



# Pileated the Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

Volume 18

Number 8

November, 1993

## ❖ President's Corner

"He who slings mud ... loses ground." I think about that statement often and believe in it. I'm proud of being associated with Audubon, a group of caring, intelligent people who do not have time to "sling mud".

We in Flathead Audubon don't waste our time and energy trying to work people into a frenzy, calling names, belittling others, thinking up new bumper stickers, tearing down relationships or contributing to the polarization within our community. Members of the general public do not see or hear inflammatory rhetoric at our meetings or in our publications. We are conservationists who are trying to work with others. We work on committees with the Forest Service, Cooperative Planning Coalition and Fish, Wildlife & Parks. We work on education projects with the schools and timber industry (Family Forestry Expo, Mini-College). And we work with other conservation groups (MT Wilderness Ass'n., Earth Day Coalittion, Flathead Lake Protection Ass'n.)

To work out problems, we must continue to work with, talk with, meet with people who have other perspectives. The initial stages of these get togethers are often uncomfortable, but "progress involves risk -- you can't steal second with your foot on first." The efforts made to come together, to understand, are worth the time spent. We at Flathead Audubon will continue working out the complex natural resource problems with others in our community. We will not sling mud; as a group and individually, we have better uses for our energies.

Pride in our Audubon chapter comes from



maintaining respect and credibility within our communities, consistency in our statements and our actions, courtesy to all, regardless of their beliefs, and loyalty to each other and the natural world.

Friends, the mud we don't sling ... makes fertile ground for progress. ❖ **Brent Mitchell**

## ❖ MAKE NOTE of it!

◆ November General Meeting 11/8/93  
United Methodist Church, Bigfork  
Meeting: 7:30 pm - Program: 8:15 pm

◆ Happy Turkey Day 11/25/93

◆ December General Meeting 12/13/93  
United Methodist Church, Bigfork  
Meeting: 7:30 pm - Program: 8:15 pm

## Program for November Meeting

Janet Ellis, Program Director for the Montana Audubon Council, will be the featured speaker at the November meeting. "The Creature Connection: Protecting Montana's Biodiversity and Endangered Species" will be the subject of her presentation, which will be illustrated with *Turning the Tide*, the National Audubon slide show on endangered species.

Janet invites us to join in the effort to preserve Montana's biodiversity and to keep Montana whole. Under her leadership, Montana Audubon Council will be focusing on our threatened and endangered species, which include four of Montana's rare creatures: the wolf, black-footed ferret, least tern and piping plover. ☞





## The Editor's Spotting Scope

Awhile back someone commented that we shouldn't be feeding birds and four-legged creatures during the winter months because they will become dependent on us and have a difficult time making it on their own come spring. In other words, we might be tainting the natural wildlife, making it less pure and not so wild.

My first reaction was "Oh, give us a break!". And then, being an open-minded person willing to hear all factions, I decided to investigate further before attempting to shout anyone down. This meant going direct to a reliable source. I headed for the cedar tree near the pond in back of my place and waited for The Chickadee to show up, so we could talk and I'd find out once and for all. While I waited, days passed and I raked leaves, prepared the lawnmower for winter, cleaned out the garden beds and repaired a bird feeder. (Point #1 - If this bird was tamed because I feed it, it's about time it learned to come when I call.)

There he is! "Hey, you rascal! Where've you been all summer? I've hardly seen you."

"You surely didn't think I'd hang around the bird feeder when the weather was good, did you? There was a courtship to carry on, the nuptials to consummate, a nest to build and then young'uns to raise. Spring and summer are always the busiest time of the year for us, you know."

"I have a question to ask. Do you depend on me and the neighbors for your food during the winter or could you survive without us?"

"Oh, give me a break! One of the first things we learned when we got shoved out of the nest was how to survive on our own and that's one of the first things we teach our young. We love the sunflower seeds and it's handy to have them served up in the feeder; it means less work for us. And there's something else we like: watching you struggle through the snow to fill the feeders. But, hey, I've got things to do and I'd better git to doing them. See you at the feeder." (Point #2: In some respects, birds are like humans; they'll take advantage of a prepared meal and they take fiendish pleasure out of someone's obvious discomfort, but that doesn't make them less wild.)

