



the

# Pileated Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

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Pintail



Allaboutbirds.com

## BIRDS NEED OUR HELP SERIES - HOW WE CAN MAKE DIFFERENCE LOCALLY

From Flathead Audubon

This month we offer two more articles on how you personally can help birds: "Why You Should Buy a Duck Stamp" (page 5), and "Drive Protection of Bird Habitat with your Purchasing Power" (below). In addition,

on page 6 you'll find a box with information that can help guide your purchasing decisions: a list of companies that protect bird habitat, and a collection of symbols that identify bird-friendly products.

### Drive Protection of Bird Habitat with your Purchasing Power

Did you know that the products you buy affect more than just your household and health? Your choice of materials and the practices of manufacturers and growers impact birds, animals, plants, water, and the air we all share.

Growing methods, like growing coffee and cocoa in native plant shade, preserve natural forest and plant diversity, providing homes for birds and other wildlife. Livestock grazed sustainably can preserve habitat for grassland birds. Julie Craves, Bird Ecologist and Contributing Editor for Bird Watching Magazine points out: "Worldwide, habitat destruction is the leading cause of bird population declines. The link between poverty and environmental degradation is inescapable, especially in tropical climates where our migratory birds spend their winters. Making sure that coffee farmers receive a living wage is one way to help preserve habitat." "Coffee drinkers have the potential to make a huge impact on the environment and economies of coffee growing nations."

Ms. Craves website, Coffee & Conservation, [www.coffeehabitat.com](http://www.coffeehabitat.com), is invaluable in researching the integrity of organizations, companies and products that are really helping to protect habitat and who is not. And it is not just about coffee. From those same certifications, organizations and producers we might hope to trust come tea, chocolate, cotton, fruit, tropical oils, sugar, cut flowers, forestry products and more that are grown in tropical rainforests and poverty. As consumers we need to pay attention because our migratory birds depend on that landscape.

Rainforest Alliance, Fairtrade, Shade-grown in the beginning had an integrity you could trust, but as

they become more engaged with large growers and big food corporations, many well intentioned organizations "are lightening up the stringency of environmental requirements." The enormous increase in demand means stronger requirements need to be in place, not weaker. In a huge way this is and will continue to affect bird habitat.

The symbols and companies listed in the box on page 6 can help guide purchasing decisions. These entities have consistently protected bird habitat both south of the border and locally for many years. The USDA Organic symbol is still the most credible of all symbols across a wide range of products in the US and Canada. (Imported organic commodities are questionable and sometimes not closely monitored). Millions of pounds of chemicals used worldwide are in the air we breathe and the food we eat. Growing organically helps keep enormous amounts out of our environment. Birds need us to support organic growing practices - whether it be coffee from Panama or vegetables from Montana.

It is not just loss of sustainable habitat south of the border, it is also occurring in our own local landscapes. Deforestation, wetlands drained and polluted, grasslands overgrazed, and monoculture crops destroying bird habitat. But there is hope. In the US, Canada, and western states there are many businesses offering sustainable solutions for our song birds, shorebirds and raptors. California rice growers in collaboration with conservation groups flood their fields for migrating shore birds, Audubon certified ranchers protect habitat for grassland species, Locally,

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### MARCH FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

**Monday, March 2, 2020. 6 PM. FAS Board of Directors Meeting**, Gateway Community Center, US Hwy 2 West, Kalispell. All welcome.

**Monday, March 9, 2020. 7 PM. Flathead Audubon General Meeting**, Gateway Community Center, US Hwy 2 West, Kalispell. All welcome. See page 3.

**Sunday March 22, 2020. Spring Migration Birding with Craig Hohenberger.** See page 7.

**Thursday-Friday, March 26-27, 2020. Freezout Lake Snow Goose Migration.** See page 8

# BIRD OF THE MONTH

## Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus*

by Gail Cleveland

Northwest Montana is blessed with a number of species from the family of Turdidae or Thrushes. These include the Western and Mountain Bluebird, Townsend's Solitaire, American Robin, Varied Thrush as well three species of the genus *Catharus*: the Swainson's Thrush, Veery, and the subject of this article: the Hermit Thrush.

The Western and Mountain Bluebird are known for their distinctive coloring. The others are not so brightly colored and are known for their spring and summer songs that brighten the mornings and evenings. The American Robin's song seems ubiquitous in the cities and woods alike; the seldom seen gray Townsend's Solitaire sings a continuous disjointed warble from high perches. With his upward swirl of haunting notes, the Swainson's Thrush can be found mostly in lower woodlands. The Varied Thrush sings his flutelike high-speed trill on various pitches in forested high elevations. The least prevalent thrush in our area, the Veery, is usually found near streams or boggy areas singing a song which sounds like descending organ music. The Hermit Thrush, having been called the American nightingale, in our area can be found at high elevations singing his mesmerizing, melancholy song on a variety of pitches.

