



Pileated the Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

Volume 16

Number 5

May, 1991

President's Corner

Are you feeling a need to get involved? Here's your chance. Flathead Audubon has a number of projects, meetings and other activities that you can participate in--especially if you want to get away from the T.V. a couple times a month, or have a flexible work schedule, or are retired and have a few hours to spare. Volunteers contribute to wildlife and conservation and our quality of life in the Flathead. And volunteering has many rewards.

As the saying goes: "Many hands make light work". If just a few go to the meetings, write the responses, or submit the articles, the load can become a burden. We need new help, and we need more help with our activities... without it, good ideas will go un-noticed or unimplemented; conservation issues critical to the Flathead will go unanswered; communication with other groups, industries and agencies will deteriorate. We have 480 members and I'd like more of us to pitch in.

Hands-on wildlife projects are being planned. Would you like to help build, install or monitor a wood duck or bluebird box, help create a small wetland area or build a bat house, develop a spring for watering wildlife?

If you can help by attending a meeting and taking notes or bringing back ideas, or by working on one of our projects, give me a call at 756-8130 (pm). And keep trying... I'm probably at a meeting!

Brent Mitchell



Mark Your Calendar

MAY

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

5/13/91

ANNUAL MAY POTLUCK!

Lone Pine Park,
6:00 PM. Bring a dish and table service, and your festive mood! Everyone welcome.

Program: "Wolves of the North Fork: An Ecosystem Approach" presented by Mike Fairchild, research specialist, University of Montana. Mike will emphasize the wolf/ungulate (elk, deer, moose) relationship in the North Fork of the Flathead ecosystem.

COMING UP

- 5/11/91: Ruth White's (and J.J. Audubon's) Birthday Walk.
 - 5/19/91: Wild Horse Island Field Trip.
 - 6/1/91: National Audubon BIRDATHON.
 - 6/8/91: Safe Harbor Marsh Field Trip.
 - 6/22/91: Squeezer Creek Hike.
- And much more:** Call Dan Casey for more info. 857-3143(eve) 752-5501(day)

THE POWER OF ONE LETTER

Here's what Arizona Congressman Mo Udall said about the power of one letter: "Perhaps 90 percent of our citizens live and die without ever taking pen in hand and expressing a single opinion to the people who represent them... This reluctance to communicate results from the typical and understandable feeling that... one letter won't make any difference anyway... I can state flatly that these notions are wrong... On several occasions, a single, thoughtful, factually persuasive letter did change my mind."



Through The Editor's Spotting Scope

Sitting at the Editor's Desk for Sharon this month is me--your old newsletter editor, and by golly I'm here to tell you it's great to be back in the saddle again. Why anyone would want to spend a gorgeous weekend in April anywhere but hog-tied to this almost new, fully automated, totally electronic with digital readout, Micro-Soft, Smith and Corona "Bird Processor" is beyond me. Up here in these attic chambers I can discern outside the merry caroling of spring robins as I gaze wistfully at the occasional ray of afternoon sun filtering through a tiny window thoughtfully placed at the far end of my cell--I mean office! And that's not to mention the ever-present thrill of THE DEAD LINE. In just three days I will have "tanked up" on 8 pots of coffee, 2 pounds of chips, and innumerable Girl Scout Cookies, all in preparation for the big moment when the newsletter must be delivered copy-ready to the printer. Even a second or two makes all the difference here... "I'm sorry Mr. Newsletter Editor but you are one second late and now we can't possibly have this mess off the press till July." What a rush. To quote a famous person: "War is hell, and being a newsletter editor ain't far behind".

And so Sharon, I, for one, honestly do not begrudge you your job. You can't imagine how much I appreciate the timely arrival of my robin's-egg-blue Pileated Post each month. And I promise not to take for granted next time I find myself gallivanting off to yet another birding hot spot, or merely propped up on the lawn chair casually enjoying the sun, a cool one and warblers trilling in the pines. For after just one weekend of staring at blank pages I'm reminded of another famous quotation: "Good newsletter editors aren't born, they're crazy!"