Okay, I've drawn my conclusions and here's the main point: Birds and wild creatures like the assistance we give them and they're still a part of the wildlife community. We can be on the outside edge of that community as interested observers and we all benefit.

**Sharon Bergman**

## Black-footed Ferret Reintroduction Delayed

Montanans won't see black-footed ferrets reintroduced into our state until 1994, at the earliest. A shortage of ferrets has forced reintroduction plans to be postponed for at least one more year.

The original plan was to release ferrets in three western states this year: Wyoming, South Dakota, and Montana. It was expected that 150 ferrets would be available for release from captive breeding programs. Instead, because of a poor breeding year and an aging captive breeding population, only 69 ferrets were available for release. All 69 ferrets will be released in

the Shirley Basin of Wyoming.

When more ferrets become available, Montana is expected to receive 50 ferrets on the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge south of Malta. The one-year delay for reintroduction does not change plans other than setting them back a year.

Ferrets have been protected as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act since 1973, when the Act originally passed. The decline of black-footed ferret populations is directly linked to the massive eradication programs of prairie dogs, the ferrets'

sole source of food, during the first half of this century.

Ferrets have not been found in Montana since 1978, when ferrets were discovered near Ekalaka. Perhaps we will see them again in 1994.







## Board Report

The Board of Directors spent most of the time at the October board meeting finalizing plans for delivery of the bird seed and reviewing this season's sales, which were down from previous years. Extra seed will be available during the winter months for those who failed to order enough.

Plans are being formulated for the Christmas Bird Count in December. It was reported that the Swan Lake area will have a count circle. Those interested in taking part should contact The Raptor Room.

Flathead Audubon's new mailing address is: P. O. Box 9173, Kalispell, MT 59904. The Bigfork post office box will be monitored until the rental period expires at the end of the year. 📧



## What's a Pish?

If you want a bird to put in an appearance, you can't whistle for it - like for a dog; you can't holler for it - like for a pig; and you can't just yell good and loud - like for the kids. But you can pish.

Pishing causes adult birds to investigate the sound, even while carrying food in their bills. They pause, look and come closer -- to satisfy their curiosity.

A pish is a noise you can make with your mouth. Just whisper "Pish" rather forcefully and let the air out at the end of it. Or you can give your own arm or hand a squeaky kiss. (You might want to check the area first, to make sure just you and the birds are there.) Pishing is another skill you can develop to enhance your bird watching.

## Member of the Month

### ✿ Neal Brown

When he was a youngster, Neal Brown's grandmother made up names for all the grassland plants in the area in an effort "to shut him up", as he put it. It may not have shut him up, but it did result in a lifelong interest in the natural world around him.

Born and raised in Crook, Colorado, Neal studied anthropology at Colorado State University and the U.S. Army taught him how to be a helicopter mechanic. Job wise, he's been a heavy equipment operator/truck driver (a lot) and, he added, "House painting got me through college, pool table refurbishing got me through Alaskan winters and being an aircraft mechanic got me into the Nation Museum of Flight." He is currently a theatre technician.

A mutual friend in Fairbanks, Alaska introduced Neal to his future wife, Pattie, knowing they were both birders. They went birding on their first date and were married shortly after that. A few months later they were traveling through Montana and camped at Hungry Horse at the end of October. "The weather turned," Neal said, "forcing us to seek a kitchenette so we could dry out. We picked up a Home Seekers paper while shopping for groceries and found our home in it."

Neal first became involved with Flathead Audubon when he assisted with the distribution of bird seed, and he's been assisting with the Bigfork distribution ever since. He is vitally interested in the riparian wetlands of northwest Montana and serves as the chapter's wetlands co-chair. He commented, "Between 80 and 90% of all wildlife species depend on riparian habitat. Wetland preservation is the key to the biodiversity we have and enjoy."

Flathead Audubon's Member of the Month, Neal Brown: not one to hesitate about speaking up, which he probably learned from his grandmother. ✿





## Birds in the Blizzard: News from Project FeederWatch



While the eastern half of North America was digging out from a massive snowstorm last March, hungry birds were digging in at backyard feeders, according to Project FeederWatch coordinator Margaret Barker.

