loons. Chris Hammond, will discuss the history of Common Loon conservation in Montana and summarize research from the Montana Loon Study in the early 1990s and the Loon Ecology Project (2002-2008). He will share the successes and what he believes to be potential failures, as well as what we may expect to see in the future.

Chris Hammond works for Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks as the Regional Nongame/Mitigation



Biologist in Kalispell. He is responsible for survey, inventory, management, and conservation of primarily nongame wildlife species. He also works on mitigation projects that involve conservation easements, acquisitions, and habitat restoration. His undergraduate and graduate work focused on the ecology of common loons in northwest Montana. In 2010, with collaboration from members of the Common Loon Working Group, he completed the Conservation Plan for Common Loons in Montana. Chris is currently a co-chair of the Montana Common Loon Working Group.

Plan for Common Loons in Montana. Chris is currently a co-chair of the Montana Common Loon Working Group.

Education Committee News

Adopt-a-School Trunk Program and Call for Ambassadors

The Education Committee formed a sub-committee to update our trunk program. We now have permanent storage for the trunks at Montana Fish and Game's Lone Pine State Park facility, the trunks have been inventoried and items cleaned and organized, and formed the Audubon Ambassador program.

We are seeking Flathead Audubon members who become Ambassadors to bring the world of birds to students, adults and elders. Ambassador opportunities include shuttling trunks from and from storage to a

school or agency, setting out materials prior to use, familiarizing the teacher with the trunk's content, or even presenting a trunk program.

Visit Flathead Audubon's website and click on 'Lifetime Learning' to read the list and descriptions of the trunks available.

You are invited to attend a brief training about the trunk program on March 12 which will be given by Linda de Kort. Meet at the United Way conference room from 6:30 to 6:55 PM. The Audubon general meeting will follow at 7 PM.

Happy Birding!
by Gail Shay Linne, Education Chair



Two Montana Veteran Home residents enjoy holding a Snowy Owl puppet during the trunk program on Valentine's Day.

CHIRPS & SQUAWKS

Highlights from February 5, 2018 Board Meeting

- ◆ A Grants Committee has been formed with Rod Walette, Mike Fanning, Gail Linne and Gael Bissell as members.
- ◆ A letter was sent to our Congressional members in support of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
- ◆ The education bird trunks have been relocated to Lone Pine State Park.
- ◆ The keynote speaker at the Montana Audubon Bird Festival in Kalispell is Stuart Strahl of Illinois Chicago Brookfield Zoo. He is the chair of the board of Vital Ground.

MIGRATORY BIRD TREATY ACT THREATENED

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) is under attack and needs our support. In December 2017, the Trump administration issued a controversial legal opinion providing an interpretation that the law does not apply to the incidental or accidental deaths of migratory birds and in Congress, H.R. 4239—The Secure American Energy Act—would change the law to cement this interpretation. These changes would represent the most significant roll back of the MBTA in its 100-year history. It would dramatically reduce the incentive for industries to implement best practices that save birds, and would limit the accountability and recovery from events and activities that kill substantial numbers of birds.

In Montana, some examples would be: Snow Geese will be free to die in the Berkeley Pit, uncovered oil pits can kill birds, oil spills like in the Yellowstone River can kill birds, and wind farms can kill as many birds as they want...all with no repercussions. On a national scale for example, the responsible party for another oil spill like the Gulf of Mexico oil spill would not be held responsible for bird deaths and damage. The BP Gulf of Mexico oil spill killed more than one million birds, and led to BP pleading guilty to violations of the MBTA and paying \$100 million to recover damages to birds impacted by the spill.

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) enacted in 1918 implements treaties signed with Canada, Mexico, Japan and Russia, and protects more than 1000 species, most of which aren't covered by other laws, while still allowing for regulation of hunting. The treaties and legislation aimed to protect a variety of birds that provide value to the country, including waterfowl and wading birds that were overhunted in the early 20th century, but also insectivorous and pollinating birds, such as hummingbirds, orioles, and woodpeckers, which help reduce agricultural pests and pollinate crops.

