



the Silent Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

Volume 21

Number 5

May 1996

Cottonwood Study Begins

(From Montana Audubon News)

Birders and wildlife enthusiasts are quickly drawn to rivers and the rich wildlife living along them. In Montana this often means visiting cottonwood groves.

These trees provide critical habitat to a variety of wildlife species, including many of our songbirds, great blue herons, bald eagles, cormorants and game animals.

Many biologists are concerned about cottonwood communities because the trees do not seem to be regenerating. As a result, these scientists think that Montana - and many western states - could lose these precious places. Substantial losses of cottonwood have already occurred and significant threats exist to the remaining population.

Montana Audubon Council hired Lynn Bacon, a graduate student at Montana State University, to review current information available regarding the threats to cottonwood communities and their regeneration. She will also spend time researching the extent of cottonwoods in Montana and the functions and values of those communities as part of riparian ecosystems (what birds and other wildlife depend upon these trees, etc.).

The threats to cottonwoods are varied. Cottonwood communities appear to be declining because of development

pressures, grazing by cattle and deer, and water management practices. In addition, cottonwoods have recently been subject to increasing scrutiny as a potential source for timber production. Finally, some exotic plant species, such as Russian olive, also pose a threat to cottonwood growth and regeneration.

Lynn's work is seen as the first phase of a bigger cottonwood project. Once the threats to these river communities are identified, Audubon will be better able to develop a protection program for a habitat that is declining, is critical to wildlife and could benefit greatly from our work.

Montana Audubon's cottonwood project is directly funded by Birdathon Funds from several Montana Audubon Chapters, given to us through the Rocky Mountain Regional Office of National Audubon.



Inside ➡

Meeting Notice

page 2

BIRDATHON

page 3

Field Trip Schedule

page 5



The Editor's Spotting Scope

As I have done for several years, I am spending the spring months in a city out-of-state, working at the women's national bowling tournament. This part time work has sent me to various parts of the country each year, with the opportunity to do some bird watching in new territory.

Being in Buffalo, New York, with its many nearby rivers and lakes, you'd think there would be an abundance of sites to explore. However, as of this writing, I've had to be content to watch and listen to the sparrows nesting in the trees on the motel grounds and to watch for pigeons, crows and gulls as I drive to work. (I could have stayed home and done that.) It's been snowing, sleeting and raining, with more wet etcetera forecast for each day.

But the natives assure me the weather will soon clear and I'll be able to get out and bird watch to my heart's content. I have the address and phone number of the Buffalo Audubon office and will contact them at the first opportunity.

In the meantime, I find myself on the defensive because I'm from Montana (and damn proud of it!). When talking with a Western New Yorker, invariably the conversation goes like this: "Where are you from?"

"I'm from Montana."

(In shock.) "Montana! That's where the Unabomber and those Freemen are!"

"They're in another part of the state. I live in Western Montana — just south of Glacier Park." That comment is intended to make things all better, but it's not always successful. Then I make an effort to assure them that all Montanans are not grisly.

Why should I defend us? I understand the independent spirit of Montana men

and women, having my own fair share of it. I'm also aware that it can be carried too far. But I don't want anyone to lump us all together in the same basket labeled "Those Rascal Montanans."

So I defend us, just as those of us in Flathead Audubon defend our ecosystem and attempt to keep it as natural as possible. If, in doing so, we inadvertently preserve it for wildlife as well as those who want to hide from the authorities, then that's the way it is. It doesn't have to brand us all as riffraff, and it just might discourage some folks from settling here. Yeah — right! Have a good summer.

Sharon Bergman

Call the Birding Hotline

Spring birding in the Flathead is really heating up. Swans,

grebes, osprey and cranes have all been reported in the area, along with the illusive European Widgeon.

For more current information, call the Hotline: **756-5595**.



Take Note! —

May General Meeting

Monday, May 13, 1996, 6 p.m.

Lone Pine Park, Kalispell

This is our annual Potluck Meeting, so bring a potluck dish, eating gear and your appetite. Also, bring a friend.

Program: Janet Ellis, Program Director of Montana Audubon, will give a presentation on **Guatemala - Ancient Ruins & Exotic Scenery**. She will also give an update on MT Audubon's efforts to protect the cottonwoods and wetlands.

This will be the last chapter meeting until September. Join us for an evening of eating, meeting and exchanging bird stuff.



