

Pileated the Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

Volume 17

Number 2

February, 1992

President's Corner

There is never enough time to do it right the first time, but we always seem to have time to do it over again. The quick fix. Does it work? Look around.

Frustrated with those no-good environmentalists? Fix 'em with a new sign: "Environmentalists welcome you to Montana. Park your car at the border and walk in." Tired of the decade-old wilderness issue? Fix it with a poor wilderness bill and hope the issue goes away by election time. Endangered Species Act a problem? Quick, hire a God Squad to fix the darn owls, etc. Forest appeals and professional foresters getting you down? You can fix them too. Change the appeals process to eliminate dissension from the conservationists and send the foresters packing (like Mumma and Nunn). Sure, you can "fix" something for the short ter, but will the fix last?

Conservationists are in the resource issues for the duration. Although we have been subjected to a lot of name calling and harrassment, we have not been the ones to initiate new slogans, signs and bumper stickers attacking our opponents. We dig in; we look at the bigger picture, we plan for the long haul and a lasting solution that is well-thought-out, with facts, science, math and studies to back us up. Do we have a few well-paid organizers that can hype up a crowd? No, we just have a lot of unpaid organized people who have vision and a hope and conviction that we will be the ones to bring balance to our land use priorities. No hype, no emotion-alism.

Contrary to popular belief, we don't want it all. We're storing our energy for the long haul and a fix that will help all mankind by helping Nature.

Why don't we attack our opponents and their quick-fix approaches? Because we have compassion for the working folks; because we all work and because it's not a wise use of our energy. Also, we see further down the road than they do; further than a single timber sale, further than a forest management plan and further than some interim changes in the local economy.

Quick fix it today? We'll just end up having to go back and redo it tomorrow. Is that what we really want?

Brent Mitchell

Mark Your Calendar

FEBRUARY

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

***2/10/92 - Board of Directors Dinner Meeting,**
5 pm, at the Bigfork Inn, Bigfork. Open to those interested.

Regular Monthly Meeting: United Methodist Church,

Commerce and Electric Avenues, Bigfork.
Business Meeting: 7:30 pm. Program: 8 pm.
Everyone welcome.

Program: Rosalind Yanishevsky, PhD. will give a presentation featuring National Audubon's Adopt-a-Forest Program. She is the Ancient Forest Mapping Coordinator of the project. (See story on page 5.)

Old-growth forests are a unique and irreplaceable part of our native diversity. Less than 5% of the nation's old growth forests remain, and the few that are left are falling at a faster rate than tropical rain forests. Her program will focus on the Swancrest and the work of volunteer mappers to identify old-growth forest, sensitive wildlife and plant habitat, indicator species and important fisheries and streams.



The Editor's Spotting Scope

"The only thing that never changes is change itself." Someone said that once and has been quoted and misquoted ever since. There's a lot of truth in those nine words and it frequently hits home for me when something I have been lead to believe turns out to be a fallacy.

Take bird feeding, for instance. I read somewhere, or was told by someone whose counsel I respected, that once you start feeding birds, you must continue without interruption or the birds will suffer. Well, it ain't necessarily so. Walt Aring pointed out in the OSPREY OBSERVER, the Northern Idaho Audubon Society newsletter, that "wild birds are not stupid," and those that winter over are well-adapted to using and exhausting a particular food source, then moving to another one. Now, why didn't that occur to me?



When I have a week-end trip planned, I make sure there is an ample supply of bird seed in the feeders, so my feathered friends won't suffer deprivation. And when I go on a two-week trip, I arrange for a neighbor to be the substitute feeder. (She calls and whistles to them also, but does that on her own and not at my insistence.)

So it turns out that a failure to continue with a supply of bird seed is not going to be catastrophic. The most it will do is send the birds to another neighborhood feeder. It's kind of a relief to know that I will not return from a trip and find the ground strewn with birds who died of starvation because I failed to make the necessary arrangements for their feeding, and I won't have to deal with a guilty conscience while looking at an empty, deserted bird feeder.