The MBTA has effectively protected birds in the decades since its passage, and is still needed now as much as ever. Birds face numerous modern-day threats. Impacts can often be avoided or minimized

with basic precautions and best management practices, such as covering oil waste pits, flagging transmission lines, and following wind energy guidelines.

MBTA protections have incentivized proactive conservation to help bird populations and limited the need for further protections under the Endangered Species Act.

The MBTA is now under serious threat and we strongly urge you to defend the Migratory Bird Treaty Act -- one of our nation's oldest and most important wildlife conservation laws. In particular, we urge you to oppose any effort that undermines the ability to address the incidental take of birds under the MBTA. Please take action and tell Congress and the Administration to fight for migratory birds and oppose changes to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

by Lewis Young, Conservation Committee

President Donald Trump

Email: president@whitehouse.gov

Website: whitehouse.gov

U.S. Senator Jon Tester

204 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-2604

Phone: (202) 224-2644

Email: <https://www.testersenate.gov/contact/>

Website: testersenate.gov

U.S. Senator Steve Daines

320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Phone: (202) 224-2651

Email: <https://www.daines.senate.gov/connect/email-steve>

Website: daines.senate.gov

U.S. Representative Greg Gianforte

1419 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Phone: (202) 225-3211

Email: <https://gianforte.house.gov/contact>

Website: <https://gianforte.house.gov/>

Nongame Wildlife Tax Check-off

When filling out your Montana tax form this year, think "wildlife" by donating to the Nongame Wildlife Program, found on line 18a (short EZ form) or 69a (long form). If your taxes are prepared, tell your accountant that you want to donate to wildlife! Your contri-



butions are tax deductible on next year's return. Look for the soaring Bald Eagle in the instruction booklet. Montana has more than 500 species of "nongame" animals that benefit from public support each year at tax time. Since 1983, the check-off has contributed over \$27,000 annually to this important wildlife program.



WINTER/SPRING FIELD TRIPS FOR YOU!

All Flathead Audubon field trips are free and open to the public and are geared for all ages and levels of field experience. They are led by area biologists, retired professionals, and some of the best birders in the region. For all Field Trips, dress for the weather, bring binoculars or spotting scope if you have them, wear sturdy footwear, and drive and pull off the road safely. All drivers must have their own vehicle insurance. For more information, contact Kathy Ross at 837-3837 or Cory Davis at 257-3166, or the individual field trip leader listed below. Also, a free brochure, "Birding Hotspots of the Flathead" is available at the Flathead Audubon general meetings and on www.FlatheadAudubon.org.



FREEZOUT LAKE AND THE SNOW GESE MIGRATION, March 24-25, 2018. The Snow Geese are moving from their California wintering grounds to their arctic nesting areas along with thousands of other waterfowl. There is nothing like Snow Geese and the Rocky Mountains at the same time and place. The place is Freezout Lake near Choteau; the time is the annual Flathead Audubon field trip. We will meet on Saturday morning at 10 AM, caravan/carpool to Choteau and arrive in time for the afternoon "fly-out." After spending a night in Choteau, we will head back out just before daybreak to watch the "mass ascension" of geese from the ponds of Freezout. After the morning's birding, we, too, will head home in the early afternoon arriving in Kalispell around 5 PM on Sunday. Bob Lee will provide a suggested schedule and route, and will be in the front of the group. Participants may choose to pursue the geese on their own as much or as little as they, the weather and the birds allow. Please make your own arrangements for lodging; primitive camping is available at Freezout WMA. Motel options include the Stage Stop (406-466-5900), Gunther (406-466-5444) and Big Sky (406-466-5318). Make your reservations early as these hotels will likely fill up. For more information, including the meeting location, contact Bob Lee at 270-0371 or RML3@centurytel.net.