Leo Keane



THORNE INSTITUTE

Diverse interests converge around the management of water, wetlands, and riparian corridors. For a fifth summer, biologists, teachers, attorneys, engineers, realtors, planners, government and industry representatives, and amateur naturalists will congregate in Bailey, Colorado for the **Institute of River Ecology**. The Institute traces the importance of water to life from its source to its many applications. What are the ecological functions and values of these resources and how do they change over the continuum from the river's source to the sea? Which wildlife and plant species have critical dependence upon them and how can we ensure their well-being? How will we provide water for growing populations, agriculture, and recreation, while protecting water quality too?

Explore these and many more questions with experts on all sides of the issues on field trips in the mountains and onto the plains. Learn more about the regulations that shape resource management policies and current thinking about their effectiveness. Issues raised during the Institute will interest participants from across North America.

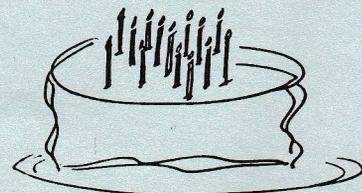
The program will take place Sunday, June 23rd to Wednesday, June 26th. The cost for food, lodging, instruction, and field trip transportation is \$325. University credit is available for an additional fee. The Institute is co-sponsored by Denver Audubon Society, Thorne Ecological Institute, and the Colorado Division of Wildlife. To receive more information and a brochure write to **Susan Foster, Thorne Ecological Institute, 5398 Manhattan Circle, Boulder, CO 80303, or call (303) 499-3647.**

THE FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY

was incorporated into the National Audubon Society and granted a charter on May 1, 1977.

Officers for the new chapter were:

Dan Sullivan—President, Newton Reed—Vice-President
Wanda Jamieson—Secretary, Nancy Paul—Treasurer
Rick Trembath—Publicity, Karen Sullivan—Membership



**PROFILE OF AN AUDUBON ACTIVIST : Rod Ash—Member of the Month**

Late in the summer of 1949 a young California man thumbed a ride along Flat-Head Lake's West Shore Highway. As cars drifted past, his gaze was caught by the impressive mountain range east, across the big lake. Opening his highway map, he identified the mountains as the Mission Range, and noticed with particular interest the long valley beyond called "The Swan". To the young Rod Ash, this Swan Valley seemed intriguingly wild, remote and explorable. Making a mental note to return someday, he caught a ride on to Glacier Park.

At this point in his career Rod was a seasonal ranger with the U.S. Forest Service, and had just completed a stint on the Clearwater National Forest in Idaho. The following summer a fire lookout position opened on the Kootenai Forest at Big Swede near Libby, Montana. Rod got the job, and late that summer of 1950, on a weekend off, made good on his promise to visit the Swan. He found the valley as wild and beautiful as imagined--a first impression that would influence the rest of his life.

To hear Rod Ash speak at one of our Audubon meetings--whether it be to track the politics of conservation in Helena, or to keep track of U.S. Forest Service activities out his own back door--is to hear a gifted public speaker. His presentations are invariably clear, succinct and logical, and leave his listeners with the distinct impression that a truth has been spoken. Perhaps this is the gift of a natural-born teacher--to make the world, life, even politics, comprehensible.

In fact Rod's knack for teaching and for politics does come naturally. He was raised in a family of labor activists when the unions were going strong in the Bay Area of California, and essentially followed his father's footsteps by becoming a reporter for the Olympic Press, one of the important "Labor Papers" of that era. Rod's keen interest in politics led him to the University of California at Berkeley where he earned his Master's Degree in Cultural Anthropology--and met his wife-to-be, June.

With their college years behind them, Rod and June began scouting for teaching jobs. Their love of young people (each had worked with the YMCA and YWCA while at Berkeley) pointed them toward high school teaching, and their desire for a more serene lifestyle led them north to the Shasta Valley and rural Redding, California. They bought a home in neighboring Cottonwood, and settled down to a long, successful and enjoyable career at Shasta High.

"Settled down" is an inaccurate choice of words to describe any aspect of Rod's life. A partial list of his accomplishments during these "Shasta years"--the early 1960's to 1983--would include: organized and edited another "Labor Paper" specifically geared toward northern California mill towns; organized a letter campaign to support passage of the Wilderness Act of 1964; started and coached a Little League team; activated his school into the first Earth Day celebration in 1970 by involving the kids in public conservation projects; and last but, significantly, not least, Rod, with friends, established a chapter of the National Audubon Society for the Shasta area.

