

# Pileated the Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

Volume 19

Number 1

January, 1994

## Dangers to Migratory Birds in Our Gardens: Cats

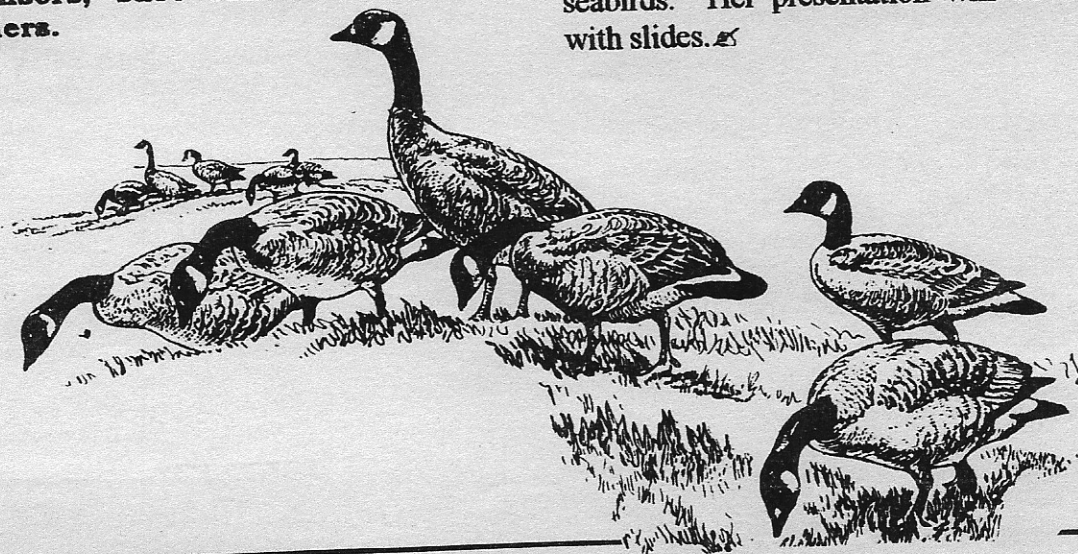
The Problem: Dr. Stanley Temple and John Coleman of the University of Wisconsin estimate that rural cats in Wisconsin kill between 20 to 150 million songbirds (35% of a rural cat's diet) annually. Many people believe that a collar bell will alert birds to danger, but research shows that cats either sit and wait for their prey or stalk very slowly. By the time a bell rings, it is too late. Research has also shown that declawing a cat does not prevent it from taking wildlife.

The Solution: Cats should either be confined indoors or be restricted to a fenced area.

-From "Partners in Flight"

## Did You Know That ...

At least three kinds of feeders should be used in your bird feeding area? According to Irene Cosgrove, who wrote *My Recipes are for the Birds*, they are seed dispensers, suet containers and ground feeders.



## MAKE NOTE of it! ✍

◆ January General Meeting 1/10/94  
United Methodist Church, Bigfork  
Meeting: 7:30 pm - Program: 8:15 pm

◆ February General Meeting 2/14/94  
United Methodist Church, Bigfork  
Meeting: 7:30 pm - Program: 8:15 pm

## Program for January Meeting

Susan Hitchcox, a graduate of Cornell University with a degree in Natural Resources, will be the featured speaker, presenting a program on "National Audubon's Puffin Project: Re-establishing Sea Birds in the Northeast."

Susan worked as a Wildlife Intern for Maine Audubon, monitoring endangered shore birds prior to spending the summer of '88 off the coast of Maine on the Puffin Project. The goal of re-establishing puffins on the offshore islands has since been expanded to include other seabirds. Her presentation will be illustrated with slides. ✍





## The Editor's Spotting Scope

Like many conservationists, I belong to several national organizations, paying the annual dues and supporting several of the sponsored programs and projects. This results in my name being included on other mailing lists, all relating to the environment in some form. There are frequent requests for donations, by phone as well as by mail, but I don't send money every time I'm asked.