WINTER/SPRING ECOLOGY OF THE OWEN SOWERWINE NATURAL AREA, Saturday, March 31, 2018 9 AM-3 PM. Come with us for a magical mystery tour of one of the most unique areas in the Flathead Valley! Our guide will be Brian Baxter, forester and wildlife researcher, who has taught outdoor educational programs for over 16 years. We'll begin with a 1-hour classroom session to view and discuss the slide presentation "The Essence of Animal Tracking." Then we'll walk into Owen Sowerwine to visit its wetlands, and study the wildlife, vegetation, and predator/prey relationships that give this area its special flavor. As we quietly enter along the southern trails, we will search for and identify the track patterns and sign of the weasel family, muskrat, beaver, and water loving birds such as Great Blue Heron and American Dipper. All the while, we will scope for birds of prey, waterfowl, woodpeckers, and songbirds. Come prepared for the day, with proper layers, lunch, water, binoculars, spotting scope, bird books, and waterproof boots or snowshoes as conditions require. Trip is limited to 15 participants. To sign up and get the meeting location contact Brian Baxter at b_baxter53@yahoo.com or 406-291-2154.

WATERFOWL AT THE WEST VALLEY PONDS, Saturday, April 21, 2018 9 AM-12:00 PM. Join us as we visit several ponds in the West Valley area during waterfowl migration. We should see many of the Valley's waterfowl and shorebirds. Be prepared for any kind of weather, including footwear for walking on muddy roads. Depending on road conditions, we may need to walk a short distance (<1/4 mile) to viewing areas. Bring binoculars and a spotting scope if you have one. Please RSVP to Cory Davis at 406-471-3314, or piranga99@gmail.com. Limited to 25 people.

SPRING ARRIVALS IN THE SMITH LAKE AREA, Saturday, May 19, 8 AM-12 PM. Join us for a spring morning of birding west of Kalispell. We'll drive Smith Lake Road looking for recently arrived sparrows, orioles, warblers, and other breeding migrants and then make our way to Smith Lake to look for waterfowl and wetland species. We should have a good diversity of habitats and species! Bring binocs and scopes and appropriate weather gear. To RSVP contact Cory Davis at 406-471-3314, or piranga99@gmail.com. Limited to 20 people.

MONTANA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY. Wednesday, March 21. 7 PM. Grass Identification Workshop. Glacier National Park botanist Jen Asebrook will help us learn our grasses. Bring a hand lens and plant keys, if you have them. North Valley Community Hall (also North Valley Physical Therapy), 235 Nucleus Ave., Columbia Falls. Join the Flathead Chapter board/planning meeting at 5:30 PM before the program.

Curlew Survey Opportunity in the Mission Valley

It's curlew season again in the Mission Valley!

Are you ready to hear the 'currlleeee' of the Long-billed Curlew? Well, grab your binoculars and get ready, because this charismatic shorebird needs you. Montana's curlews will be trickling back next month and we want to keep tracking them in and around the Mission Valley!



catch up on Curlew identification and you are all set to go!

The best way to get involved is to visit our weebly website and view the routes available in the Mission Valley and Flathead Indian Reservation: <http://missionvalleycurlews.weebly.com/>.

We know that Montana and the Mission Valley harbor the very important grassland and wetland habitat that curlews rely on during breeding and migration. This species offers the perfect opportunity to involve citizen scientists, like you, to collect more details on local curlew hotspots. We are reaching out to ask you to join our great network of conservation partners in the Mission Valley by choosing an available survey route and getting out into the field!

It's easy. Survey routes consist of early morning road-side stops repeated every half mile. At each stop, you will get out of the car for five minutes and look and listen for curlews. Along the way you will collect important data on the time, habitat, and presence or absence of curlews. And, the great thing is that you only need to look for one big beautiful bellowing bird. So all you have to do is choose a route and

Here you will find survey details such as the protocol, data sheets, and route maps. You can also contact Amy or Janene if you would like us to send you a route packet. Feel free to take a partner, do a route more than once, or do more than one route. The Curlews are just waiting to be found!