But upon my return, I would have to deal with deserted bird feeders and I wouldn't like that. One of the nice aspects of returning home from a trip is the anticipation of seeing the chickadees, juncos, finches and all the other winged etcetera friends in the backyard and adjoining wooded area.

For me, once I start feeding the birds, I'll do my utmost to continue without interruption until spring. Not just because it will help them get through the winter ... but mainly because it will help me get through the winter.

Sharon Bergman



Winter Exploration/A Silent Tale

At this time of year, a great place to go for a winter outing is the north shore of Flathead Lake. The water has gone down and exposed the sandy flats which make a fine surface on which to ski, stroll or run.

If you are a sun lover choose a sunny day and get your fill of rays beaming off the lake and the snow. You might even find an exposed portion of sand on which to have a winter beach picnic.

On the abundant overcast days, stroll along and enjoy the dramatic backdrop of the water and Swan/Mission Ranges, as well as the surreal forms of the old exposed tree roots. The sand flats are a real delight for photography, bird watching, contemplating, sun-bathing and cross country skiing. Access points are about one mile west of the Bigfork bowling lanes or the little dirt road across from where the building once stood at the Somers tie yard.

It was the rebar that first caught my eye. So I paused for a closer look and realized what I had come upon there on the Flathead Lake sand flat was an old hunting blind. After the rebar, I noticed a jumble of rusted fencing and then some chicken wire, and how the small, driftwood tree trunks were not helter skelter at all, but deliberately set to conceal a hunter.

I was about to walk on, but a little tuft of something flicked on the new snow. It was fur and there were bits of it scattered throughout the little blind. As always, when I find fur or feathers, I began an investigation. A story could unfold here. Lots of short bits of fur; no blood ... no tracks ... no entrails. And then I saw it: the little limp body impaled on the shiny pointed branch. The mouse: the larder of the shrike. The old hunting blind: put to use by whatever hunter happened along.

My field guide indicates that shrikes are birds of open country where there are scattered trees. They prey on insects, small mammals and birds, and impale their prey on thorns. Happy exploring if you go to the sand flats ... and be on the lookout for shrikes. Sue Ketcher, Somers





Conservation Comments

PROTECTING MONTANA'S WETLANDS. Protecting Montana's wetlands continues to be a high priority of both the Montana Audubon Council and the Flathead Audubon chapter.

Last month, in Helena, the Montana Audubon Council sponsored the first-ever Montana Wetlands conference. Representatives of a variety of conservation groups and public agencies gathered to discuss the problems faced by wetlands and to begin to develop plans to protect and enhance this vital resource.

Our wetlands are absolutely vital to the health of our wildlife populations and to the health and well-being of human populations. Wetlands provide the single most critical habitat component for wildlife and protect water quality for human communities.

Conference speakers pointed out that Montana is fortunate that more of its wetlands are intact than is true of the U. S. as a whole, where there has been disastrous decline in wetland acreages.

However, it was noted that Montana wetlands, as well as those remaining in the rest of the U. S., are threatened by proposed changes in federal regulations and by bad legislation being advocated in Congress. Both the regulations and legislation would change the definition of wetlands, resulting in the loss of legal protection for an estimated 300,000 of the 850,000 acres of Montana wetlands.

A wetlands specialist pointed out that Senator Max Baucus has been leading the fight to keep strong wetlands protection in Senate Bill 1081, which reauthorizes the Clean Water Act. Unfortunately, Senator Conrad Burns and Congressman Ron Marlenee have sponsored legislation which would drastically reduce wetlands protection.

In response to a letter requesting his support for continued strong wetlands regulations, Senator Burns rejected the appeal and commented that while he was a duck hunter and realized the importance of wetlands, "..... a pothole in the middle of a wheat field, which holds water for only a few days each year, should not be considered a wetland."



At the conference, a Fish & Wildlife Service representative stated that northern pintail populations had declined by 60% since 1954. He further stated that the decline was directly related to the loss of "seasonal prairie potholes", which Senator Burns calls "a pothole in the middle of a wheatfield."

Conservation organization representatives at the conference agreed to continue the effort to coordinate wetland's efforts. A followup meeting will be scheduled by Montana Audubon's program director, Janet Ellis. It was also agreed that a state wetlands inventory would be undertaken.