I have been asked to help save the whales, the black rhinoceros, and the rain forest in the Amazon; I've received pleas to help stamp out the ivory trade, curtail illegal poaching of hunter trophies and to save our national parks, any one of several. I've been asked to donate on behalf of vanishing species, vanishing wetlands and vanishing forests.

There seems to be a relentless stream of requests and in some instances I'm made to feel guilty if I don't respond as requested. On one occasion, I got into a heated argument on the telephone with a young man who was seeking funds for a special project by a prominent conservation group of which I am a member. When I indicated that my funds for conservation only stretched so far and I couldn't give anymore, he implied that only their program was deserving and the others should be sacrificed. Whoa, partner! That just about did it for me and that conservation group!

Of the groups I support, each one has its own goals and attempts to achieve those goals in a different manner. In my view, one is not more deserving than another.

I'm proud to be a conservationist and I'm proud to be a member of the various groups, especially National Audubon. I only wish I could afford to donate \$100 every time I'm asked, but that's not even in the realm of possibility.

The reality is I can pay dues, write

letters, edit a newsletter and make an occasional contribution — if you don't ask me around Christmas or tax time. Attempting to make me feel guilty by letter or phone is not going to elicit any additional support. It could have just the opposite reaction.

Sharon Bergman



## Fewer Birds at Your Feeder?

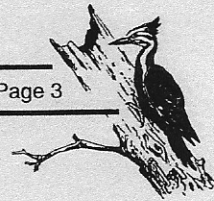
Questions have been raised about the apparent decline of birds at backyard feeders. At the last general meeting, Dan Casey (who works for FWP) commented that his office has received numerous inquiries and the following is the explanation given.

One of the major reasons is the weather, which has been good. There is still a lot of natural food around, which they prefer, and the birds will return to the feeders when the natural supply is depleted.

There may be a slight decline in some species because of the wet summer. Birds which nest on the ground may not have produced as many young as in the past due to the nest being soaked for long periods of time.

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## Wetlands Watch by Leo Keane

Two summers ago my dog, Buck, and I took a little detour on our routine evening walk around the neighborhood. (It used to be a daily run around the neighborhood, but old Buck is getting up in years and I'm no spring chicken either.)

Ours is a north Whitefish neighborhood, not far from the lake, and there was a rumor of eventual expansion into what everybody called the "old spruce bog". Buck and I are thinking it might be interesting to see what that "old spruce bog" is all about, so we decide to duck in for a moment.

It is like stepping around a heavy curtain, as heavy foliage closes in behind us. Traffic noises dim. We stride into a canopy of aged cottonwood limbs, like beams, and spruce trees that rise straight and stout as columns. Soon we are deep in the forest and it seems as quiet as a cathedral. We stop beside an ancient cottonwood and listen.

A Swainson's Thrush elusive song filters out of the bog, bubbly and purring like a spring. This is June, so there will be a nest nearby, impossibly concealed -- perhaps in that copse of fallen timbers. But I have yet to find a Swainson's nest; they are as elusive as their song.

Gradually I become aware of a soft twittering and chattering sifting down from the forest canopy. Looking up I see a melange of leafy green, pale sky blue and sunset gold. The songs of those furtive birds run together like a watercolor too. I concentrate on individual notes: a Red-eyed Vireo, a Western Tanager, a Townsend's Warbler and, I think, an Orange-crowned. It's a neotropical paradise up there in the leafy crown -- all those birds have come home to their summer jungle.

Neither furtive nor elusive, a flashing Pileated Woodpecker startles my reverie as he swoops to the cottonwood, and the forest rings with his echoic call. He latches with great nonchalance to the craggy bark overhead and serenely eyeballs me and Buck.

We have to leave ... before nightfall overtakes the forest. I rise and a ruffed grouse flutters in a flurry of broken wing, crooked tail and one limp leg as she tumbles away into a thicket. Her chicks materialize like camouflaged puffballs and jostle after her. Don't worry, Mom; Buck is no bird dog.

We retreat by the same way we came, taking one last look before stepping back outside. Two flags of whitetail deer bounce deeper into the gloom.