To brush up on your Curlew identification before heading into the field visit Montana Audubon's webpage: <http://mtaudubon.org/birds-science/long-billed-curlew-initiative/> for a link to the Curlew's call and much more. Also visit Cornell Lab of Ornithology's All About Birds: http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Long-billed_Curlew/id.

Surveys can start as early as April 8th, so get those taxes done early! For more information contact Amy Seaman: aseaman@mtaudubon.org, 406.210.9449

Volunteers Needed for OSNA Monitoring Project

Flathead Audubon's OSNA Volunteer Monitoring Program starts its 12th year this month!

This Program provides the on-site information that underpins our management of the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area.

Reports from Volunteer Monitors in March through November keep our OSNA On-the-Ground Manager up to date on maintenance needs at Owen Sowerwine, and add to our records on the bird and wildlife and native vegetation species present at Owen Sowerwine. In addition, Volunteer Monitors relay feedback from OSNA visitors and neighbors that helps us improve our management of the Area.

YOU CAN HELP by becoming an OSNA VOLUNTEER MONITOR.

Here are 2 ways to participate.

1. Take an OSNA Volunteer Monitoring Form along when you visit OSNA. Use it to tell us what you observe. The fill-in-the-blank and check-list parts of the Form give guidance on what to look for, and there is also space for additional information and comments. Send it to the address given on the Form.

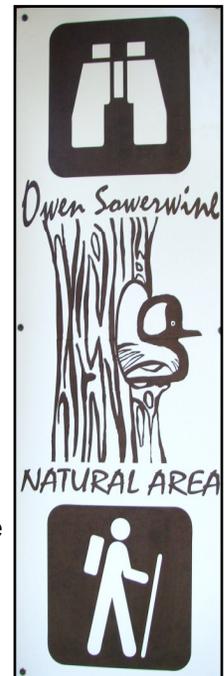
2. Or sign up for a scheduled monitoring visit. In addition to "whenever you go" feedback, we try to insure a regular flow of information by schedul-

ing someone to do a monitoring visit every half month. Pick the month you want for your scheduled visit, and whether you want the first half of that month or the last half. You'll get a reminder call when your chosen monitoring period is coming up. To get on the schedule, you can sign up at the March FAS meeting, or contact me: lindawin626@gmail.com or 755-1406.

The Monitoring Form can be printed from the OSNA section of the website (under Conservation), along with an OSNA trail map. These will also be available at FAS meetings, or contact me to have them mailed to you.

THANK YOU to all who have served as Volunteer Monitors over the years. Your help has been invaluable! Please let me know if you are able to help again this year.

*From Linda Winnie, Co-Chair,
Owen Sowerwine Committee*





wings across the big sky

June 8-10, 2018 — Kalispell, Montana
Red Lion Hotel

During the winter months, many birders find themselves dreaming of long summer days chasing our feathered friends across beautiful Montana landscapes. Remember, it's not too early to begin planning your summer birding adventures! Come join us in Kalispell for **Montana Audubon's 19th Annual Bird Festival, this year co-hosted by Flathead Audubon.**

We have over 20 field trips planned! —

guided by knowledgeable birders and naturalists familiar with the species and their habitats in the Flathead area. Here are a few locations:

- ◆ **Swan River Nature Trail – Birds and Native Plants**
- ◆ **Glacier National Park - East to West**
- ◆ **Flathead Lake Biological Station & Boat Ride**
- ◆ **Flathead River to Lake Birding**

Keep watch in early March: Festival Registration Brochures with all field trip information, speakers and schedules will be in the mail, and the online system for registration will be active.

For more information please contact Montana Audubon Bird Festival Coordinator, Cathie Erickson, cerickson@mtaudubon.org, or call (406) 443-3949.