The winter bird survey documented a surge in feeder visits during the "Blizzard of '93," explains FeederWatch data analyst Diane Tessaglia. "In the week immediately following the blizzard, we saw a significant increase in bird numbers. In areas the blizzard didn't hit, numbers actually declined."

Meanwhile, FeederWatchers in the West tracked another natural disaster. Salmonella, a deadly bacterial infection, killed numerous Pine Siskins and other feeder birds.

Continentwide, the news was more cheerful. Despite a popular

### Despite natural disasters, winter bird populations are holding steady.

perception that many species are declining, FeederWatch data show that most feeder birds seem to be holding steady.

Project FeederWatch is a joint effort of two bird research centers: Long Point Bird Observatory in Ontario and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in New York. Every two weeks from November to March, thousands of "kitchen-window scientists" across North America count birds at their backyard feeders, noting which species visit, and how many.

Together, the volunteer FeederWatchers collect far more data than a single scientist ever could. Cornell ornithologists use the

information to track bird population trends.

For example, this past winter many FeederWatchers thought they saw fewer birds than normal at their feeders. But the FeederWatch data, once analyzed, didn't support this gut reaction. According to Tessaglia, the "missing" birds were mostly invasion species—birds such as Common Redpoll, Evening Grosbeak, and Pine Siskin. These birds breed and winter in northern areas but sometimes wander south when food is in short supply. This past winter wasn't a big invasion year, perhaps because food was plentiful in the north.

Other bird species that really did decline the previous winter showed modest increases this past winter, including Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal, Red-bellied Woodpecker, European Starling, American Goldfinch, Northern Cardinal, and Black-capped Chickadee.

On the down side, some ground-feeding sparrows showed declines. For White-throated Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Golden-crowned Sparrow, and Harris' Sparrow, this was the second year in a row that FeederWatch noted a downward trend.

But for these birds, fewer feeder visits may not mean a real change in population levels. For the last two years, eastern winters have been mild, with little snow. As a result, says Tessaglia, birds may have shunned feeders because natural food was easy to find.

This coming winter, says Barker, FeederWatchers will have a chance to expand the scope of their backyard investigations. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is launching a novel program, the National Science Experiments, that offers research

opportunities for bird lovers of all abilities. FeederWatchers are especially invited to take part in one experiment, the Seed Preference Test—they'll help to find out which foods birds like best.

### Project FeederWatch Wants You!

Sign up now for Project FeederWatch, and this November we'll send you a participant's kit with complete instructions.

Yes, I want to be a FeederWatcher!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

——\$14 check enclosed  
Make checks payable in U.S. dollars  
to Project FeederWatch

——Charge \$14 to my

——VISA                      ——MasterCard  
   ——DISCOVER

Account No. \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Send this form to:

Project FeederWatch  
159 Sapsucker Woods Road  
Ithaca, New York 14850

For more information, call:  
(607) 254-2414

*As an independent study, Project FeederWatch is financed by its participants. Corporate sponsors and grants provide additional support.*





## Strong Wetlands Bill Introduced

Senator Barbara Boxer of California introduced S. 1195, a bill which strengthens the Section 404 wetlands protection program of the Clean Water Act. Senator Boxer's bill is identical to that of Rep. Don Edwards, H.R. 350, which currently has 83 cosponsors in the House.

The National Audubon Society strongly endorses both H.R. 350 and the new S. 1195, and is calling on strong grassroots support for these bills to help convince Congress to enact stricter wetlands protection in the Clean Water Act.

The Boxer bill will play a vital role in improving Section 404 as a strong efficient and scientifically defensible wetlands protection program. It encompasses a number of measures designed to strengthen existing Clean Water Act wetlands protections:

- ♦Establishes a national policy to preserve the quantity and quality of the nation's wetland resources, and to restore wetlands which have been degraded.

- ♦Expands the number of wetland-destroying activities which require a permit under Section 404.

- ♦Gives the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service a more meaningful role in protecting fish and wildlife habitats, and strengthens EPA's oversight of the general permit program.