Once again on the noisy roadway my thoughts are troubled. I can't picture this forest gone; can't picture the thickets bulldozed into heaps and burned like some third world country; can't picture dump trucks lumbering in with loads of fill to bury lady slippers and bird nests. I

can't think of a parking lot laid over the watercolor painting of the evening I just experienced.

But, of course, the land-owner, in this case, would rather raise hotels and restaurants, tennis courts and condos than wild creatures and natural things. There's way more money in it for one, and real estate near the lake is just that: acreage, raw land, all that much more room to expand -- not thrushes and mossy places and cathedral-like quietude.

It is an increasingly complex issue: specifically, the right of the private sector to make a fair return on an investment and to use privately-owned land without undo interference; versus the community drive for places left in their natural state for wildlife habitat and open space, and to preserve a functioning ecosystem and biodiversity and a quality of life we've grown to appreciate.

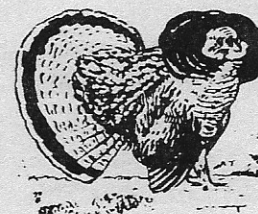
All of these issues came to a head with the application of P & D Land Enterprises for a Section 404 Permit from the Army Corp of Engineers, to begin filling the 38-acre parcel -- "the old spruce bog" -- so that construction of a hotel may begin.

Flathead Audubon, Montana Audubon Council and 50 or more other interested parties, agencies and organizations have submitted testimony objecting to the fill permit.

Flathead Audubon acknowledges the complexity of the issue. We view that an equitable solution for all may well revolve around a blend of development, along with wetlands mitigation and a conservation easement.

That the Corp of Engineers has granted a further hearing on the application should be considered a minor victory and attests to the strong public response. Few wetlands fill permits ever go to a public hearing.

It is imperative that Flathead Audubon and the conservation community be very well represented. We need your ideas, your concern and your attendance on **JANUARY 12, 1994, AT 7 PM, AT THE GROUSE MOUNTAIN LODGE IN THE WEST DIVIDE ROOM, WHITEFISH.** See you there.







## ❖ President's Corner

Most of us contribute to conservation as a result of our dedication and interest in bird watching (a hobby) or habitat/environmental issues (a philosophy).

Bird watchers donate time to Christmas Bird Counts and Birdathons and maintaining feeders, then they spend money on bird seed and gardening projects that benefit wildlife. In their off-time they lobby legislators, donate to their favorite group, work on newsletters and speak to groups about facets of this fascinating and educationally challenging hobby. Bird watchers -- non-consumptive resource users -- spend a lot of time and (nationally) millions of dollars promoting and participating in wildlife and conservation issues.

Hunters -- the consumptive users of the resource -- also contribute in a big way. Behind the scenes they build bluebird houses, as Flathead Wildlife, Inc. does. They donate to organizations that purchase or enhance habitat, such as Ducks Unlimited and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and they pay millions in the form of tags, permits, licenses and stamps.

This is the money that pays biologists to survey the wildlife populations and make sure the game species are not overhunted and are at sustainable levels. This money also pays for the enforcement of conservation laws. Additionally, self-imposed taxes on firearms, ammunition and related equipment go into the Pittman-Robertson Funds that finance millions of dollars worth of professional on-the-ground wildlife management programs which benefit both game and non-game species. The hunter is often the one that buys the wetland that the bird watcher uses to enjoy his/her hobby.

We are all in this together -- this issue of conservation. We must see the other's problems and understand that although we are coming from different angles, we are dealing

with the same basic resources and need to work together.

Right now, crime control bills are being written which will impact the hunter. If we keep stepping on the second amendment rights of hunters, we risk killing the goose that laid the golden egg -- the hunters that help pay directly for conservation. If you would like to get more information on how birdwatching, wetlands, hunters and crime control are all linked together, give me a call. ❖ Brent Mitchell



## Member of the Month

### ☼ Evelyn H. Kile

When you attend the general meeting of Flathead Audubon, chances are you will be greeted with a warm smile by Evelyn Kile. She serves as the official hostess of the chapter.