Looking for Luscious Desserts!

The Dessert Auction is the big fundraiser at the Festival, and the proceeds will be used to help fund a local Flathead Audubon project - installation of a parking area for the new bird viewing area at the West Valley Ponds (to be completed this year!).

Donated desserts are at the center of the Dessert Auction.

At the festival banquet on Saturday evening (June 9), the banquet guests at each table will pool their funds to bid for a dessert. The table with the highest bid gets first choice, second highest gets second choice, etc. An array of attractive, delicious desserts - plus the fact that all proceeds go to support a great local cause - can generate some pretty generous bids. Last year, the high bid was \$1000!

We are looking for donations of about 30

tempting desserts to offer for auction at the banquet - cakes, pies, cheesecakes, and other fancy and delicious concoctions. **Can you help by donating a home-made dessert** for the auction? Or by **arranging for a donation from a local bakery?** If so, please contact a member of the FAS Dessert Auction Committee. Desserts will need to be delivered to the Red Lion on June 8, the day of the festival banquet. Donors will get more details as festival time approaches.

For more information or to sign up as a dessert donor, contact a member of the FAS Dessert Auction Committee: **Gail Cleveland** (406-212-8640, taneland239@gmail.com), **Paula Smith** (837-0181, paulabobsmith@centurytel.net), and **Linda Winnie** (755-1406, lindawin626@gmail.com).

2018 Beauty of Birds Community Adult Education Class

Flathead Audubon is carrying on a highly anticipated tradition – the April “Beauty of Birds” class. Learn about the amazing world of bird beauty, topography, sight and sound identification, habitat, the physics of bird songs, bird intelligence, the physics of flight, fascinating behaviors, hawks, eagles and owls (with live birds!) -- all through a series of four Wednes-

day evening (6 – 8 PM) workshops and a field trip. Cost is only \$10 per person. Class size is limited, so join us soon! To register, call: *Debbie Newman, Flathead High School Administrative Assistant* 406-751-3461.

Contact auduboneducator@gmail.com for more information.

West Valley Naturalists

West Valley Naturalists first spring program will feature Ron Buentemeier on Wednesday, February 28th beginning at 7 PM. This presentation will be held in the boardroom of West Valley School, 2290 Farm to Market Road, Kalispell. There will be guides to help you find your way to the boardroom.

Ron worked for Stoltze Land and Lumber Company as Forester-Land Manager for 44 years and

continues to be an advocate for actively managing forests to maintain their vibrancy and health. He has many tales to share about the origin of the Stoltze company and early logging in the Flathead including the West Valley area.

There is no charge for this program; all are welcome. For more information please call Linda de Kort at 755-3704.

Thank
You !

Lone Pine State Park
and
Northwest Montana Educational Cooperative

Flathead Audubon wishes to recognize and thank Lone Pine State Park Manager Brian Schwartz and his crew Derrick, Brenna, Tom and Julianna for supporting FAS. Besides being fantastic partners for the Birds of Prey Festival each year, the group recently offered to house, check-out and return our FAS Educational Trunks. Derrick will be the Lone Pine contact person for future trunk exchanges and can be contacted at 755-2706, ext. 2.

We also owe a great debt of gratitude to Eliza, Karla and Beth at the Northwest Montana Educational Cooperative for housing the trunks for so many years. The Coop is moving to quarters at the Gateway West Mall and will need the smaller space available there to house their equipment and supplies.

Thanks to each of these people and their organizations for partnering with Flathead Audubon for our community education programs!

Conservation Educator's Niche continued from page 1

wanted a souvenir for its own historical record of the adventures of exploring boys. This was further proof that the place was truly, and eternally, ours. By that time, I had refined that notion to include that I also belonged to the *place*, and the tree, it seemed. The reciprocal nature of that relationship had enriched my life far beyond what I knew at the time.

