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# Pileated Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

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## BOARD VS MEMBERS CHALLENGE 2019!

Gosh, it's already that time of year where you receive innumerable end of year appeals from dozens of worthy non-profit organizations. It can be a struggle to decide if and how much to give and to which organization. What it comes down to for me, what motivates me, is seeing those dollars work locally and efficiently. I like to hear what the organization is actually doing? How many people do they serve? Do they get things done? Do my dollars make a difference? Do they walk the talk?

I believe Flathead Audubon is one of our most effective and transparent local conservation organizations. We successfully meet our mission each year to impact our community through **innovative Conservation/Education programs** led by Denny Olson and others.

We are also that local organization who tweaks our programs in response to a changing world and new opportunities and needs, who maintains and restores the **442-acre Owen Sowerwine Natural Area**, and sustains important projects such as the **Jewel Basin Hawk Watch and Birds of Prey Festival**. Flathead Audubon also tracks and comments on many issues affecting our local environment; offers 20-30 field trips a year; contributes to local conservation projects; promotes collaboration with like-minded organizations; and sustains and improves our newsletter, public programming, and other vital communications



with you and the public. **Everything we do is free and open to the public.** We serve about 6,500 people a year and also provide significant contributions to the Daily Interlake's Outdoor Report. We are primarily an all-volunteer organization but we do need to fund our half time Conservation/Education contractor and other expenses associated with all of the above. We are that organization that over time, **get kids outdoors** as we enter a digital world and constantly reminds all folks of the **importance of our ecosystems through the world of birds.**

This year's Challenge is still a Board vs Members Challenge but with a twist. We are asking all **past and present Board members** (about 50 of us) to challenge the other approximately 350 general **Membership** to

see who can raise the most for Flathead Audubon by December 31, 2019. Last year, Membership beat the Board by a significant margin but together we raised just over \$7,000. This year, we hope to meet or beat that goal! You can see how you/we are doing on our website, [www.FlatheadAudubon.org](http://www.FlatheadAudubon.org), where we update the results weekly. If you want to be on the winning team again, just feel free to donate lavishly! Many thanks for your help!

*Gael Bissell, President*

### Natural Events To See This Month:

*Wintering Townsend's Solitaires each claim a favorite perch and defend it from other solitaires.*

### DECEMBER FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

**Monday, December 2, 2019. 6 PM. FAS Board of Directors Meeting**, Gateway Community Center, US Hwy 2 West, Kalispell. All welcome.

**Monday, December 9, 2019. 7 PM. Flathead Audubon General Meeting**, Gateway Community Center, US Hwy 2 West, Kalispell. All welcome. See page 3.

**Saturday, December 14, 2019. Bigfork Christmas Bird Count**, see page 3 for details.

**Sunday, December 29, 2019. Kalispell Christmas Bird Count**, see page 3 for details. See page 4 for other Christmas Bird Count dates.

# BIRD OF THE MONTH

## Turkey Vulture By Denny Olson

Most of our first experiences with Turkey Vultures are spotting them in flight. They are often in groups, a “venue” of birds, not necessarily related to each other, but gathering because the warm thermals of air are optimal there. Their flight is as effortless and beautiful as any bird’s can be. They are large birds, six-foot wingspans, with a shallow V-shaped “dihedral” profile, circling and rising on the air as if they are filled with helium. They tilt side-to-side, adjusting their trajectories – without once flapping their wings. The grace and beauty of their flight is the post-er-child for our human envy of a self-propelled relationship with air.

This ability to ride updrafts sometimes finds them 20,000 feet high, which can lead to unfortunate encounters with jet aircraft -- usually more unfortunate for the vulture, but sometimes for both. Our Western vultures migrate in those updrafts to the West Coast or Central and South America. Some on the Eastern Seaboard may not migrate at all.

When mating, males do a “follow-flight”, above and directly behind the female, then dives in a U-shape directly at her. At the last second, she banks sideways and drops a few feet, then he swoops back up and they repeat their graceful tango.

Vultures look almost headless at a distance – largely because of those huge wings – and a closer look shows a dark bird with silver gray trailing edges on their underwing feathers (ventral remiges). An even closer look reveals another reason their head looks small. It is featherless. If the light is from an angle behind an observer, and their binoculars are sharp, they can even see the red color of an adult’s head, and the gray head of a juvenile.

When vultures are perched, often in groups, we can get even closer, and vultures reveal a face made for radio. Bare, wrinkled, cir-

cles around their eyes, they are reminiscent of a very sickly zombie. But their beauty, such as it is, lies in practicality and function. They eat carrion – dead animals – almost exclusively. Diving into a rotting carcass would render head feathers a toxic mess, since preening is done with a beak, and head feathers would be unreachable.