People often wonder why the songs of thrushes are so hauntingly beautiful. [NPR Bird Notes](#) explains it well: "The answer is that the birds have a double voice box. Bird song emanates from a complex structure, unique to birds, called the syrinx. Syrinx is also the Greek word for the musical instrument we call panpipes, which have multiple pipes. It's a fitting name for this essential part of a bird's vocal anatomy. Because, like panpipes, birds have two separate pipes to sing with. A fine singer like a thrush can voice notes independently and simultaneously from each half of its syrinx, notes which blend brilliantly as ethereal, harmonious tones." The thrushes essentially harmonize with themselves but not always as we humans would call harmoniously, but nevertheless, the songs are awe inspiring. Henry David Thoreau, John Burroughs and Walt

Whitman, all wrote poems waxing romantically on the songs of the thrushes.

Hermits are one of the latest of the thrushes to arrive in late spring in Northwest Montana. Marias Pass, Logan Pass and on the Big Mountain are good places to listen for them from early June to mid-July. During this breeding season, they often sing from the tops of trees, so they are visible to see with binoculars. Otherwise, Hermit Thrushes are usually found near the ground around the trunks of trees or fallen logs, scraping in leaf litter while foraging for insects and larvae or making their low soft "chup" call.



If the male Hermit Thrush is successful in finding a mate using his vocal prowess, the female builds the nest. West of the mountains the nest will be in a shrub or tree branch, rarely above eye level; east of the mountains, it will be on the ground. According to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology Website, the female builds her nest of grass, leaves, pine needles, bits of wood surrounded by mud and lichen. She puts finer plant materials like willow catkins on the inside, taking up to

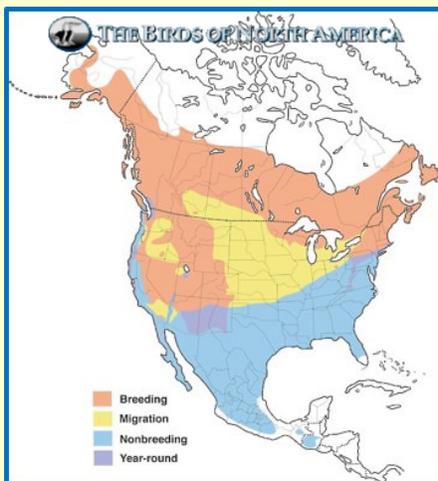
10 days to build the nest. The male finds food for the 3-6 possible nestlings, while the female remains in the nest. The incubation period is 11-13 days while the nestling period is 10-15.

Hermit Thrush populations stayed relatively stable between 1966 and 2015, according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey. The Hermit Thrush is not on the [2016 State of North America's Birds' Watch List](#). One reason for its success is contributed to the

fact that its winter range goes only as far as Central Mexico, and many also winter on the West Coast and in the southern United States rather than tropical Central and South America where habitat is shrinking.

Of our local thrushes, the two that are most difficult to visually distinguish are the Swainson's and the Hermit. Both have gray brown backs and black spots on their white breasts. The Hermit has a russet tail and its black spots are bolder with a darker malar stripe on its neck. The best way to tell them apart is, of course, the song.

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# March Program

## African Birds and Wildlife

presented by Laura Katzman

Guest speaker Laura Katzman will share her African experience traveling to the Okavango Delta in Botswana and the Victoria Falls area of Zimbabwe at the Monday, March 9 Flathead Audubon meeting from 7-9 PM at the Gateway West Meeting Room in Kalispell. The meeting is free and open to the public.

Laura will talk about the colorful and unique birds seen on her trip. In addition, she will tell stories of her adventures with lions, leopards, elephants, giraffes, zebras and other animals encountered in her travels. Even though she did not travel to Africa specifically to bird, she was amazed by the 120 species of birds she did see.

Laura has been working for the last 10 years as a Land Protection Specialist for the Flathead Land Trust. She earned a Bachelor's de-

gree at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point and her Master's degree in Fish and Wildlife Management from Montana State University.

Prior to her work with Flathead Land Trust, she worked as a fisheries biologist. Laura has always loved birds and has volunteered on many bird surveys throughout her career. She has focused her work on conserving bird habitat as evidenced by a successful campaign to preserve sandhill crane habitat in the West Valley. Recently, she began a bird education program with 7th graders in cooperation with Flathead Audubon. She loves hiking, backpacking, rafting, kayaking, skiing, photography and of course, watching birds and wildlife.