Audubon Birdathon

Flathead Audubon is gearing up for the annual Birdathon. This is one of the largest fundraising events for the chapter. Half of the money raised will go to the National Audubon's work to protect wildlife and ecosystems. The other half of the proceeds will help fund local wetland protection work.

Project. One project that has been identified is the Swan River Wildlife Refuge. Plans are to help build an observation platform so more people can enjoy this special place.

This year we are asking everyone who enjoys birding to do their own thing for Birdathon. We know people are really busy and it's hard to get everyone to commit to one certain day.

Date. Find a time that is good for you and your favorite birding buddy, sign up some sponsors and have your own Big Day.

We've found great success in getting pledges from relatives, friends, neighbors and co-workers. All those folks who know you like to go bird watching are probably willing to pledge a fixed amount of \$10, \$20 or more. Or ask them to pledge a specific amount per species identified.

The state record of species identified is over 170 — a great feat accomplished by our own Casey's. Other teams have been able to find around 100 species in a day, so set your sites high.

But most important — go birding, have fun and raise money for the birds.

GET INVOLVED! We need all chapter members to support this important effort. Collect at least \$20 in pledges and join the fun on a Big Day. If you can't do your own big day, support the effort by supporting the chapter effort.

Help! Send your donation, payable to Flathead Audubon, to Liz Hill at 888 McCaffery Rd, Bigfork, Mt 59911, or sign up at the table that will be set up at the May spring potluck meeting.

Another option would be to count the species at your backyard feeder or in the local park, like Woodland Park in Kalispell or Woodland Park in Whitefish. A member of another chapter birded a park during lunch hour

at \$1 per species, and with only ten sponsors was able to bring in \$100. Just think what you could do if you tried.

There will be prizes for the most money earned and the most sponsors pledging \$10 or more. There will be other prizes too, so do GET INVOLVED.

Liz Hill



Killing with Kindness — An Important Reminder

Bears are out of the dens now, both male and female, both Black and Grizzly. We are lucky to live with bears, but we must modify our behavior so we do not put at risk the animals we love so well. Bears have become attracted to bird feeders, so if you live in bear country, it is time to bring them inside until next winter. Take the suet feeder down and quit feeding the turkeys. There is plenty of food now for birds and they are not depending on your feeders.

- Don't leave feed, including dogfood, and trash outside.

- Hang the hummingbird feeders high and bring them in at the end of August.

- Pick all your fruit in the fall and thoroughly compost garden waste.

- If you absolutely have to feed birds all year, put out a small amount of seed that will be consumed quickly. Try not to feed in September and October when the bears may have come down into the valleys. Use only birdseed — no crumbs, peanut butter or other human food.

Please share this information. None of us want to be responsible for a bear that was moved or killed because of our carelessness or selfishness.

Pattie Brown





The President's Page >>

There is a certain beauty in a volunteer organization that mirrors the perfection seen in nature within a functioning ecosystem. Picture, for example, an intact forest of Douglas Fir, Western Larch and Ponderosa Pine — the indigenous forest of our Flathead Valley. Better yet, let's get off our duffs and take a walk in the forest.

Fortunately, we didn't have to go far. I just stepped off my deck into our "backdoor forest". These fir, larch and pine groves are widespread in the Flathead — unfortunately in ever smaller fragments, often not much more than undemolished remnants.

Notice first of all how the big, old trees provide shade and shelter for an array of seedlings, saplings and young trees filling in beneath the canopy. This, in itself, is a work of art. There are few things in nature more pleasing to the eye than a healthy forest. A random interplay of light and form somehow melds itself into a perfect balance of color, tone, scale and weight — qualities artists strive for, but nature creates offhand.

And what's this? I haven't gone 20 feet into my forest walk when a pine squirrel shatters the light into fluid motion. He all but careens among the coniferous branches yet never misses a toehold or a flying leap; an apparent chaotic yet delicate balance — not exactly earthbound, not quite airborne. Pure energy. This is exactly what distinguishes a functioning ecosystem, this animation of energy into creatures that grace our world with motion and spirit: the living forest, the trembling prairie, the ducky swamp. This is beauty unsurpassed and the ultimate reassurance to see the balance of nature intact.

The balance of nature then is essentially the balance of energy circulating within a functioning ecosystem. There is just so much energy flowing from skylight to topsoil, flowing through the whole array of plants and animals — energy blossoming into fir and pine squirrel and nuthatch.