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Their beaks, lighter ivory-colored as adults age and black on juveniles, have huge nostrils. Although few birds have a good olfactory sense (some owls eat skunk – and like it), Turkey Vultures can locate unseen carrion from miles away

upwind with their “noses” and large olfactory lobes in their brains. Interestingly, they are often fooled by the ethyl mercaptan smell added to natural gas for safety reasons – which ironically could help workers locate gas leaks on a long pipeline.



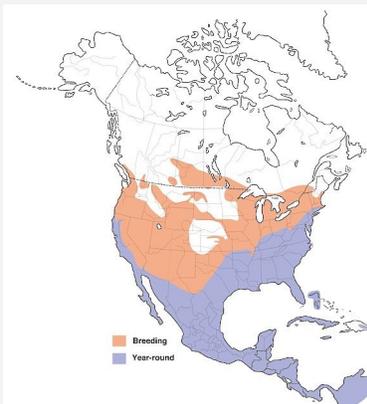
© Jerry A. Shover / iStock

Vultures have to eat every 15 – 20 days or so, and they are often early in locating the freshly deceased (but usually later than magpies, ravens, and jays). The degree of rot means little to them – their unsavory work is quite savory to them – because their digestive systems are industrial strength. In fact, their clean-up role can widen their

choices of food. In one documented instance, a vulture landed on the nest of a great blue heron, scared the bejesus out of the nestlings until they vomited, and then ate the vomit and left. The pH of gastric juices in a vulture is somewhere around 1.0, which is acidic enough to dissolve iron should they get a taste for it. The old husband’s tale of vultures spreading disease from pooping near the carcass is far from reality. Their generic name “cathartes” translates to “purifier” and their digestive systems do just that. In fact, when they purposely and accurately defecate on their legs in hot weather, it doesn’t just cool them, but it “cleans” and disinfects them as well.

Speaking of beautiful imagery, *continued on page 7*

### THE BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA



# December Program

## Christmas Bird Counts in the Flathead

presented by **Josh Covill**

It is December and thus the time for the annual Christmas Bird Count. This is the longest running citizen-science project in the world, and you are invited to participate! Veteran birder and counter Josh Covill will present an extraordinary program at the regular Flathead Audubon meeting on Monday, 9 December at the United Way Conference Room. Josh's program will focus on likely birds to be seen, identification tips and counting techniques. He may even have some predictions on new additions to the lists.



Two large counts dominate the Flathead—the Bigfork Count and the Kalispell count. Details and contacts are given in the descriptions below. Both count compilers (Craig Hohenberger and Pete Fisher) will be present at the meeting to sign people up and answer questions.

Information about other counts in the area will be available at the meeting. As always, Flathead Audubon meetings are free and open to the public.

### Bigfork CBC

The 46<sup>th</sup> annual **Bigfork Christmas Bird Count** will be held **Saturday, December 14<sup>th</sup>**. First established in 1974, the Bigfork count circle is centered at the "Little Brown Church" north of Bigfork, and includes >30 miles of the Swan and Flathead Rivers, the north end of Flathead Lake, and habitats varying from croplands of the Lower Valley to the spruce-fir and cedar-hemlock forests in the Swan and Crane Mountain foothills. We became the first count in the state to report 90 species (in 2011), and always find a diverse and surprising mix of birds, with nearly 150 species over the history of the count.

This count typically depends on veteran group leaders to scour their usual areas, and we are always looking for additional participants to join in to help us gain a better understanding of our early winter bird populations. We will begin preparation for the count at the December 9<sup>th</sup> general meeting, and will finalize most of the groups before the count day. Also, there will be a gathering at 8 AM on the morning of the count at the Flathead Brewing Company parking lot at 116 Holt Drive in Bigfork to make any last minute arrangements. The group will gather again at Flathead Brewery at 5 PM to review the group's results. Contact Craig at 406-890-1629 or [asoleado2003@yahoo.com](mailto:asoleado2003@yahoo.com)

### Kalispell CBC

The 21<sup>st</sup> annual Kalispell count will be on **Sunday, December 29<sup>th</sup>**. Centered at Reserve and Highway 93, the 15-mi diameter count circle includes Evergreen, much of the Flathead River corridor including the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area, Happy Valley, Herron Park, Kuhn's Wildlife Area, Foy's Lake, MacWenegar Slough, Fairview Marsh, Lone Pine State Park and the "Flathead Gull Sanctuary". This count has proven to be a popular New Year's tradition. It includes the homes, bird feeders, and favorite birding spots of many of our members! Our traditional start to this count is a group breakfast at 7:00 AM; this year we will meet at 4B's Restaurant (formerly Finnegan's) at 660 East Idaho in Kalispell. It is here that we will finish assigning circle segments and field teams for the day's efforts. At days' end, there is an informal meeting at Brannigan's Pub in Kalispell to tabulate results. If you are interested in participating, please sign up and leave your contact information at the December general meeting, or contact Pete Fisher at [fisher-pete88@yahoo.com](mailto:fisher-pete88@yahoo.com) or 406-250-9624.