## Linda de Kort

receives

## Conservation Achievement Recognition

Linda de Kort will be presented Flathead Audubon's Lifetime Conservation Achievement Recognition at the March FAS meeting. Linda is an extraordinary science educator who has instilled in thousands of students and adults in this Valley, and far beyond, an understanding and appreciation of the natural world, and inspired in many of them a commitment to the conservation of this natural world – and especially to the conservation of the birds we share it with.

Linda was a biology teacher for over 30 years, 24 of them at Flathead High. Her enthusiasm and open friendliness made her a favorite among the students. Her signature teaching strategy was to get her students outside to learn through direct observation of nature, and by doing scientific studies. As they learned through experience and experiments,

they came to understand and appreciate - and value – our local natural places and our native plants and wildlife. Many have become supporters of conservation in the Flathead, and one is pursuing a career in sustainable energy.

Flathead Audubon recruited Linda when she retired. She served on the FAS board for 12 years and in 2003-5 as President, and shaped a new FAS education program. She chaired the Education Committee that organized Flathead Audubon's first teachers' workshop, and also organized a volunteer program that provided assistants to help these teachers and lead birding field trips for their students. Linda and her Committee received Montana Audubon's "Environmental Educator of the Year" award for developing this budding education program.

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Photo by Frank de Kort



## Conservation Educator's Niche

By Denny Olson

### Learning About Where We Live

Place-learning has built-in relevance. Local politics affects us at a much greater rate and intensity than state, national or global politics. Local air, water and food conditions affect us much more than those on larger scales. Local people are the ones with which we must have relationships. Local land and wildlife are what we see, feel, hear, smell, and taste when we walk out of the door. When I visit schools -- with smartboards and computers turning the "actual" outside the school-walls into the "virtual" on a screen -- it seems clear that one rather dominating fact seems to have escaped those of us in the educational community. We are *here ... now*. That is pure, un-adorned common sense. And yet, cost and liability considerations are limiting trips outside the school walls further and further every year.

So, what are we missing? What would a place-literate student know and be able to do about his or her place? Some examples:

- Mapping -- in early grades, are they able to draw a rudimentary map of bedroom, house and yard, classroom, schoolyard? In later grades, can they draw a detailed map of their watershed and/or bioregion?
- Water systems -- early grades, basic flora and fauna of a local stream; later, ongoing monitoring of chemical and biological in different places and at different times on the major lakes and rivers in the watershed; compare to others in different areas of U. S. and world; understand history of river and lake use; flood history; pros and cons of local dams; how water bodies have changed in response to human activity and extrapolate how they might change in the future; be able to construct the student's "water address", from their bathroom sink to the ocean.
- Water use -- how do septic systems work; how central sewage systems work; which kind are students connected to from home and school; how much and what types of water do they use at their home and in local businesses?
- In their bioregion, do they know the location and unique characteristics of rare plants and animals, natural areas, public parks, wild rivers and wilderness areas, wetlands, mountain ranges, public forests, etc.
- In their watershed, what are there major sources of toxic releases, air pollution, solid waste, etc., and what measures have been taken to modify the effects of those sources?
- What are the historical development and sprawl effects of population expansion in their bioregion?
- Do they know local political structures -- who makes decisions about what for whom; opportunities for participation *beyond* voting *at any age*?
- How a compost pile works; how a solid waste district works.
- Forestry practices in their region.
- Employment and job type percentages in their region, how those percentages have changed historically and how they may change in the future.
- Wildlife habitat in their home yards and schoolyards, and how it can be improved.
- Be able to construct an ongoing and flexible plan to make the school and (by request) local businesses more environmentally friendly and cost efficient; persuading powers-that-be to implement the plan.
- Perform a public service project every year -- student choice.
- Engage in a multi-generational and/ or multi-cultural learning process each year.
- Know the native historical and post-European history of their bioregion.
- Be able to outline the major differences in traditions of local native cultures and post-settlement cultures.
- Know and experience a good variety of the major recreational opportunities in their region.
- Have cooperation, collaboration, negotiating, civility and skills in these learning processes.
- Have a good basic knowledge of the local opportunities for personal spiritual (using the word in the broadest sense) development -- free of pre-judgement and with tolerance for other perspectives.
- Understand how bioregion natural systems have changed in historical and pre-historical past; know the major components (rocks, soil, plants and animals) of their bioregion, and how they may respond to future change.
- And knowing some local birds couldn't hurt, either.

If our kids knew these things, it could possibly embarrass our local leaders into learning them as well ... and the cost and liability concerns might magically disappear, because our priorities might find a more suitable order. Of course, that might mean more students may want to stay and contribute, needlessly creating a better world for the rest of us.