In the same context, this might be said of our Flathead Audubon Society. There is a fixed amount of energy out there circulating through our members and leaders. As volunteers we each give freely to the organization just exactly what

we can spare to give and that is all we can do.

Nobody gives everything; nobody gets it all, yet we're each somewhere in the cycle. That to me is the beauty of being a volunteer in an all-volunteer organization. What we accomplish and what we become is the sum of what we each give to the organization. We simply can't do better than that. We can't all be grizzly bears in a forest of redwoods.

It's just as well. We're doing just fine if we've struck a balance similar to the healthy forests close to home — plus we have as much fun as my crazy pine squirrels.

While speaking of volunteers, we need to recognize several who have given a good share of their spare energy throughout the last several years and who will soon be moving somewhere else in the cycle.

- Kent Miller, secretary, who set the standard for all Flathead Audubon secretaries to follow.

- Elaine Corrigan, director, who spoke softly but sensibly and never failed to be there.

- Carol Purchase, director, who ultimately found her correct balance of energy right at home with her new son Zach.

- Dan Casey, Field Trips Chair Emeritus, who knows as much about birds as all the rest of us put together. Literally.

- Liz Hill, Publicity Chair, who recently passed the baton to Linda Winnie, but can still be reached on our Birding Hotline, 756-5595.

- Ed (Program Chair) and Carla (Hospitality Chair) Prach, who simply need one less thing to do.

Thanks to all for your energy and commitment.

Leo Keane





1996 Field Trips

The following field trips are open to members and nonmembers alike, so please *post this list and copies of it in prominent places at home and work*. Additional field trips sponsored by the Montana Native Plant Society (MNPS) have been incorporated. Trips vary from short hikes and roadside stops to long hikes and boat trips as noted. You'll find a variety of field trips, all suitable for families, throughout the spring and summer. Come and enjoy.

Standard recommended equipment includes comfortable clothes and shoes, binoculars, cameras, field guides, "fowl" weather gear and a sack lunch or snack.

Please call the Field Trips Chairperson, Betty Winzenburg, 755-1697, with any questions, last minute changes or for more detailed information. For more information on MNPS trips, call 837-5018. You can also check the birding hotline, 756-5595, for updates on trips or to network with other birders for informal outings. Individual trip leaders are listed with the trips.

Saturday, May 11: International Migratory Bird Day. Celebrate this day, dedicated to the plight of migratory land birds, by joining us at **Lawrence Park**. Help survey migrants at Kalispell's premier birding hotspot. Meet at the north end of the park (end of the road) at 7 a.m. Dan Casey, 857-3143.

Audubon's (Ruth White's) Birthday Walk. A 2.5 mile hike along the Swan River outside Bigfork; see early migrants and wildflowers. Meet at the Kootenai Gallery in Downtown Bigfork at 9 a.m. Robin Magaddino, 837-4294.

Saturday, May 18: Audubon. An interpretive nature trail is being built by Friends of the Wild Swan near the Point Pleasant Campground and is scheduled to be completed on May 11. Montana Audubon gave a grant of \$275 to be used for the trail interpretive brochures. Your help is needed in gathering information to be incorporated into the brochure and other educational materials about the trail.

This May 18 field trip is for the purpose of identifying plants and to identify birds which use the forest area around the trail location. Your help with bird identification is greatly appreciated. The trail will be open to the general public as well as used by school classes.

PLEASE NOTE: The nature trail is located on Montana state lands, so a **state recreational use permit** is required. Time for field trip: 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.. Meet at the Nature Trail site and bring a lunch. **Directions:** turn right approximately 9 miles south of Swan Lake at the Point Pleasant Campground sign. At the first switchback there will be a sign to the trail. Turn right to the parking area. For more information, call Arlene Montgomery, 886-2011.

Saturday, June 1:

- **Flathead Audubon's 1996 Birdathon.** If interested in the Birdathon, contact Liz Hill at 837-1444.

- **Warbler Identification.** Join Leo Keane and Elly Jones for a warbler identification outing at Swan Lake Waterfowl Production Area. Meet at the Swan Chapel in the township of Swan Lake at 6 a.m.