## Don't Forget to Use Amazon Smile for Your Holiday Shopping

Amazon Smile donates to your selected charity for every purchase. Here's the URL for the Amazon Smile sign-in page: <https://smile.amazon.com>. You use the same email and password as regular Amazon. Once you sign in, click the 3 horizontal lines in the

upper left and scroll all the way to the bottom where it says "Your Amazon Smile." That is where you choose the charity you want to have Amazon donate to. If you bookmark the sign-in page, you can always go right to Smile.

## Contacts for Local Audubon 2019 Christmas Bird Counts

Count	Date	Contact information
Bigfork	Saturday, Dec. 14 <sup>th</sup>	Craig Hohenberger, <a href="mailto:asoleado2003@yahoo.com">asoleado2003@yahoo.com</a> , 406-890-1629
Eureka	Saturday, Dec. 14 <sup>th</sup>	Lewis & Lynda Young, <a href="mailto:llyoung@interbel.net">llyoung@interbel.net</a> , 406-889-3492 or Ellen Sullivan, 406-889-3983
Libby	Saturday, Dec. 14 <sup>th</sup>	Gene Reckin, <a href="mailto:gnreckin@gmail.com">gnreckin@gmail.com</a> , Home: 406-293-9344 Cell: 406-291-8482
Ninepipe	TBA	Brian Williams, <a href="mailto:brianwilliams406@gmail.com">brianwilliams406@gmail.com</a> , H: 406-721-1467
Glacier National Park	Sunday, Dec. 15 <sup>th</sup>	Lisa Bate, <a href="mailto:Lisa_Bate@nps.gov">Lisa_Bate@nps.gov</a> , 406-888-7833
Upper Swan	Saturday, Dec. 21 <sup>st</sup>	Rob Rich, <a href="mailto:rob@svconnections.org">rob@svconnections.org</a> , o: 406.754.3137 c:207.598.6649
Troy	Saturday, Dec. 21 <sup>st</sup>	Donald Jones, <a href="mailto:don@donaldmjones.com">don@donaldmjones.com</a> , 406-295-4291
Kalispell	Sunday, Dec. 29 <sup>th</sup>	Pete Fisher, <a href="mailto:fisherpete88@yahoo.com">fisherpete88@yahoo.com</a> , 406-250-9624

### Flathead Valley Bird Report

by Joshua Covill

#### **Rare and Notables - November 2019**

10/20 - **Barred Owl** photographed at Owen Sowerwine Natural Area (Jake B.)

10/25 - **Surf Scoter** in Somers Bay, Flathead Lake (Craig H.)

10/27 - **8 Greater White-fronted Geese** on West Valley Ponds with Canada Geese flocks (Dan C.)

10/27 - **Surf Scoter** on Foy's Lake (Dan C.)

10/29 - **Rusty Blackbird** photographed along the shore of Bowman Lake, GNP (Forrest E.)

11/06 - **Pacific Loon** seen from Wayfarer's State Park (Craig H.)

11/06 - **2 White-throated Sparrows** at a private residence outside Columbia Falls (Shannon D.)

11/08 - **Surf Scoter** on Roger's Lake (Craig H., Rob W., Shawn R.)

11/08 - **Mew Gull & Iceland Gull** at the Flathead Co. Landfill (Craig H., Rob W., Shawn R.)

11/10 - **NORTHERN CARDINAL!** (female) at private residence in Marion! Not seen since it first appeared,

this is the 16<sup>th</sup> state record for Montana and the 1<sup>st</sup> west of the divide!

11/14 - **Red-breasted Merganser** in Somers Bay (Craig H.)

#### **What to Expect - December 2019**

December marks the end of fall migration, and much lower chances of a wayward rare bird landing in the Flathead valley. It's a great time to look for winter residents like Snow Buntings, Northern Shrikes, Rough-legged Hawks, and Bohemian Waxwings. Checking the rooftops, power poles, and hay bales in the Lower and West Valley can produce a Snowy Owl or Gyrfalcon. Bird feeders become very active, especially those that supply a variety of food and cover for waiting birds. Any spot with unfrozen water and muddy spots can hold a lingering Killdeer or Wilson's Snipe. Keep an eye on blackbird flocks around livestock feed lots and muddy shores, an aptly-named Rusty Blackbird may be hiding in a mixture of Red-winged and Brewer's Blackbirds.