There is zero doubt in my mind that this place was, and is, the reason for my degrees in biology and a life profession of nature education. I was, and am today, completely and hopelessly, bonded to nature. Whenever I visit woods, mountains, lakes and rivers,

and can be alone there, I feel safe, content, happy, alert, and an overwhelming sense of *belonging*.

And, who does *not* belong to the place from which we rose, and to where we shall return? This, I think, points to a very ancient, subconscious genetic understanding that nature – where we have spent ninety-nine percent of our pre-historical time as a species – is our true home. The peopled, indoor, urban world we have created is only a small fraction of the story of us.

To children, the value of outdoor experiences in natural surroundings is an immeasurable resource – one capable of saving the world -- one changed life at a time. That's why I'm "Audubon", and Audubon is me.

American Three-toed Woodpecker continued from page 2

In Montana, they typically lay four eggs in May, with young fledging late June to mid-July.

Three-toed Woodpeckers are uncommon and quiet, difficult to detect, but April is a good month to start listening for their drumming. It is the start of the breeding season, and they drum, more than they vocalize, to defend their territories and attract a mate. The drumming pattern of Three-toed and Black-backed Woodpeckers is distinct, which makes them much easier to locate in the forest. Unlike the Hairy Woodpecker, a close relative, whose drum pattern is steady and fast, the drum of the Three-toed Woodpecker is slower and more variable (https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/American_Three-toed_Woodpecker/id). Their call is a flat 'pik' or 'pwick', and their rattle call is far less emphatic than the Hairy's call, and somewhat reminiscent of a swimmer

jumping off a diving board. During the non-breeding season, the best way to locate Three-toed Woodpeckers is while they forage. Listen for pecking, or tapping sounds as they scale off bark to look for insects, larvae, and arthropods. Scaling refers to removing the bark with their beaks.

The foraging method used by Three-toed Woodpeckers offers a biological control, both directly and indirectly, for many insects considered forest 'pests'. Their primary prey are bark beetles (Scolytidae)—spruce and mountain pine—and their succulent larvae. They obtain their food directly by scaling, flaking, or pecking off the bark to reach the cambium where the beetles build their galleries to lay eggs. Indirectly, woodpeckers can alter the microclimate of the beetle galleries by scaling off the protective cover of bark. This exposes the overwintering larvae to more weather extremes and can help reduce the number of beetles surviving until spring.

Glacier's Harlequins – March 6, *Science on Tap*

Lisa Bate, Wildlife Biologist, Glacier National Park, will present "*Harlequin Ducks: The East-West Migrants*" March 6, 6 PM, at the Flathead Lake Brewing Company in Bigfork, as part of the *Science on Tap* series. Her talk will cover the life history of harlequins, and monitoring and research efforts for this species of concern. For more information about *Science on Tap* visit www.scienceontapflathead.org/.



Thank You!

...to those below who have made donations to Flathead Audubon through January 2018

Snowy Owl

Paula and Bob Smith
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SPECIAL GIFTS

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GLACIER COUNTRY

2018 Phenology Calendar



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Late breaking FAS news and announcements
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Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

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MARCH 2018



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The Flathead Audubon Society is affiliated with Montana Audubon and the National Audubon Society. Flathead Audubon meets on the second Monday of each month from September through May. Meetings start at 7 PM and include a featured guest who presents a conservation or nature program. The Board of Directors meet the Monday preceding the general meeting, at 6 PM at Gateway Community Center, US Hwy 2 West, Kalispell. Both meetings are open to all.

THE PILEATED POST is published September through May and is sent to members of Flathead Audubon Society as a membership benefit. For membership information or address change, please call Mike Fanning at 862-8070. To receive this newsletter electronically, email your request to: lindawin626@gmail.com. Deadline for newsletter copy is the 18th of each month. Contact newsletter editor at 755-1406; email submissions to: lindawin626@gmail.com

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