Summers during these busy years were set aside for rest and renewal. Rod and June and their growing family--Gordon, David, Ellen and James--returned each year to camp in their favorite place of all, the Swan Valley of Montana. In 1969 they finally bought property and an old, log summer home near Condon. In 1983, after retiring from Shasta High, the Ash's made their move to the Swan Valley permanent, and built their present home in 1984.

Not one to rest on any laurels, Rod's been deepening his commitment to Montana politics and conservation ever since--primarily through his involvement with Flathead Audubon and the Montana Audubon Council. It is no exaggeration to say our chapter couldn't get along without him. For all you do, Thanks Rod.



Flathead Valley Coalition Earth day -- 1991



STATEMENT OF GOALS

Supporting the national theme of "Make Every Day Earth Day", the Flathead Valley Earth Day Coalition 1991 has established a roster of activities for the education and promotion of public awareness concerning source reduction and recycling on a local level.

The Coalition encourages every person in the Flathead Valley and surrounding communities to make at least one change in their daily lives for the benefit of the environment through the reduction of waste.

We will continue last year's emphasis on recycling in order to further reduce the quantity of recyclable materials being discarded in our local landfills. We hope to attain this goal through the continued efforts and concerns of the many and varied groups in this year's Earth Day Celebration.

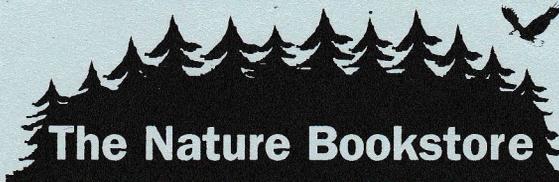
Fact Sheets were donated to Flathead Valley schools and their teachers by the Earth Day Coalition. It was the wish of the Coalition members that each instructor receive a packet of Fact Sheets in their mailbox. The Coalition is to be commended for their commitment to "Make Every Day Earth Day" and to make this information available. The topics of the Fact Sheets are: Waste Reduction, Recycling, Composting, Food Choices, Population Growth, Tropical Rainforests, Tree Planting, Pesticides, Global Warming, Acid Rain and Ozone Depletion.

These Fact Sheets will be available at the general meetings of Flathead Audubon on request.

FLATHEAD VALLEY EARTH DAY COALITION

For Information Call Coordinator 862-2028

BOOKWORKS



The Nature Bookstore

110 CENTRAL AVE. WHITEFISH, MT 59937 PH (406) 862-4980

BOB & SUSAN ZAHROBSKY, OWNERS OPEN MON-SAT 9:30-6

The **BOOKWORKS** Bookstore in Whitefish, MT is pleased to support the activities of the Audubon Society. Our store specializes in nature books, and we recognize the importance of funding conservation minded organizations. At a member's request, we will donate 10% of the purchase price to Flathead Audubon. I hope this program results in significant support for you chapter, and some enjoyable reading for the membership.

Bob Zahrobsky

NATIONAL FOREST HISTORY AND INTERPRETATION

June 20-22, 1991 a symposium/workshop in Missoula, MT will be held focusing on the historical origins and significance of the National Forest System and the techniques of interpreting its rich history. In commemoration of the National Forest Centennial (1891-1991) the symposium is sponsored by USDA Forest Service, Univ. of Montana, Forest History Society, Inc., and National Forest Service Museum. Participants will: view from twenty vantage points the grand experiment in land management that began on March 10, 1891; hear how miners reacted to creation of forest reserves; learn how Indians managed the resources before white settlement; examine how the national forests are a source of water for the farmer, forage for the stockman, logs for the mill, and game for the sportsman; investigate century-old debates over private property, state rights, and federal presence; learn the "how to" aspects of interpreting history and historical events; and much more. For details contact the Center for Continuing Education, Univ. of Montana, Missoula, MT 59812, (406-243-4623).