- **Squeezer Creek Watchable Wildlife Trail.** After more birding, field trippers will clean up the trail in preparation for the summer season. Meet at the Swan Chapel at 10 a.m. Time: 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

- **Point Pleasant and Nature Conservancy.** The group will move to the New Interpretive Trail and the Nature Conservancy trail at the head of Swan Lake, home of the endangered *Howellia aquatilis*. Time: 1 p.m. till dusk.

Bring lunch, drinking water, garden tool suitable for trail maintenance and binoculars. Wear clothing suitable for the garden and footwear that can get wet. Those who wish to join the outing in progress should make arrangements in advance. Leo Keane, 862-5807 or Neal Brown, 837-5018.



Continued on next page →



→ Field Trips continued —

Sunday, June 16: Father's Day at the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area by Canoe. Half-day trip for breeding birds at this river island county park. Learn just how diverse our cottonwood forests are! Flat water paddling and bush-whacking on the island. Dress for brush and bring canoe and life jackets. Meet at Rosauer's parking lot at 7:30 a.m. Dan & Susannah Casey, 857-3143.

Saturday, July 6: Loon Trip to Thompson Chain of Lakes. Meet at the Kalispell office of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (490 N. Meridian) at 9 a.m. to join Lynn Kelly for a tour of known and potential loon nesting lakes in this chain of lakes west of Kalispell. Return at about 3 p.m. Call 883-5797 for details.

Sunday, July 14: Squirmy, Scaly Critter Search Join MDFWP/USFS biologists on a search for snakes, frogs, salamanders and other reptiles. A half-day trip at a site and time to be announced, but plan on rubber boots! Dan Casey, 857-3143.

Saturday, July 20: Montana Loon Day / Census Day. If you can spend all or part of the day visiting one or more lakes, contact Lynn Kelly at 883-5797. The necessary form will be sent to you and you can take part in the annual census of all Montana lakes likely to have loons. (This is not an organized trip.)

Sunday, July 21: Flathead River Float. Canoe trip from Presentine Bar Fishing Access to Leisure Island at Kalispell. About six easy hours on the river through a variety of riparian habitats — no white water. Bring canoes, life jackets (one for each person), lunch and rain gear. Meet at the K-Mart parking lot at 9 a.m. Dan & Susannah Casey, 857-3143.

Saturday, August 10: Purple Loosestrife Control - Ninepipe National Wildlife Refuge. (Co-sponsored with MNPS.) Help birds and native aquatic plants by reducing competition from the invasive, introduced purple loosestrife. Bring lunch, gloves and shoes (boots, waders) to wear in water. Call Neal Brown, 837-5018.

Sunday, September 7: Swan Valley Logging. Tour of various logging practices in action. Discussion of the effect of various logging techniques on wildlife and of light-impact logging methods available to landowners. Meet at the Condon Forest Service Work Station at 10 a.m. Call Rod Ash to confirm if you plan on attending (754-2289)

IMPORTANT NOTE: Anyone using State lands for birding or other types of recreation or use is required to obtain a **Montana State Recreational Use Permit**. The cost is \$10 (\$5 for seniors). The money collected goes to the Montana State School Trust. All State land users are mandated to fund this school trust, such as logging, grazing, etc.



THANKS A BUNCH

To Montana Coffee Traders

For providing courtesy coffee to Flathead Audubon for its general meetings. It is another one of the pleasures of the Flathead Valley that civic-minded businesses such as Montana Coffee Traders are willing to lend their support to groups such as ours. We raise our coffee cups to you in a salute!

To Ruth White

Ruth has done it again! As she has for each Earth Day since 1990, Ruth has created an outstanding piece of weaving. This work of art will be sold at the May annual meeting. Flathead Audubon is very appreciative of Ruth's creations and of her continued devotion to the chapter.



Cranes on the Platte

(Ferne and Marty Cohen went to Kearney, NE during the spring Sandhill Crane migration and the following is a report on their trip.)

Last spring we participated in a National Audubon Society field trip to the Lillian Annette Rowe Sanctuary, near Kearney, Nebraska. Along the route we observed small groups of cranes foraging in the corn fields. We walked along a path beside a corn field and found corn husks in abundance. It was hard to believe there was that much waste from the harvest. Of course, we were pleased that farmers were leaving these overlooked cobs for the birds.

We arrived at the blind along the river just before sunset. Soon we heard the cacophony of cranes arriving at their secondary roost north of the river. The cranes flew over in formation, in layers, in ribbons, streams, singly, but mostly collectively, loudly announcing their presence.