### Jewel Basin Hawk Watch 2019

The 12<sup>th</sup> season has ended for the 2019 hawk migration season at the Jewel Basin Hawk Watch site northeast of Bigfork. Our season started out encouragingly with a primary observer on the ridge almost every day. Our high count of 250 birds on September 22 was our seventh best day ever! However, Mid-September presented 8 foul weather days during our peak flight of migrants. The first half of October presented many full survey days. Yet, as the eagle migration started to increase, the season came to a halt

on our earliest close of October 16. Regrettably, this early season snow permanently shut down safe access to the trailhead.

This year 36 surveys were conducted during our designated 75-day survey window (25 August – 7 November). This was our lowest survey effort over the 12 years of the survey. Unfortunately, on at least 15 late season survey days in which the ridge was clear, we were unable to conduct surveys due to unsafe

*continued on page 8.*



## Conservation Educator's Niche

By Denny Olson

### The Meta-Threat

In the last Pileated Post, FAS Board member Carole Jorgensen and Post Editor Lewis Young wrote two wonderful short summaries of two separate "meta-studies" – regarding the 29% decline in North American bird populations in the last 50 years, and, respectively, an Audubon study outlining the 64% of North American bird species vulnerable (to some degree) to climate change. Because these studies were huge and complex, Carole and Lewis both rightly referred and linked anyone with further interest to the studies themselves. I especially liked Carole's call to action: keep your cats indoors, plant native trees and shrubs, leave snags, down wood and habitat piles, tolerate insects, demand companies and governments to operate in synch with biological balance, vote green, and support organizations that make a difference, such as Flathead Audubon, then worry—worry a lot!

Meta-studies take hundreds, sometimes thousands, of separate smaller-scope studies and try to make some conclusive sense out of them. The same process has been done with studies on climate change's existence and possible causes. These sorts of studies are fraught with possible pitfalls. Scientists are acutely aware that conclusions about conclusions demand a lot of discipline -- to reduce bias and cherry-picking of data based on a fallible human being's pre-existing beliefs. The object is to get "belief" out of the process. Projecting *future* events can only be done well by carefully examining *present* trends, and then doing one's best to examine the possible effects of known and possibly as yet unknown variables on those trends. It is a very daunting task.

So, I read both of the studies, as suggested. The bird decline study was conclusive and clear – bird populations have declined, largely but not exclusively due to habitat loss. The Audubon climate study was long, fraught with threat categories, projected declines with odds, continent and state maps showing estimates of by-the-end-of-the-century declines for each of 604 North American species -- based on three climate change scenarios: (1) no change from present conditions, (2) a 1.5 degree centigrade rise in average global temperatures, and (3) the present trajectory of a 3-degree rise in average temperatures. There were 21 pages just on Montana birds. With the assumption that the multiple authors of these studies have done their best, I am also going to assume that a good number of you readers probably won't read it, for lots of good reasons. So I'll add another summary layer to all the numbers, in the Queen's English. All of the fol-

lowing is based on my humble understanding of my reading. The authors have stated that they tried to be very conservative in their projections. I'll try to be as well ... but fair warning. I'm mad.

By the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, under the present 3-degree C. rise trajectory of warming climate, there is *at least* a 50-50 chance that these birds will be extirpated (read: gone, not breeding) from the State of Montana: Greater Sage Grouse, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Long-billed Curlew, Northern Goshawk, Northern Hawk Owl, Boreal Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Merlin, Northern Shrike, Black-billed Magpie, Tree Swallow, House Wren, Cedar Waxwing, Gray-crowned Rosy Finch, Red Crossbill, White-winged Crossbill, Vesper Sparrow, Baird's Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Brewer's Blackbird, Common Grackle, Common Yellowthroat, and Yellow Warbler.

Close behind, with a 40% or greater chance of breeding season disappearance, are: American Wigeon, Common Loon, Red-naped Sapsucker, Western Wood Peewee, Townsend's Solitaire, Chestnut-collared Longspur, McCown's Longspur, American Redstart, Clay-colored Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow and Lincoln's Sparrow.

We will likely not see winter visits from Rough-legged Hawks, Gyrfalcons, Bohemian Waxwings, Common Redpolls and Hoary Redpolls.

Many alpine and Subalpine birds, even those in the lower-elevation Western forests, will find their habitat and numbers greatly reduced. Boreal Chickadees, Mountain Chickadees, Canada Jays (formerly Gray Jays), Clark's Nutcrackers, Pine Grosbeaks are some among many examples.