What a waste ...

## Why You Should Buy a “Duck Stamp”

The Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Act was passed by Congress on March 16, 1934 in response to the nation-wide drought and reduction in waterfowl populations. This legislation requires each waterfowl hunter 16 years of age or older to possess a valid Federal hunting stamp (“duck stamp”) along with a state hunting license. In later years, each state required hunters to purchase a state-issued duck stamp to be affixed to the hunting license. Receipts from the sale of the federal stamp are deposited in a special Treasury account known as the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund.

Funds appropriated under the Wetland Loan Act as amended, are merged with duck stamp receipts and provided to the Secretary of the Interior for the acquisition of migratory bird refuges and other wetland habitat. The original price of the stamp was set at \$1, and the price was increased to \$2 by 1949, and raised to \$5, \$7.50, and eventually to the current \$25. This reflects the increasing cost of wetland acquisition.

The Postal Service prints, issues and sells the stamp and is reimbursed for its expenses from money

in the fund. Public Law 94-215, approved February 17, 1976, amended the Act to allow, among other things, the sale of stamps at places other than post offices and authorized consignments to “retail dealers.” The 1976 amendment also changed the name of the stamp from “Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp” to “Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp.”

A contest is held each year by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to select the design of the next year’s stamp.

On July 8, 1984, the 1934 Act was amended to authorize reproductions of the duck stamps and require that all resulting proceeds be deposited into the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund. It required that color reproductions be less than three-fourths or at least one and one-half times the linear size of the actual stamp.

Whether you hunt or not, the purchase of a duck stamp contributes to bird conservation and the preservation of valuable wetland habitat that is used by many animals and plants.

*by Dave Manuwal*



1934



2019



1986  
Montana's first duck stamp

## Migratory Birds Need Your Help

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is proposing a new interpretation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act that does away with penalties for unintentionally killing birds. This would result in even greater losses of migratory birds because it would remove incentives for industry to guard against accidental take of birds, and also, without penalties for accidental take, no funds could be collected to mitigate any accidental damage, such as funds to clean oiled birds and re-

store habitat after an oil spill.

The Service has asked for public comment on this proposal. Flathead Audubon will be writing to voice our opposition to the proposal, and we urge FAS members to do the same. To learn more about the issue and find out how to submit your comment, go to [www.flatheadaudubon.org/conservation/migratory-birds-need-your-help](http://www.flatheadaudubon.org/conservation/migratory-birds-need-your-help).

## Nominations

Another election will soon be upon us: the one for new FAS Board of Directors members. At the annual meeting in May, FAS will elect a Secretary and Treasurer as well as new Director positions. Please start thinking about some people that you would like to see guide Flathead Audubon in the near future. The person who sat next to you at the last meeting is likely a good choice. And the person sitting in your seat is

also a good choice! If you know of someone who would be a good leader, please contact Bob Lee (270-0371 or [RML3@centurytel.net](mailto:RML3@centurytel.net)). Someone from the Nominations Committee will talk with them about roles and responsibilities and get hopefully them on the ballot. And anyone that would like to serve on the Nominations Committee should also contact Bob.

## Flathead Valley Bird Report

by Joshua Covill

### Rare and Notables – February 2020

01/20 - **Rusty Blackbird** feeding in the cow pasture on Fox Farm Road (Cory D.)

01/20 - **Northern Saw-whet Owl** heard tooting from private residence south of Col. Falls (Chris H.)

01/24 - **Iceland Gull** (Thayer's subspecies) spotted at the Flathead Co Landfill (Zack S.)

01/30 - **Prairie Falcon** along Highway 2 north of Kalispell (Jake B.)

02/05 - **Prairie Falcon** south of Kalispell along Hwy 93 (Ray W.)

02/08 - **IVORY GULL (immature) was found on JANUARY 30<sup>th</sup>** by Craig Barefoot in Blue Bay on Flathead Lake. A Montana state first drawing birders from all over the country! It stayed until **Feb 8<sup>th</sup>**, the last day it was seen.

02/13 - **3 Red-breasted Mergansers** on the Flathead River seen from the Ranchettes Rd fishing access (Craig H.)

02/12 - **Great Gray Owl** was spotted in the West Valley on Fox Farm Road (Cory D.)

02/14 - **Northern Pygmy-Owl** northwest of White-

fish (Jordan G.)

02/15 - **11 Red-breasted Mergansers** on the lake in Lakeside (Dan C.)

02/15 - **Common Grackle** visiting the feeders of Craig H. along with **2 Yellow-headed Blackbirds** have been overwintering rarities this year.