Each Audubon chapter was asked to name a wetlands chairperson, and Leo Keane, assisted by Neil Brown, agreed to be the Flathead Audubon wetlands coordinator.

The first priority established by the conference was to support Senator Baucus in reauthorizing the Clean Water Act without reducing wetlands protection. Letters supporting Senate Bill 1081 and opposing HR 1330 and SB 1483 should be sent to the Montana Congressional delegation. And while you're writing, thank Senator Baucus for supporting a good wetlands law.

Rod Ash

Your Right To Write

Writing your elected officials is one of the simplest and most effective ways to influence public policy on behalf of the environment. **Address the envelope properly.** The Honorable _____; U. S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515; or The Honorable _____; U. S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510. **Identify the bill or issue.** If you write about a particular piece of legislation, give the bill's number, such as Senate Bill 1081, or describe it by a popular title, such as the Clean Water Act. **Give your reasons for taking a stand,** but don't berate your representative. **Sign the letter** and include a return address.



AUDUBON PRAISES REINTRODUCTION OF CAPTIVE BRED BLACK-FOOTED FERRETS INTO THE WILDS OF WYOMING

Audubon expressed praise of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management and Wyoming Game and Fish Department's reintroduction of 50 black-footed ferrets into Wyoming. This release took place on September 3 into Shirley Basin, located 50 miles south of Casper, Wyoming on BLM and private lands.

The black-footed ferret, a charter member of the 1964 Endangered Species list, was thought in the 1970's to have become extinct. In 1981 a few were rediscovered just east of Yellowstone National Park. Hoping to reverse their population decline, biologists took six black-footed ferrets out of the wild in 1989, and have successfully bred 350 in captivity.

"The black-footed ferret captive breeding program shows once again that the Endangered Species Act has performed a vital function in preventing a species from becoming extinct. Had these creatures not been taken from the wild two years ago, the black-footed ferrets' chances of survival would have all but disappeared," said Randy Snodgrass, Audubon's Director of Wildlife Policy. The nation's endangered species law is up for reauthorization in 1992. Snodgrass emphasized the need to strengthen the Act when it is reconsidered by Congress next year.

Montana Ferret Reintroduction Considered

Montana ferret reintroduction needs your help! Black-footed ferrets are



Black-footed Ferret

scheduled to be introduced into South Phillips County in September, 1992. In order to have the reintroduction happen, a management plan must be approved. **Letters in support of the management plan are needed!** Landowners who oppose the reintroduction effort are

trying to get lots of letters in opposition submitted. If we are going to get ferrets reintroduced to Montana, you need to write a letter - in support - today!

The management plan tries to accommodate landowners' concerns by going as far as saying that ferret reintroduction will not "reduce the right of private landowners to manage their property." It also says that 1) management actions will be taken on private lands only with landowner approval; 2) that livestock grazing will not be reduced on state or federal lands because of the reintroduction and 3) that prairie dog expansion would not be allowed on BLM lands without making up for grazing losses. Despite these concessions to landowners, many still oppose the proposal.

Ferrets are an important part of Montana. They have been missing from the state since about 1978. It is time to get them back. The management plan has adequate protections for landowners. Wyoming has already proceeded with a reintroduction effort; Montana should follow suit.

The comment period ends February 14, 1992. Send your letter to: Wildlife Division, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 1420 E. 6th Avenue, Helena, MT 59620.

Janet Ellis

NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Enjoy full National Audubon Society benefits—and AUDUBON magazine—at a special new-member rate of \$20.

Mail to:
Flathead Audubon Society
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Bigfork, Montana 59911

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Join today and receive:

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MEMBERSHIP in one of the 500 local Audubon chapters nationwide (if there is one in your area) with access to field-trips and other activities.

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DISCOUNTS on nature books, collectibles and gifts. And with your membership you're supporting the National Audubon Society's vital efforts at protecting wildlife and environment.

NEW MEMBERS ONLY!