- ♦Improves the Section 404 Permit Process by making the program faster, more efficient and more user friendly.

- ♦Establishes a sound, scientific basis for wetlands delineation by requiring that any revisions to the Federal manual for identifying wetlands take into consideration the findings of the Congressionally mandated National Academy of the Sciences study.

- ♦Creates financial incentives for wetlands conservation.

## What Can We Do?

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee is expected to begin working in earnest on the Clean Water Act reauthorization this fall. Our Senators, particularly those on the Environment Committee and its Clean Water Subcommittee, must hear *now* that their constituents care about protecting the nation's wetlands.

Take time to write your Senators and encourage them to support strong wetlands provisions in the Clean Water Act:

- ♦Tell them how important wetlands are in this area to wildlife, water quality and flood control;

- ♦Ask them to cosponsor the Boxer Bill, S.1195;

- ♦Tell them that the Baucus Chaffee bill (S.1304) and the White House plan need to be strengthened if they are truly to protect wetlands.

Send a copy of this letter to Senator Bob Graham, the chair of the Clean Water Subcommittee (U. S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510).

Senator Max Baucus  
706 Hart Senate Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20510  
(202)224-2651

Senator Conrad Burns  
825 Hart Senate Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20510  
(202)224-2644

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## Meet the Board

(This feature spotlights Flathead Audubon members who serve on the Board of Directors.)



**Name:** Rod Ash

**Position:** Conservation Chair  
**Board Member:** Since 1986

**Originally from:** Bay Area, California

**Present home:** Condon, MT

**Occupation:** President,  
Montana Audubon Council



**Flathead Audubon Society Directory****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	Kent Miller, 781 1st Ave. EN, Kalispell, MT 59901	257-4100
Treasurer	Holly Butlett, P.O. Box 7821, Kalispell, MT 59904-0821	257-2025
Past President	Robin Magaddino, 2100 Swan Hwy, Bigfork, MT 59911	837-4294

**DIRECTORS**

1991-94	Sam Culotta, 979 Eastman Dr, Bigfork, MT 59911	837-4298
1991-94	Malcolm Thompson, P.O. Box 1105, Columbia Falls, MT 59912	892-4208
1993-96	Elaine Corrigan, 7405 Valley View Rd, Polson, MT 59860	883-6895
1993-96	Carol Purchase, 781 1st Ave. EN, Kalispell, MT 59901	257-4100

**CHAIRS**

Audubon Adventures	Kim Davis, 1230 Rhodes Draw, Kalispell, MT 59901	755-1311
Conservation	Rod Ash, P.O. Box 1129, Condon, MT 59826	754-2289
Field Trips	Dan Casey, P.O. Box 7922, Kalispell, MT 59904	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	Gail Leonard, 514 Pine Place, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-5807
Membership	June Ash, P.O. Box 1129, Condon, MT 59826	754-2289
Newsletter	Sharon Bergman, 354 LaBella Lane, Big Arm, MT 59910	849-5286
Program	Ferne Cohen, P.O. Box 1782, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-2028
	Ed Prach, 110 Goat Trail, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-1350
Refuge Projects	Lynn Kelly, 6525 Rocky Point Road, Polson, MT 59860	883-5797
Schools, Clubs	Jean Robocker, 1655 Montford Road, Kalispell, MT 59901	756-6344
Wetlands/Waterfowl	Leo Keane, 514 Pine Place, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-5807
	Neil Brown, 560 Wolf Creek Drive, Bigfork, MT 59911	837-5018

**Montana Audubon Council**

<b>OFFICE</b>	Janet Ellis, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624	443-3949
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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 p.m. followed by a special program at 8 p.m. The regular monthly meeting is preceded by the 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 \$5.00 per year. **Deadline for newsletter copy: the 20th of each month.**

**National Audubon Society  
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Enjoy full National Audubon Society benefits and AUDUBON magazine, as well as PILEATED POST newsletter.

Check your category rate from the following:

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Name

Address

City

State  Zip

N54 7XCHA

Send this application and your check to:

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Chapter Membership Data Center  
P.O. Box 51001  
Boulder, CO 80322-1001

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Condon, Montana 59826

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