Conservation Comments

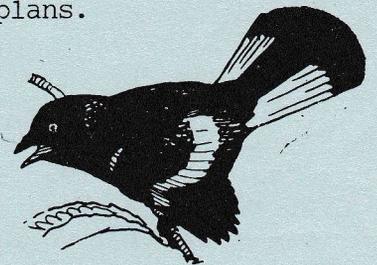
COOPERATION PRODUCES GREAT RESULTS

If you are fortunate enough to take in the June 22 field trip to the Squeezer Creek Watchable Wildlife Site, look around you carefully. In addition to a wonderful bird and plant study area, you will see the results of great cooperation between the folks at the Swan River State Forest, members of Flathead Audubon and the Flathead Chapter Montana Native Plant Society.

According to Glen Gray, Chief Forester at the Swan River State Forest, Jack Whitney and Elmer Sprunger of Flathead Audubon first approached him with the idea that Squeezer Meadow was an outstanding place for special attention. Whitney, with a lifetime of observation under his belt, described Squeezer Meadow and its wetlands as having a "unique diversity of birds".

Gray, Whitney and Sprunger walked the ground and made plans. The State Forest put up funds, and trail work was begun. The workers included state forest personnel, young men from the Swan River State Camp, and volunteers from Flathead Audubon and the Native Plant Society. In addition to Whitney and Sprunger, volunteers Ann Morley and Patti and Neal Brown put in many hours on the project.

State Forest instructors Henry Myers and Brent Morrow supervised the crews from the state camp in much of the construction work. Bridges, benches and a wonderful boardwalk into the heart of the marshy area were built. Construction was designed to accommodate handicapped viewers. From that boardwalk last summer, June and I saw more American redstarts than we have ever seen in one place. Another interesting feature at the site is trail markers topped by owl figures each made by one of the camp workers.



When the work at Squeezer Meadow was mostly completed, Gray nominated the site for the Montana Watchable Wildlife program. Subsequently it was awarded that distinction and is now so marked.

Plans include finishing touches on the trails, and the compiling and publishing of a brochure describing the unique features of the area, including a bird and plant list.

Glen Gray, Jack Whitney and Elmer Sprunger along with the other volunteers and state workers deserve our gratitude for showing us what great things can be accomplished when we work together toward common goals.

The Squeezer Meadow Watchable Wildlife Area can be reached from Swan River Highway 83 by turning east off of 83 immediately opposite the Swan River Forest Headquarters approximately between mile markers 58-59. The route into Squeezer is marked by Watchable Wildlife signs.

Rod Ash

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The National Audubon Society's Montana Adopt-a-Forest Program is seeking volunteers to assist this spring/summer in field checking the data collected on possible old growth stands in the Flathead National Forest. The program is being conducted in cooperation with, and with training from, Forest Service

personnel. Volunteers will enjoy an opportunity to learn about old growth ecology while actively participating in an outdoor conservation project of great importance. For more information regarding how you can assist in this effort, please call or write Dawn Gaitis, Star Route, Polebridge, MT 59928, (406) 756-4446.



WILDLIFE WATCHING GETS A BOOST

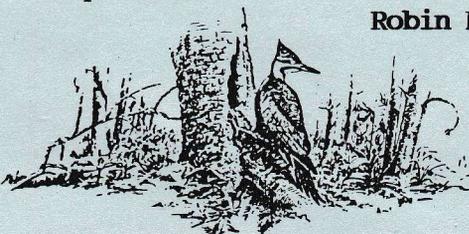
BOOK REVIEW (ETC.)

Teaching Kids to Love the Earth
by Herman, Passineau, Schimpf and
Treuer, 175 pages. Published by
Pfeifer/Hamilton, 1702 E. Jefferson
Street, Duluth, MN 55812.

Curiosity, Exploration, Discovery, Sharing, Passion... these are the section headings of this treasure. Inspired by Rachel Carson, and by teaching seven years of family oriented nature workshops, and by their own families, the authors created a book that will surely become the foundation of environmental education. This book is intended to stimulate feelings for the Earth. By using that inborn sense of adventure and wonder, a child and adult can travel together down the fun path toward understanding. Each chapter contains a story to illustrate the main activity, followed by "Did You Know", "Resources", and "Other Ideas" sections to help you plan your own adventure. This stimulating book, Teaching Kids to Love the Earth, will generate new ideas in any fertile soil.