At least half of the bird species in Montana will find their breeding ranges moved farther north (or uphill) and drastically shrunken in size.

All this information is not good news for our birdwatching grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and certainly not good news for many, many species of birds. I have two young grandsons, so far, and my worries about them have more to do with famine, poverty, political upheaval, disappearing coastal lowland, and the multiplying effects just recently observed that may exacerbate the present 3-degree scenario.

There are many things we can personally do to reduce our own impact and even go nearly carbon-neutral in our personal lives, but the world's cultures and economics are set up for the Holy Grail of "economic growth". Transition away from stored fossil-carbon energy sources is not negotiable. It simply has to be done. We may even need to consider nuclear

*continued on page 8.*

## Global Bird Conservation Crisis State of the World's Birds

On September 19, 2019 an article in the journal *Science* was published that sent shockwaves through the conservation community. The report indicated that almost 3 billion birds had disappeared since 1970. A year earlier in 2018, another independent less well-known report was published by Birdlife International, a conservation group based in the United Kingdom. Compiling data from various sources from all over the world, the report showed very similar trends in global bird populations as the article in *Science* this year.

Much of the information on birds is derived from the Red List and Red List Index published by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The major areas of concern outlined in the report include 1) important bird and biodiversity areas in the world; 2) globally, birds continue to decline and become extinct; 3) some species and bird groups are declining very rapidly; 4) certain ecosystems are in peril; 5) human actions are driving the biodiversity crisis; 6) deforestation and unsustainable logging; 7) catastrophic impact of alien species; 8) overexploitation; 9) unsustainable and poorly planned infrastructure development; 10) seabirds are in serious danger from fisheries bycatch; 11) climate change already having negative impacts on some birds; and 12) human overconsumption of natural resources.

It is worth providing some detail here about forest birds, since two-thirds of the world's birds occupy forests. In the tropical forests of South America and Southeast Asia, bird species tend to be highly specialized and have small population levels. Deforestation and unsustainable forestry is particularly rampant in these regions as well as sub-Saharan Africa. In parts of Southeast Asia, there is now so little primary forest left that many forests will soon be logged for the second or third time. This is especially concerning as these regions support considerable numbers of forest dependent bird, mammal, and am-

phibian species, including forest specialists that are entirely reliant on forests for their survival.

Despite the rather bleak picture of global bird decline, the report indicates that bird conservation is working in some areas. Since 2000, 25 bird species have been brought back from the brink of extinction and down-listed from the IUCN Critically Endangered category. Major efforts have been made at protecting some of the most important bird habitats and sites of high biodiversity. Many important environments that have been degraded, are now being restored to natural conditions. Major efforts are being made throughout the world in eradicating invasive plants and animals, especially on islands. There are numerous successful target species recovery programs. In several dire conservation situations, birds have been removed from the wild, captive-bred and reintroduced into improved habitat. One notable example is the Guam Rail which was nearly extirpated by the introduced brown tree snake. In many regions of the world, birds are overexploited to satisfy the enormous caged-bird trade. Substantial numbers of songbirds are killed in southern Europe for human consumption.

The problem, of course, is that our conservation efforts must greatly increase just to keep pace with the amount of population and species loss as well as habitat degradation and destruction.

What to do? The key actions needed to conserve birds and biodiversity include 1) education and raising awareness of conservation problems; 2) provide economic and livelihood incentives; 3) influence policy and legislation; 4) campaign for conservation issues; and 5) use the best available science for conservation. Just as politics is used against conservation efforts, conservationists should actively support politicians who create policies and actions for the good of the planet. We can start right here in the Flathead. *By David A. Manuwal*

### 2019 Jewel Basin Hawk Watch Totals

Turkey Vulture: 3  
Osprey: 4  
Bald Eagle: 71  
Northern Harrier: 13  
Sharp-shinned Hawk: 804  
Cooper's Hawk: 282  
Northern Goshawk: 25  
Unidentified Accipiter: 33  
Broad-winged Hawk: 16  
Swainson's Hawk: 1

Red-tailed Hawk: 161  
Ferruginous Hawk: 1  
Rough-legged Hawk: 3  
Unidentified Buteo: 16  
Golden Eagle: 249  
American Kestrel: 48  
Merlin: 14  
Peregrine Falcon: 6  
Prairie Falcon: 21  
Gyr Falcon: 0

Unidentified Falcon: 3  
Unidentified Raptor, 12

Total: 1,792  
Survey days : 36  
Survey hours: 226.7  
Hours/survey: 6.3  
Birds/hour: 7.9

## WINTER 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. Please read our field trip guidelines at [www.FlatheadAudubon.org](http://www.FlatheadAudubon.org). 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, Margaret Parodi at 837-1371, or Cory Davis at 471-3314 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](http://www.FlatheadAudubon.org). Check the FAS webpage (<https://www.flatheadaudubon.org/activities-and-field-trips/>) for updated information on field trips.