### What to Expect – March 2020

March is the start of Spring, even if it doesn't feel like it. The first Varied Thrushes show up late Feb in yards & under trees where there's bare ground. 2nd week of March the first Bluebirds arrive; drive all of Smith Lake Road for your best chance to spot them. Tree Swallows should start to grace phone wires after the Vernal Equinox. Thawing bodies of water accommodate the influx of ducks as waterfowl migration peaks in late March. Church Slough can be PACKED with 1,000s American Wigeon and Tundra Swans by mid month. The grand Snow Geese spectacle at Freezout Lake hits its peak late March; keep an eye on the Birding Montana Facebook page for Snow Goose updates!



**Use your purchasing power, for the love and life of birds, the environment and your own good health.**

Here are just a few of the products and companies that have been protecting birds and their habitat for many years.

Flathead Valley organic farmers, summer produce, eggs, cheese and more. Buy local!

Mt Coffee Traders, Kalispell and Whitefish, Fair trade, organic coffee and tea

Smithsonian Bird Friendly Coffee, online

Equal Exchange, Fair trade, organic, coffee, tea, chocolate and fruit, local health food stores

Lundberg Farms, California grown, Organic rice products, local health food stores

American Prairie Reserve, Wild Sky Beef jerky, online

Lifeline Farms, Victor, Mt. organic cheese

Organic Valley Dairy Cooperative, milk, cheese, yogurt, locally purchased

Mission Mountain Eggs, Mission Valley, Mt. organic eggs, local health food stores

Frey Vineyards, California, organic wine, online

Center for Native Plants, Whitefish, Mt, native plant nursery

Spring Brook Ranch, Kalispell, Tibetan Yak meat, Forestry products

Audubon Certified Ranching "Hay Mama Cattle Ranch" online

Western Sustainability Exchange (WSE), Mt. beef, goat, pork, grains, fruit, bison, poultry, online

Fat Robin Orchard and Farm, Polson, Mt. (WSE) organic cherries, apples

Patagonia, clothing, locally purchased

RBM Wood products, Columbia Falls, artisan quality wood products.

These symbols will help guide you to bird friendly products.



## 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. 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, or Margaret Parodi at 837-1371, 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 upcoming field trips.



### SPRING MIGRATION BIRDING with CRAIG HOHENBERGER, Sunday March 22, 9 AM-1

**PM.** Craig will take us on a birding adventure at the south end of the Flathead Valley. The early migration will be underway. An exciting time of the year to see swans, ducks, hawks, early migrants, and resident song birds. Hope to see the first of the year Bluebirds, Robins, and hear the Red-winged Blackbirds welcome spring. Space is limited. For directions and to sign up, contact KR, 406-837-3837 or [mtkat67@gmail.com](mailto:mtkat67@gmail.com).

**FREEZOUT LAKE AND THE SNOW GEESE MIGRATION, Thursday and Friday, March 26-27, 2020.** See the article on page 8.

**RIVERSIDE EARLY BIRDS, Owen Sowerwine Natural Area (OSNA), Kalispell. Sunday, April 19, 2020, 9 AM- 12 noon.** Meet at the Kalispell Montessori School, 349 Willow Glen Dr. Join Flathead Audubon Conservation Educator Denny Olson for an early spring hike through OSNA searching for early river bottom and waterfowl migrants. Along the trails, Denny will explain the unusual hydrology and plant succession dynamics that have shaped this rare Montana environment. Many species of ducks, geese and swans should be moving through or searching for nesting spots. The resident Pileated and other Woodpeckers will be doing residential construction, and early songbirds should be very visible immediately pre-leafout. If you want to brush up on your birding by ear, Denny can repeat many of the songs you will hear to assist learning them well. Bring binoculars, rubber-bottomed boots and dress for the forecast. Call Denny at 249-3987, or contact at [auduboneducator@gmail.com](mailto:auduboneducator@gmail.com) to register and get directions.

## Treasurer Changes

The role of the Treasurer has expanded over the last 5 years that I have served as FAS Treasurer. Duties that were once spread among other board members are now more consolidated under the Treasurer. In addition, as the organization grows, greater accountability and reporting is needed. The Treasurer has always maintained the primary responsibility of managing all income and expenses and logging those accurately into *Quickbooks* and maintaining our non-profit registration with the State of Montana. Other expanded duties now include preparing and filing the annual IRS 990 form, preparing monthly financial reports for the board, preparing annual reports for membership, overseeing our investment accounts, and reviewing and paying annual insurance premiums. With consolidation also comes necessary financial oversight and internal audits. These continue to be done by both the Finance Committee and Bruce Tannehill, our past Treasurer.

With the help of a SCORE Consultant, Richard Dillon, we will be changing to a non-profit version of *Quickbooks* that will greatly improve our reporting and our understanding of GAAP accounting. We will

keep you advised about our progress.