We recently had a family nature experience as we breakfasted at a local restaurant. Joe quietly indicated that "one of those big woodpeckers" was on the parking lot telephone pole. Angelina ran to the window and said, in a louder voice, that it had flown closer. I stood up and, excitedly, told every one in the restaurant to stop eating and look at the pileated woodpecker. A patron-wide discussion of natural history and house pecking followed. This kind of opportunity probably appears many times throughout even an average day--the trick is to not let even one pass unexplored.

Robin Magaddino



When President Bush presented his budget to Congress 6.2 million dollars were earmarked for recreational, educational, and "watchable wildlife" opportunities on federal lands throughout the U.S. Flathead Forest Supervisor Joel Holtrop recently submitted over a dozen project proposals and hopes to be awarded some of these funds during 1992 through 1994.

Forest Service personnel want to work on these projects in cooperation with interested individuals and organizations such as Flathead Audubon, Montana Dept. of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Project DREAM, and other civic groups.

A few of the proposals submitted by the Flathead Forest are:

1. Produce a brochure and map on **Birding Hotspots of the Flathead Valley.**
2. Develop two **interpretive driving routes.** One along Hungry Horse Reservoir and the other through the Tally Lake District. Some of the habitats featured on these routes would be a marsh/cottonwood forest, expansive meadow/willow bottom, pristine stream or lake and more. These routes might also feature a canopy-level **songbird viewing platform** and a cassette tape featuring birds likely to be heard.
3. Place **interpretive signs** along the cross-country ski trails at Essex and Round Meadows.
4. Install interpretive signs about **recolonization of wolves** in the North Fork.
5. A **visitor center** in the Condon area and a **cabin rental/outdoor education center** at the Star Meadows Guard Station on the Tally District.

How about helping with bird and wildlife inventories for some of the interpretive sites, or offering your ideas and assistance on another project? Let the Forest Service know if you are interested in any of these proposed projects by contacting **Reed Kuennen or Kathy Minta at the Tally Lake District (862-2508).**

SPRING IS THE MELODY OF A MEADOWLARK
Deborah Richie

This morning I wake to a contest. Winter or spring? Mists creep below mountain ridges and block the sun. I walk outside, feeling a dampness uncommon to lands east of the Continental Divide. Clambering over a snow drift and sloshing across a meadow, the magic happens... a western meadowlark sings! Spring is the victor. The long, lush melody sweeps across golden grasses bowed by winter snows, a melody that captures the fragrance of an awakening land. I know again the emerald brilliance of new grass, swelling buds on cottonwoods, wildflowers and bees humming.

Most of Montana's meadowlarks spend winters south of our border and return in mid-March. At once, males take up their stations on fenceposts, shrubs and tall weeds, tilt their bills skyward and defend their territories with buoyant song. They sing not one, but as many as 12 double-noted melodies, each song as bright as the sun that clears the mists from the land.

Watch for meadowlarks singing on our prairies, cultivated meadows and valleys all across Montana. Note the yellow breast, set off by a black swath like a bandanna draped around its neck. In flight, however, the showy meadowlark is rather drab. Look for a robin-sized, plump, brown bird with white on each side of its stubby tail. The brown back streaked with black serves as camouflage from predators.

In April or May meadowlarks build their nests on the ground among grasses. Working together, the pairs first find or scratch out a depression in the grass, and carefully line the nest with a layer of coarse grasses, followed by fine grasses and hair. But they do not stop there. They actually construct a grass roof woven into surrounding vegetation and finish with an entrance on one side. If a nest is destroyed by mowing or other mishap early in the nesting season, the hardy birds start over. I'm not surprised. Nothing seems more optimistic than those first, jeweled notes of a meadowlark on a March morning.

Naturalist John Burroughs wrote of the mystery of birds arriving in spring: "We go out in the morning, and no thrush or vireo is to be heard; we go out again, and every tree and grove is musical".

Truly, we ought to prepare a proper spring welcome for our state bird, the western meadowlark. All Montanans may express their appreciation by giving something back to the birds. You may help meadowlarks and other "watchable wildlife" species to flourish by checking off for wildlife on your state income tax form. Or (if you've forgotten) send a tax-deductible donation directly to **Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, 1420 East Sixth Avenue, Helena, MT 59620.** Make you check out to the "Nongame Wildlife Program".



NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

A Statement of Audubon Philosophy

We believe in the wisdom of nature's design.

We know that soil, water, plants, and wild creatures depend upon each other and are vital to human life.

We recognize that each living thing links to many others in the chain of nature.

We believe that persistent research into the intricate patterns of outdoor life will help to assure wise use of earth's abundance.

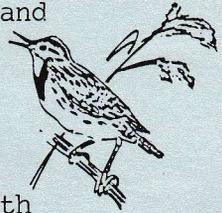
We condemn no wild creature and work to assure that no living species shall be lost.

We believe that every generation should be able to experience spiritual and physical refreshment in places where primitive nature is undisturbed.

So we will be vigilant to protect wilderness areas, refuges, and parks, and to encourage good use of nature's storehouse of resources.

We dedicate ourselves to the pleasant task of opening the eyes of young and old that all may come to

enjoy the beauty of the outdoor world and to share in conserving its wonders forever.





Flathead Audubon Society Directory

BIRD SIGHTINGS

Shaina Keane of White Pine (near Thompson Falls) Montana reports that her pond has "lots of ducks--**wood ducks, cinnamon teal and mallards**". When asked which is her favorite, Shaina (5 years old) thought about it and replied, "cinnamon teal".

Lou Bruno of East Glacier is beaming over his recent success at "owling" (calling in owls at night by voice or electronic broadcasting). Last attempt, Lou pulled in a **western screech owl** one star-filled night along the Teton River west of Choteau. The call of the western, quite unlike that of the eastern screech owl, is whistled notes with the cadence of a bouncing ball.

This spring's flooded fields around the north Flathead Valley boasted a great number of migrating waterfowl--swarms of **mallards, pintails and widgeon** stoking up for the flight northward. This "sheet water" as its called, is very important for migrating dabblers.

Late arrival for **tree swallows** this year--around April 6th. And the first **ruby-crowned kinglet** of spring was singing near my house April 22. **Red-eyed vireo** reported in Kalispell about the same time.

Leo Keane

OFFICERS

President	Brent Mitchell, 960 Kienas Rd, Kalispell, MT 59901	756-8130
Vice president	Leo Keane, 514 Pine Place, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-5807
Secretary	Gail Leonard, 514 Pine Place, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-5807
Treasurer	Tommie Clark, 231 Pine Needle Ln, Bigfork, MT 59911	837-6615

DIRECTORS

MONTANA BIRD HOTLINE 721-2935

CHAIRS

Audubon Adventures	Kim Davis, 4870 Hwy 93S, #62, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-7350
Conservation	Rod Ash, P. O. Box 1129, Condon, MT 59826	754-2289
Field Trips	Dan Casey, P. O. Box 2922, Kalispell, MT 59901	857-3143
Hospitality/Sales	Pattie Brown, 560 Wolf Creek Dr, Bigfork, MT 59911	837-5018
Hostess	Evelyn Kile, 20 Hoffman Draw, Kila, MT 59920	755-4422
Librarian	Marie Shirley, 1016A Park Ave, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-0790
Membership	June Ash, P. O. Box 1129, Condon, MT 59826	754-2289
Newsletter	Sharon Bergman, 354 LaBella Ln, Big Arm, MT 59910	849-5286
Program	Ferne Cohen, P. O. Box 1782, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-2028
Refuge Projects	Bob Ballou, Rt 1, Box 11881, Charlo, MT 59825	644-2365
Schools, Clubs	Jean Robocker, 1655 Montford Rd, Kalispell, MT 59901	756-6344

MONTANA AUDUBON COUNCIL

Office - Janet Ellis, P. O. Box 595, Helena MT 59624 443-3949

The FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY is affiliated with the National Audubon Society and meets on the second Monday of each month from September through May. The business meeting is held at 7:30 pm, followed by a special program at 8 pm. The regular monthly meetings are preceded by an Executive Board meeting. Both meetings are open to all interested people.

THE PILEATED POST is published nine times a year, September through May, and is sent to Flathead Audubon Society members as a membership benefit. Subscriptions for non-members are \$5 per year. Deadline for newsletter copy: the 20th of each month.



the Pileated Post

Flathead Audubon Society

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