No field trips other than Christmas Bird Counts are scheduled for December. See pages 3 and 4 for details.

**WINTER RIVER BOTTOM: BIRDS, TRACKS, AND PLANT ADAPTATIONS, Saturday, January 18, 1-4 PM** (weather permitting). Join FAS Conservation Educator and long-time teaching naturalist Denny Olson on a winter hike in Kalispell. Winter birds, bird songs, tracking, botanizing, and seat-of-the-pants interpretation will be the unstructured itinerary. This is one of the best spots in the area to see Pileated and other woodpeckers, many kinds of chickadees, Bohemian and Cedar waxwings in flocks of thousands, Pine Grosbeaks, Townsend's Solitaires -- and there's always an unexpected bird. Not just ID, but lots of natural history lore, which is Denny's trademark. Dress warm, bring binoculars and snow boots, and check with us on the need for snowshoes if the snow is deep. We have binoculars and field guides if you need them. Call Denny at 249-3987, or contact at [auduboneducator@gmail.com](mailto:auduboneducator@gmail.com) to register and get directions.

**Tune into our FAS Website for possible Winter Field trip info.** Watch the FAS website and our monthly email for upcoming "short-notice" field trips when the weather looks promising.

The holidays are just around the corner, which also means Christmas Bird Counts will soon be here. There will be no other field trips in December as we all focus on the great opportunities to join in with one or more of the many CBCs happening in our area (See dates on page 4). Look to the new year for an exciting lineup of field trip adventures especially through the spring and summer and as weather allows in January and February. Also, see Josh Covill's suggestions for good birding locations for this time of year (page 4). Audubon Field Trips are a great way to experience, ID, and learn about the birds that can be encountered as we explore our local landscapes together. All ages and birding abilities are invited to come share in these adventures. Watch the January Pileated Post, as well as the Flathead Audubon website ([www.flatheadaudubon.org](http://www.flatheadaudubon.org)), for new field trip opportunities coming soon.

We are always open to new ideas and good birding and wildlife viewing spots. Even our own backyards are a wonderful place to learn and share with other birders. It is a wonderful way especially to share with children--up close and personal! And we encourage new field trip leaders. Contact Kathy at [mtkat67@gmail.com](mailto:mtkat67@gmail.com) or 837-3837 with new ideas or to help out. We will be happy to answer any questions and help you to find ways to learn more about our feathered friends and share our love of birds with others.

### ***Turkey Vulture continued from page 2***

they also have been known to vomit acidic stomach contents at potential predators (unsubstantiated and un-videoed rumors have claimed that they can projectile vomit up to 10 feet). The prospect of stinging and searing acid is usually enough to repel predators, and frightened vulture nestlings will issue a warning of same by stomping their feet at intruders.

There is a literal vulture "peck-order" when they communally feed on a carcass. Dominant vultures warn others by flushing their bare heads a brighter red, then spread their wings, extend their

head, jump and high-kick, open their bill, and finally bite the subordinate if it proves necessary.

All kidding aside, their beauty does lie in their flight, and their role as a first-order member of the clean-up crew -- which numbers in the hundreds of thousands of species if we include bacteria. Everything that has ever lived also died (except Elvis), so if you don't think Turkey Vultures are beautiful, picture yourself in the neck-deep, rotting carrion of a world without our decomposers recycling all that former life - into new life.

Yup. Vultures are beautiful. Gorgeous, even.

***Jewel Basin continued from page 4.***

access. We were able to record our 13,000<sup>th</sup> Sharp-shinned, and our 4,500<sup>th</sup> Golden Eagle. Our final tally of 1,792 birds was second lowest to the 1,638 we had last year. We have now counted 29,679 raptors of 18 species over the 12 years of surveys. Despite foul weather and lack of survey days, we had a new record high number of Prairie Falcons (21).

These surveys have been coordinated by Flathead Audubon, and made possible in part by grants from the U.S. Forest Service and Flathead Audubon, in addition to hundreds of hours of volunteer time donated by FAS members. We are beyond grateful to the countless time spent by primary observers on the ridge in wind, rain and snow at 7,000 feet elevation. Thanks to Kat Petersen, BJ Worth,

Barbara Summer, Nickie Broesel, Diane Lundgren, Lisa Bate, Kathy Ross, Jake Bramante, Denny Olson and Dan Casey. Many days we also had secondary observers at the lower observation point as well as countless visitors to the ridge who helped catch those low flying raptors.