In February, I stepped down from the Treasurer position as I am taking on more duties with Montana Audubon as Vice President. At its February meeting, the FAS Board appointed Rod Walette to serve out the rest of my term through May, and Rod has agreed to be nominated as Treasurer in our upcoming May election to serve another 2-year term.

During the next few months, I will support Rod and the Finance Committee in the final transfer of responsibilities, and will complete the transfer and conversion of our financial records now in a commercial edition of *Quickbooks* to the non-profit version. In addition, I will also be preparing a Charter for the Accounting and Investment functions that describes all the tasks that have to be done. This will provide a guidepost for the incumbent Treasurer and other board members to use.

Thank you all for your support. I have greatly enjoyed my time as your Treasurer, and I plan to remain on FAS board to support the organization and help as needed.

by Joe Batts

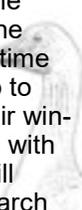
**Protection of Bird Habitat continued from page 1**  
dozens of Flathead Valley farmers grow organic and sustainable vegetables, chickens and fruit to keep bird poisoning, soil depleting chemical fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides out of the environment. The

Smithsonian even has its own logo for certifying coffee grown in the best conditions to protect migratory bird habitat. Some products are available in our local grocery stores and some can be purchased online.

by Kathy Ross

## FREEZOUT LAKE AND THE GREAT SNOW GESE MIGRATION

There is nothing like Snow Geese and the Rocky Mountains at the same time and place. The place is Freezout Lake WMA near Choteau; the time is the annual Flathead Audubon Society field trip to Freezout. The Snow Geese are moving from their wintering grounds to their arctic nesting areas along with thousands of other waterfowl. Folks from FAS will meet at the old KMart parking lot at 10 AM on March 26. Note that this is a little different than past years ... this year's trip will be on a Thursday-Friday to try to miss some of the large crowds that gather. We'll 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 a morning's birding, we will head home in the early afternoon arriving in Kalispell around 5 PM. 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), the Gunther (406-466-5444) and the Big Sky (406-466-5318). Make your reservations early as these motels often fill up. For more information, including the meeting location, contact Bob Lee at 270-0371 or [RML3@centurytel.net](mailto:RML3@centurytel.net).

## Spring Birding Extravaganza in Central Montana!

Join us for a four day, three night birding blitz to central Montana, May 22-25, 2020. We'll be visiting some of the premier birding hotspots in central Montana including Bowdoin and Benton Lake National Wildlife Refuges, Tiber Reservoir, Giant Falls, Freezout Lake, plus many "specialty" locations known through the birding community. We hope to see about 130+ Montana species and we'll be trying for some of these specialties: Eastern Screech Owl, Sprague's Pipit, Green-tailed Towhee, Chestnut-collared and McCown's Longspurs, Long-billed Curlew, Black-bellied Plover, Upland Sandpiper, Black-crowned Night Heron, White-faced Ibis, Short-eared Owl,

Baird's Sparrow, Lark Bunting, and Sharp-tailed Grouse. The trip will be led by local birders Bob Lee, Leslie Kehoe, and Cory Davis. Cost is \$850 (\$800 for FAS members) and includes transportation, 3 nights' accommodations, breakfasts and lunches (not dinners), and bird guiding by folks who know where to go! Party size will be small with 6-9 participants so book now! \$150 deposit will hold a space until April 15 with refund. Full payment due after that date refundable if replacement participant is found. To sign up or ask questions contact Cory Davis at (406) 471-3314 or [cory@flatheadaudubon.org](mailto:cory@flatheadaudubon.org). Payment by check preferred though other arrangements can be made.

## Monitoring the Majestic Heron: A call for citizens to help keep count!

Montana Audubon and Montana Natural Heritage Program are partnering for state-wide coverage of annual heron rookery surveys. Because it is statewide, we need help *everywhere*, so you are sure to be near a site of interest. Data collection is simple and uses the Survey 123 platform available on any

smart device!

Signing up is easy! For more information or to receive project outreach materials, contact Carmen Borchelt: [cborchelt@mtaudubon.org](mailto:cborchelt@mtaudubon.org); 406-443-3949 or Amy Seaman: [aseaman@mtaudubon.org](mailto:aseaman@mtaudubon.org); 406.210.9449,

### Natural Events To See This Month:

*Golden Eagles migrate north along north-south mountain ridges.*

### Correction

In the article "Gael Bissell Receives Award" that appeared in the February Pileated Post (p. 4), Gael's co-recipient Constanza von der Pahlen is incorrectly listed as "from the Flathead Land Trust." Actually Con-

stanza is the Program Director of the Critical Lands Program for the Flathead Lakers, and is coordinator of two major collaborative conservation partnerships in the Valley, the Flathead River to Lake Initiative and the Flathead River Steward Program.