Earth Day Continued

Volunteer Mappers To Be Recognized

For several months, 14 Flathead Audubon volunteers spent many hours hunched over USFS topographical maps and computerized data, placing pertinent information on acetate overlays, to produce a graphic mapping system that will illustrate the old-growth forests in the Flathead National Forest.

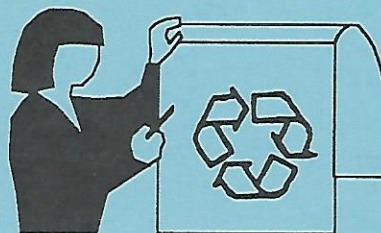
On February 10, at the regular meeting, the Flathead Audubon will honor the following volunteers for their efforts on behalf of the Adopt-A-Forest program, by naming them Members-of-the-Month: Rod and June Ash, Condon; Sharon Bergman, Big Arm; Dee Blank, Whitefish; Roseanne Bloom, Kalispell; Lou Bruno, East Glacier; Helen Bushby, Bigfork; Sam Culotta, Bigfork; Mayre Flowers, Whitefish; Evelyn Kile, Kila; Robin Maggadino, Bigfork; Karen and Dan Owens, now of North Bend, WA and Jim Rogers, Polson.

Audubon Saves Cedar Grove

Audubon's Adopt-a-Forest is helping identify and save old growth forests. Through mapping and gathering solid information, the project has a reputation for high quality work and it is paying off.

Recently Audubon identified a cedar grove that was sold as part of the Earthquake Timber Sale in the Lolo National Forest. Because of the rare and threatened status of old growth cedar, negotiations were conducted with the district ranger and eventually the Forest Service bought back the cedar grove from the timber purchaser. The Earthquake Timber Sale will cut about half the area originally slated for logging. The ancient cedars will be saved, with a 200-300 foot buffer zone around the grove.

The Adopt-a-Forest program and its volunteers and mappers were credited with the successful action.



Flathead Audubon's recycling efforts are being recognized by National Audubon's Community Solid Waste Program. Adaora Lathan, coordinator of the program, has

advised that Flathead Audubon is one of the ten National Audubon chapters/communities selected to help implement and improve local solid waste management programs. The selection was made because of the established programs in the Flathead Valley and because of its unique rural-semi-urban area.

National Audubon's program is chapter-base with cooperative working relationships with other grassroot activists such as those maintained with the Earth Day Coalition and the Flathead Communities Recycling Coalition. Along with waste reduction, recycling and household hazardous waste, backyard composting is a primary focus of NAS chapters.

Flathead Audubon was recognized for the following ongoing activities since Earth Day, 1990: Fact Sheets; networking with local and statewide organizations; a flyer on recycling options; a proposal for a Solid Waste Task Force; the use of the EPA videos ("How the Waste was Won" and "Smart Shopping") presented in classrooms and to civic groups; and monthly attendance at Solid Waste District and Board of Commissioners meetings.

Participation in the program will involve exchanging information. Eventually a guidebook will be produced to assist other chapters and communities in developing Solid Waste Management Programs.

Those interested in learning more about Solid Waste Management, can attend a program presented by Christine Kaufman, Waste Reduction and Recycling Coordinator of the Montana Department of Health and Environmental Science. The program will be conducted on Thursday, February 13, 7 pm, at the Justice Center in Kalispell.

Ferne Cohen



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Flathead Audubon Society Directory

OFFICERS

President	Brent Mitchell, 960 Kienas Rd, Kalispell, MT 59901	756-8130
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MONTANA BIRD HOTLINE 721-2935

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Ed Prach, 110 Goat Trail, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-1350
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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	Patti 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
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	Ed Prach, 110 Goat Trail, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-1350
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	Linda Vassallo, 683 Somers Rd, Somers, MT 59932	857-3166
Schools, Clubs	Jean Robocker, 1655 Montford Rd, Kalispell, MT 59901	756-6344
Wetlands/Waterfowl	Linda Vassallo, 683 Somers Rd, Somers, MT 59932	857-3166

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 members of the Flathead Audubon Society as a membership benefit. Subscriptions for non-members are \$5 per year. Deadline for newsletter copy: the 20th of each month.



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