A summary table for 2019 is on page 6. For more in depth information on data and statistics for the 2019 Jewel Basin Hawk Watch season please visit our dunkadoo website at: <https://dunkadoo.org/explore/flathead-audubon/jewel-basin-2019>

People interested in future volunteer opportunities please contact Barbara Summer [Swainsons18@gmail.com](mailto:Swainsons18@gmail.com) or Gael Bissel [gbis-sell535@gmail.com](mailto:gbis-sell535@gmail.com). *by Kat Peterson*

***Meta-Threat continued from page 5***

energy again as a “caring bridge” to accelerate on the path to carbon neutrality. Just ask my grandsons. Ask Greta Thunberg. They are the ones who actually have something at stake in the future of this planet.

I just heard an ad today for something I don't need that sloganeered “Nature is important, but not nearly as important as human nature ...” As if there

could be humans to have a “nature” without Nature. This Flat-Earther-esque ignorance of obvious reality has to stop, or at least get out of the way. We are the “vulnerable species” to extirpation.

I saw an unbylined quote the other day. “What if we are wrong about climate change and we needlessly create a better world ...”

Oh, the horror.

## CHIRPS & SQUAWKS

### Highlights from the November 4, 2019 Board meeting

- Jan Metzmaker is coordinating the development of a consistent approach to acknowledgments of gifts, grants, and donations.
- Kay Mitchell reported that we received a \$2000 matching grant from Flathead Conservation District to use in OSNA in our efforts to control invasives.
- Denny Olson is nearly finished with the educational trail guide for the new classroom trail in OSNA. He is also investigating ways to use student groups to set up the monitoring of environmental DNA (eDNA) in OSNA.
- Carole Jorgenson encourages people to be informed and/or take action on 2 major conservation issues: the bill and funding of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act, and the proposed road building in the Tongass National Forest in Alaska.

## Volunteer opportunities

Educational Trunk Ambassadors: We need some individuals who could specialize on one trunk, to deliver and introduce them to classrooms when requested by teachers. You'll receive training and your time commitment is whatever you can give!

School field trip assistants: Shadow Denny Olson on school field trips to Owen Sowerwine Natural Area and then lead trips when you're comfortable.

Owen Sowerwine Natural Area maintenance:

help on OSNA trail rerouting, building natural brush blinds at observation points, constructing deer enclosures, and continual buckthorn control efforts. Flexible time commitment.

Call our Education Coordinator, Denny Olson, at 249-3987, or contact [at auduboneducator@gmail.com](mailto:auduboneducator@gmail.com) to get details on any of these opportunities.



# Thank You!

...to those below who have made donations to Flathead Audubon through October, 2019

### Merlin

Dennis Hester  
Deevi Morgan



merlin foundation

### Kestrel

Kathleen Sheehan Dugan  
Jennifer Graham  
Dee Blank



rspb.org.uk

### Supporting Member + Donation

William Beyer  
Carol Bibler  
Carol Buchan  
Carole Jorgensen  
Peggy Moore  
Mary Patterson  
Jill Fanning  
David Sowerwine  
Bruce Tannehill  
Dawn Walker  
John Winnie  
Michael Yelinek



granderie.ca

### My Own Vision

Charles Sutfin  
Charles Van Rees  
Barbara Summer

## SPECIAL GIFTS

I wish to help make Flathead Audubon's vision a reality. Here is my contribution to the continued success of our chapter.



- Eagle Donation, \$1000+
- Osprey Donation, \$500+
- Snowy Owl Donation, \$250+
- Merlin Donation, \$100+
- Kestrel Donation, \$50+
- My Own Vision, amount of my choice

\*\*\*\*

The FAS activity which most interests me is:

- Education Programs
- Owen Sowerwine Natural Area
- Scholarships and Grants
- Field Trips and Outdoor Events

\*\*\*\*

I want my gift to recognize another:

In memory of \_\_\_\_\_

In honor of \_\_\_\_\_

Please send a notification of this gift to:

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City \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Please do not acknowledge my gift in the Pileated Post

\*\*\*\*\*

Please make checks payable to:

Flathead Audubon Society

P.O. Box 9173

Kalispell, MT 59904

## Learn Cool Stuff About Birds

### Birds in Our Lives

Continuing Education Center  
Flathead Valley Community College

**Class Time:** 6:00-8:00 PM

**Day:** Tuesdays

**Dates:** February 4, 11, March 3, 10,17,24,31; April 7,14, 21

**Instructor:** Dr David A. Manuwal, Board member, Flathead Audubon Society. For more information contact him at [manuwal2@centurylink.net](mailto:manuwal2@centurylink.net)

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15104105 www.istockphoto.com