## CHIRPS & SQUAWKS

### Highlights from the February 3, 2020 Board meeting

- ◆ Tom and Cindy Roberts were voted onto the Board of Directors for a 1-year term. They also joined the Education Committee and will assume the role of Co-Chairs. Welcome!
- ◆ Jake Bramante presented info about the characteristics, benefits, and issues related to using Google for Nonprofits for communicating, storing and sharing documents, and scheduling meetings and events.
- ◆ Joe Batts stepped down as the Treasurer for FAS. Many thanks for your years of service Joe! The Board approved a motion for Rod Walette to serve as the Treasurer until the term ends in May 2020.
- ◆ Denny Olson is starting work on the Birds of Prey Festival (Sept), and the Road Scholar classes (July in GNP). Watch for volunteer opportunities to help with these and/or to become an Ambassador for the Education program!
- ◆ The Grants Committee is working on our application for the Great Fish fundraising event, Gael Bissell is working to renew our arrangement with the Forest Service for Jewel Basin Hawk Watch, our representatives are working on a new lease arrangement with DNRC for OSNA, and the field trip committee is setting up spring/summer trips. It's a busy time of year, so watch for more news about each of these.

### 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 Form 2, page 10, under Voluntary Contributions.



If your taxes are prepared, tell your accountant that you want to donate to wild-

life! Your contributions 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.



### Native Plant Society Meeting

Native plant landscaper Kathy Ross will discuss **The Dynamic Relationship of Native Plants, Insects and Birds** at the March meeting of the Flathead Valley Chapter of Montana Native Plant Society, Wednesday March 18, 7:00 PM. Drawing on the research of Dr. Doug Tallamy, Kathy will talk about why we need our native insects and the vital role native plants play in their survival. She will also offer suggestions for landscaping practices with native

plants in order to promote biodiversity and provide healthy environments for humans and birds. We can make a difference in our backyards and landscapes!

The meeting will be in the North Valley Community Hall, located at 235 Nucleus Ave, Columbia Falls. Please bring your dinner and join us before the program at 5:30 to help plan upcoming Flathead Chapter events.

### West Valley Naturalists Meeting

The West Valley Naturalists will meet in the Middle School Commons Area of West Valley School on Monday March 2 at 7 PM. We will hear from Mike Koopal of the Whitefish Lake Institute and Ryan Richardson from River Design Group. They will share their research about the geomorphology of Lost Creek in the West Valley area and the "mystery" of Tally Lake. They will also share information about aging septic systems as a pollution source. This event is free and all are welcome. There will be guides at the front entrance of West Valley School to help you find your way to the Commons area.

In addition to the March 2nd program, West Valley Naturalists are thrilled that Derrick Rathe will be the presenter for our March 11th program. Derrick, currently the Park Ranger at Lone Pine, Lake Mary Ronan and West Shore State Parks as well as an FAS Board member, will break down some of the myths about living with the large mammals we have in NW MT such as Bears, Mountain Lions, Elk and Deer. This program will also be held in the Middle School commons at West Valley School and will begin at 7 PM. All are welcome.

**Hermit Thrush continued from page 2**

To listen to the Hermit Thrush and Swainson's Thrush, as well as the Varied Thrush and the Veery, go the Cornell Lab of Ornithology website:

[www.allaboutbirds.org](http://www.allaboutbirds.org).

It is the beginning of February and I have just seen my first Hermit Thrush of the year 2020. I am

excited. I am, also, not in Montana, but southern Arizona where they winter and breed. I will be even more excited to hear the eerie, swirling, varied-pitch melody of the Hermit Thrush calling to females in June in Northwest Montana.

**Linda de Kort continued from page 3**

The Committee also produced educational trunks for classroom use by Flathead Valley teachers. Linda designed bird puppets for the trunks, and a bird costume with interchangeable parts to teach bird anatomy and identification.

When this education program outgrew its volunteer base, Linda enlisted the Sustainability Fund to partner with Flathead Audubon to hire a part-time program manager, the precursor of our current FAS Conservation Educator.

Linda and Frank live in West Valley where

Linda actively promotes nature education and conservation in her community. She has assisted with nature studies at West Valley School, and helped students design and plant a native plant garden there. She also organized the West Valley Naturalists Group, which brings community members together for presentations and discussions.



Photo by Frank de Kort

Over the last 15 years Linda has taken nature education beyond the Flathead. While she and Frank worked for Habitat for Humanity in Mexico's Copper Canyon she introduced bird education there. She brought Spanish language books and education materials, old binoculars donated by FAS members, and a bird costume donated by Flathead Audubon, and several years taught local students about their local birds and bird habitat and how to conserve them.