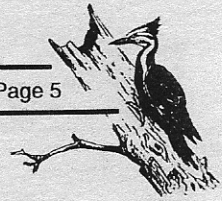
Evelyn was born in Roundup, Montana, to a cowboy father and a school teacher mother. She commented, "As a child living on the homestead, there was always wildlife to be watched, including wolves, coyotes, lynx and all species of birds known to the area. At an early age, I became aware of the nature world around me."

She met her husband in high school and they lived in Roundup for many years, raising nine children. A widow now, she recalled that her husband was a hunter and fisherman, and each weekend they would load up the kids and the poles, to go fishing. While on these outings, she became even more aware of the nature of wildlife.

Evelyn became interested in Audubon in Great Falls, where she worked as a dining room supervisor for 20 years at the Meadow Lark Country Club. While working there, she collected aluminum cans, contributing about \$30 a month for the Audubon chapter. She

Continued ... ➤





.....continued.

served the chapter as the treasurer for five years.

Since moving to the Flathead area (Kila), Evelyn became involved in the Adopt-A-Forest project, (sponsored by Flathead Audubon) making maps of the stands of old growth forests.

Evelyn said, "My main conservation interests are forest ecology and the grizzly bear. I continue to collect aluminum cans and am always reminding the family of the need for conservation ... to keep this world and its wildlife from being destroyed."

Flathead Audubon Member of the Month: Evelyn Kile; serving quietly and affectively to make her world a better place. ☼



## From the Raptor Room

My thanks to the editor for allowing some newsletter space, with a regular column as the goal. I'll share news of the activities in our facility, bird sightings and other items from here in the upper Swan. I may even radicalize from time to time, as I express my biases, which include birds, swamps, the Missions Wilderness, overpopulation and over consumption by humans. As a veteran I have a 'bias born of blood', and as a native of the upper Swan I am extremely protective of this valley.

**In the Raptor Room.** Two Golden Eagles arrived from FWP, Helena, on December 10. Both are post-clinical cases, one recovering from a fractured leg sustained in a vehicle collision and the other with a badly infected broken wing from a powerline collision. We hope to free both. Another Golden is expected from Superior, the victim of a train collision. Two Balds are in our recently operational eagle flight room, the largest flight room in the United States. If measured by volume, our flight room is the largest in N. America: 55,000 cu. ft.

The Raptor Room rehabilitation facility now occupies over 11,000 square feet with a quarter-million cu. ft. of recovery space and a total capacity of about 100 birds. When our eagle unit is completed, in the fall of 1994, we will truly have one of the finest of its kind anywhere.

**Educational Program Honored.** The Raptor Revue live birds of prey educational program was recently selected for a Special Citation from Mutual of Omaha's Wildlife Heritage Trust as "a model of success in conservation education". Mutual of Omaha will present a plaque to the Grounded Eagle Foundation at a fundraiser in Great Falls on January 22, at the Holiday Inn. You are all invited to attend. The Grounded Eagle Foundation is the first Montana organization to receive this award in its history.

The 1993 educational efforts consisted of 46 programs, mostly to elementary schools. There was also participation in the USFS Summer Interpretive Programs on the Lolo Forest for the third year and similar programs were initiated in Region 2 in cooperation with FWP.

**National Presentation.** For the third year, I have been invited to present papers on eagle and raptor rehabilitation at a national symposium. In March, I go to Delaware to present a paper, "Post-clinical Management and Housing of Eagles." As I travel and visit with more of my peers and view other facilities, the more I appreciate the Swan and our facility here.

**Ken Wolff, Director**







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### OFFICE

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 Membership Application



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

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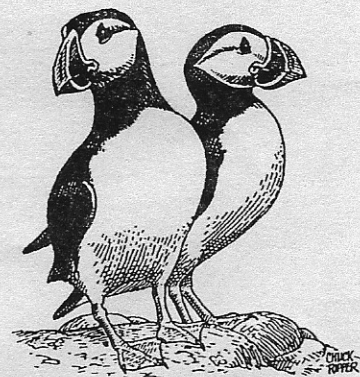
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