Late breaking FAS news and announcements  
Online FAS membership sign up or renewal  
Latest eBird reports on species being observed in the Flathead area



Clipartfest.com



# the Pileated Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

P.O. Box 9173, Kalispell, MT 59904-9173

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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](mailto: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](mailto:lindawin626@gmail.com)

Website: [www.FlatheadAudubon.org](http://www.FlatheadAudubon.org)

Conservation Educator - Denny Olson: [auduboneducator@gmail.com](mailto:auduboneducator@gmail.com)

## FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY DIRECTORY

### OFFICERS

President	Gael Bissell	<a href="mailto:gbissell535@gmail.com">gbissell535@gmail.com</a>	261-2255
Vice-President	Cory Davis	<a href="mailto:piranga99@gmail.com">piranga99@gmail.com</a>	471-3314
Past President	Kay Mitchell	<a href="mailto:kbmitch@centurytel.net">kbmitch@centurytel.net</a>	756-8130
Secretary	Pam Willison	<a href="mailto:pwillison94@gmail.com">pwillison94@gmail.com</a>	270-0225
Treasurer	Joe Batts	<a href="mailto:jbatts@me.com">jbatts@me.com</a>	249-1085

### DIRECTORS

2017-2020	Rod Walette	<a href="mailto:rodwalette@gmail.com">rodwalette@gmail.com</a>	314-5699
2018-2021	Jan Metzmaker	<a href="mailto:jmetzmaker@hotmail.com">jmetzmaker@hotmail.com</a>	862-7960
2018-2021	Jake Bramante	<a href="mailto:jake@hike734.com">jake@hike734.com</a>	250-8394
2019-2022	Will Beyer	<a href="mailto:bever59901@vahooo.com">bever59901@vahooo.com</a>	212-0550
2019-2022	Margaret Parodi	<a href="mailto:mrparodi@charter.net">mrparodi@charter.net</a>	837-1371
2019-2022	Dave Manuwal	<a href="mailto:manuwal2@centurylink.net">manuwal2@centurylink.net</a>	257-1471
2019-2020	Bob Lopp	<a href="mailto:boblopp@bresnan.net">boblopp@bresnan.net</a>	250-7753
2019-2020	Bob Lee	<a href="mailto:rml3@centurytel.net">rml3@centurytel.net</a>	270-0371
2019-2020	Kathy Ross	<a href="mailto:mtkat67@gmail.com">mtkat67@gmail.com</a>	837-3837
2019-2020	Mike Fanning	<a href="mailto:shrdlu@centurytel.net">shrdlu@centurytel.net</a>	862-8070
2019-2020	Derrick Rathe	<a href="mailto:Drathe33@gmail.com">Drathe33@gmail.com</a>	250-4108

### COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Conservation	Lewis Young	889-3492
	Carole Jorgensen	890-2211
Education	vacant	
Field Trips	Kathy Ross	837-3837
	Margaret Parodi	837-1371
Finance	Mike Fanning	862-8070
Hospitality	Cory Davis	257-3166
	Joe Batts	844-0299
	Connie Cohen	
Membership	Mike Fanning	862-8070
	Jill Fanning	862-8070
	Bob Lopp	250-7753

Nominations	Bob Lee	270-0371
Owen Sowerwine	Kay Mitchell	756-8130
Natural Area	Bob Lee	270-0371
	Pam Willison	270-0225
Newsletter	Linda Winnie	755-1406
	John Hughes	261-2506
	Lewis Young	889-3492
Program	Bob Lee	270-0371
	Dave Manuwal	257-1471
Publicity	Jan Metzmaker	837-0181
Sales	Jill Fanning	862-8070
Refuges	Kathy Ross	837-3837
Website	Jake Bramante	250-8394

### MONTANA AUDUBON

P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624 443-3949 [www.MTAudubon.org](http://www.MTAudubon.org)  
Executive Director: Larry Berrin [lberrin@mtaudubon.org](mailto:lberrin@mtaudubon.org)  
Board Member representing FAS, Bob Lee [rml3@centurytel.net](mailto:rml3@centurytel.net) 270-0371  
Bob Lopp, alternate [boblopp@bresnan.net](mailto:boblopp@bresnan.net) 250-7753

### FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY

#### Membership Individual or Family

Basic Membership ————— \$25

Pays for newsletter and operating costs

Supporting Membership ————— \$40

Extra \$15 funds local projects such as Conservation Education and Owen Sowerwine Natural Area

Additional Donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

- To:  Education Fund  
 Owen Sowerwine Fund  
 Wherever needed

Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Renewal  New member

You may renew or join online on our website:

<http://www.flatheadaudubon.org/>

If you wish to receive a paper copy by USPS, check this box.

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