As they traveled to new places, Linda and Frank sought out new volunteer opportunities to connect local young people with their natural surroundings. In Panama, they spent 4 weeks at the Smithsonian marine laboratory training university students to be nature guides. While visiting Hawai'i they volunteered 2 weeks at Kokee Park on Kauai teaching school kids to recognize their native plants, and helping them remove invading exotics. In Ecuador, they brought bird education (and more FAS donated binoculars) to a local village in the Andes.

They also found opportunities to volunteer for conservation biology field projects. In Puerto Rico, they helped gather seeds in the native plant garden at a National Wildlife Refuge, and transplanted shoots

from the garden to expand native plant coverage in the refuge, and monitored nearby turtle nests.

At a research station in Cost Rica, they collected caterpillars to determine which species of caterpillar transforms into which butterfly. They also participated in research to find new species of microbes for pharmaceutical use. The research succeeded in discovering a new yeast species, which the project leader named *Metschnikowia dekortorum*.

Flathead Audubon is proud and honored to recognize Linda de Kort for her life-long dedication to educating students of all ages about the natural world,

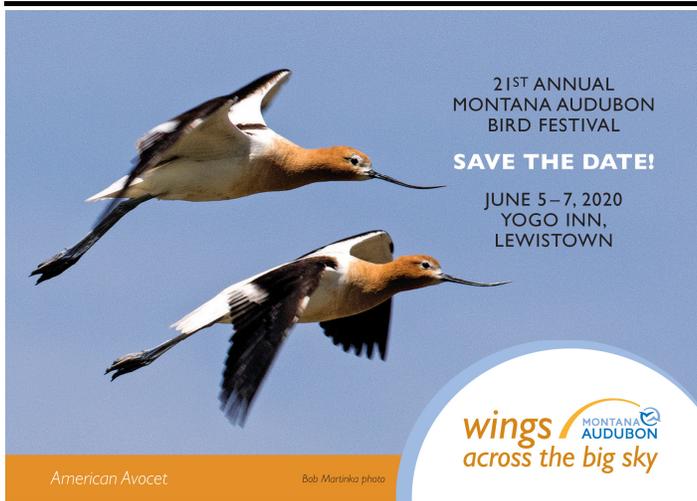
and to getting them outside to experience the natural places where they live – and the birds they live with. THANK YOU for sharing your commitment to conservation and your deep appreciation of science with so many people.

by  
Rosemary MacKinnon  
and Linda Winnie

**From Rosemary MacKinnon**

I first met Linda when my oldest daughter took Linda's advanced biology class at Flathead High. I was impressed with her extraordinary dedication and her warm and engaging personality. She spared no effort to make her students do meaningful scientific research and to make them successful. She was also always willing to innovate. My second daughter was in Linda's biology class when she and Stephanie Baca, the Spanish teacher, collaborated on a trip to Costa Rica called "Biomes and Barrios."

Linda offered her students extra credit for attending Flathead Audubon meetings and taking notes on the presentations. I accompanied my daughters when they went to some meetings. I had always loved birds but had not taken the time to get to know our local birds and was delighted to be introduced to a group where experienced birders were willing to share their knowledge and help me learn.



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 Lewistown for **Montana Audubon's 21st Annual Bird Festival, headquartered at The Yogo Inn in Lewistown.**

**We have over 25 field trips planned!** — Guided by knowledgeable birders and naturalists familiar with the species and their habitats in the Northern Great Plains region. Here is a brief sampling:

- ⇒ James Kipp Recreation Area and Missouri River
- ⇒ American Prairie Reserve PN Ranch
- ⇒ Bear Gulch Pictographs
- ⇒ Big Springs State Fish Hatchery

**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, Danielle Dowden [ddowden@mtaudubon.org](mailto:ddowden@mtaudubon.org), or call (406) 443-3949.

**FAS Meeting room changed for April — still the same for March**

Our April public meeting room has been moved to *The Gathering Place* at the northeast end of the Gateway West Mall—not far from the usual meeting room.

**GET THE PILEATED POST BY EMAIL!**  
Contact [lindawin626@gmail.com](mailto:lindawin626@gmail.com) to sign up

**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

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*The FAS activity which most interests me is:*

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Be sure to check [flatheadaudubon.org](http://flatheadaudubon.org) for

Late breaking FAS news and announcements  
Online FAS membership sign up or renewal  
Newly scheduled field trips and events



# the Pileated Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society  
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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)**

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

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- Basic Membership ————— \$25  
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- Supporting Membership ————— \$40  
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