Watching close to 400,000 cranes silhouetted against a brilliant sunset was breathtaking. Their calling continued as they settled on the sandbars, which had been cleared in preparation for them. The adjacent shallow water suited some, but most gathered close together, safe from predators, such as coyotes. The sheer numbers and the sound were overwhelming.



The members of our group were silent in admiration. When most cranes were settled for the night, the magnificent sunset which framed the scene had disappeared, but we could still hear the birds and see their shadows. Silently we made our way back to the vans to return to Kearney. It was an unforgettable experience, indeed.

The next day our field trip took us to Fish & Wildlife Service wetlands where we observed thousands of Snow Geese and White-fronted Geese. When they flew, there was a spectacular light show — white, dark and grey against the blue sky. I was reminded of fireworks as the geese exploded across the heavens. These geese also forage in the fields surrounding the Platte River before migrating to Canada and Alaska.

We felt privileged to participate in such a sight, as well as the Midwestern Regional Conference, which was attended by around 300 people.

One of the most interesting facts we learned at the conference was that according to surveys, there are twice as many birders as golfers.

Ferne Cohen

Smart Shopping Program Continued

Food Depot, Safeway and Tidyman's were very receptive to the Smart Shopping-Precycling programs introduced last winter in their markets, and we have been invited to return. Information was distributed on packaging and reducing waste, and shoppers were very receptive to the information disseminated.

Remember — to help reduce waste and save 5¢ per bag, take your own canvas, string or paper bag when you go shopping.



Flathead Audubon Society Directory

OFFICERS

President	Leo Keane, 514 Pine Place, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-5807
Vice President	Susannah Casey, P.O. Box 7922, Kalispell, MT 59904	857-3143
Secretary	Kent Miller, 781 1st Ave. EN, Kalispell, MT 59901	257-4100
Treasurer	Susan Hitchcox, 510 S. 5th W., Missoula, MT 59801	549-5692
Past President	Brent Mitchell, 960 Kienas Rd, Kalispell, MT 59901	756-8130

DIRECTORS

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
1994-97	Sharon Bergman, 354 LaBella Ln, Big Arm, MT 59910	849-5286
1994-97	Neal Brown, 560 Wolf Creek Dr, Bigfork, MT 59911	837-5018
1994-97	Dan Casey, P.O. Box 7922, Kalispell, MT 59904	857-3143
1994-97	Ferne Cohen, P.O. Box 1782, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-2028

CHAIRS

Audubon Adventures	Kim Davis, 1230 Rhodes Draw, Kalispell, MT 59901	755-1311
Field Trips	Dan Casey, P.O. Box 7922, Kalispell, MT 59904	857-3143
Hostess	Carla Prach, 110 Goat Trail, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-1350
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	Ed Prach, 110 Goat Trail, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-1350
Publicity	Linda Winnie, P.O. Box 220, Kila, MT 59920	755-1406
Refuge Projects	Lynn Kelly, 6525 Rocky Point Road, Polson, MT 59860	883-5797
Wetlands/Waterfowl	Neal Brown, 560 Wolf Creek Drive, Bigfork, MT 59911	837-5018

Montana Audubon Council

OFFICE

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

BIRDING HOTLINE: 756-5595

The Flathead Audubon Society is affiliated with the National Audubon Society and meets on the second Monday of each month from September through May. A business meeting is held at 7:30 p.m. followed by a special program at 8:15 p.m. The regular monthly meeting is preceded by the Executive Board meeting. Both meetings are open to all those interested.

THE PILEATED POST is published September through May and is sent to members of the Flathead Audubon Society as a membership benefit. Subscriptions for non-members are \$10.00 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.

Check your category rate from the following:

First-time Applicant	\$20	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student	\$20	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual Renewal	\$35	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family	\$38	<input type="checkbox"/>
Senior Individual	\$21	<input type="checkbox"/>
Senior Family	\$23	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sustaining	\$50	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supporting	\$100	<input type="checkbox"/>
Life	\$1500	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dual Life	\$2000	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

N54 7XCHA

Send this application and your check to:

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

For Newsletter Only Send \$10 ☐

to: Flathead Audubon Society Membership;

P.O. Box 1129
Condon, Montana 59826

For address change, call 1-800-274-4201



P.O. Box 9173
Kalispell, MT 59904

Non-Profit Org.
Postage PAID
Permit No. 115
Kalispell, MT
59901-9173