

the Flatheaded Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

Volume 22

Number 1

January 1997

January field trip scheduled — hawks!

On Saturday, January 25, Chad Olson will lead a field trip into the Ninepipe Refuge in search of raptors generally and Rough-legged Hawks specifically.

Birders will meet at 9 a.m. in the viewing area across the highway from the Allentown Restaurant, where there is plenty of parking. Those participating are advised to bring a sack lunch and/or snacks.

Flathead Valley birders who would like to carpool will meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Somers Bay Boat Access before traveling on to the refuge.

"This has been a good year for birds of prey," Chad commented. "There are probably four or five times more raptors now than were seen last year. I've recently seen Snowy Owls, Gyrfalcons and other raptors in general. I've been seeing an average of 70 to 90 coming out of the roosting area."

Chad recently graduated from the University of Montana and will go into research full time in the Ronan area. He is currently working with Denver Holt and the Owl Research Institute, as well as the Salish and Kootenai tribes. He expects to apply to the University's graduate school next fall.



Nominating committee appointed

Serving on the 1997 nominating committee are Dan Casey, Elaine Corrigan and Rod Ash. The terms of four officers and four directors will

expire in 1997. Those interested in running for one of the positions should contact a member of the committee.

The election will be held at the annual meeting in May.



Volunteers to monitor winter recreation

On January 18, a special training session will be held at the US Forest Service Condon Work Center to train volunteers on monitoring winter recreation in the Mission Mountains Wilderness. Sponsored by Friends of the Mission and the northwest chapter of the Montana Wilderness Ass'n, the training session is free of charge and will run from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Volunteers will receive an update on the cooperative efforts underway with the U.S. Forest Service, Missoula and Lake county law enforcement officers, the Confederated Tribes, Department of F.W. & P., local conservation organizations and snowmobile clubs.

They will learn of the present Forest Service law enforcement efforts underway to patrol for illegal snowmobile trespass in the Mission Mountains Wilderness. They will also receive information on avalanche awareness and safety considerations, presented by Cal Tassinari.

To find out what volunteers can do to assist, and for further information, contact Kari Gunderson or Joe Flood, 754-2543.

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The editor's spotting scope

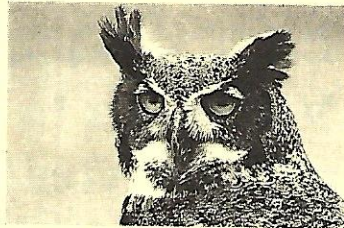
Sitting by a window, in a bus traveling south to LaGuardia Airport, my eyes idly scanned the winterized woods as we drove by. Whether riding, walking or standing still, a birder generally always checks the trees, fence lines and power poles that come into view, to see what's out there. We're seldom disappointed in our casual search.

Perched in the midsection of a tall, leafless tree was a large owl. Motionless, he surveyed his domain which was bordered by the noise and rush of a New York freeway. I was excited. I could see him so distinctly, although my view was too brief for a positive identification. Did anyone else on the bus notice? I glanced around at the other passengers. They were lost in thought or sleep or bus-boredom. What a pity they missed it.

I stored the sighting away in that special place for birding experiences and bring it out occasionally for review and to savor. It's as vivid today as it was ten years ago when it happened.

The instance in New York state stands out because where owls and I are concerned, we seldom have a see-and-be-seen arrangement. More owls see me than I them. I can spot hawks, osprey, eagles and other raptors, but owls elude me. (Which is probably what they intended.)

One summer, camping near Lake Mary Ronan with my young grandson, we were settling in for the night when the stillness of the camp was broken by the hoot of an owl. "What was that, Grandma?"



David asked in a loud whisper. "That was an owl, David, and we can't see him, but from the sound of things, he must be in that tree right over there." "Boy!" he replied, "He must be the biggest owl in the whole wide world."

I've never seen an owl on my home place, but that's not surprising considering my track record for not seeing them. There is not a lack of birds around here as the habitat is very bird-friendly, but to my knowledge there has never been a resident owl.

A week ago or so, I returned home in the evening and as I got out of the car an owl hooted nearby. I was so pleased at hearing his call that I found myself saying, "Well, hello yourself." I couldn't see him, but from the sound of things he must be the second biggest owl in the whole wide world. Wait till I tell David about this!

Sharon Bergman

Take note!

January General Meeting

Monday, January 13, 1997
Fish, Wildlife & Parks Bldg.
490 N. Meridian Rd, Kalispell
Meeting starts at 7:30 p.m.

Program: Tom Ulrich, nationally known wildlife photographer, will present a slide program on "Birds & Animals of the Pantanal" (an area in South America). Making his home in West Glacier, Ulrich serves on the board of directors of the Outdoor Writers' Association of America. His photo of a red-billed tropic bird was recently selected as the best of more than 1,000 entries in a photo contest by *Wildbird Magazine*.

Happy New Year



Science **potlight: Fire, Forests and Forest Health**

Conventional wisdom regarding fire and its role in western forest ecosystems might go something like this: small, frequent fires maintained open, park-like stands of trees that were resistant to large, intense fires. However, because we actively suppress forest fires, today's forests are unlike those of yesteryear. Fuels have accumulated and the stand structure has changed. Timber harvesting reduces fuel accumulation. Therefore, intensive logging is necessary to reduce fire danger, mimic the natural role of fire and restore "forest health".

The final report of the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project (SNEP) suggests conventional wisdom might not consider the whole picture. At the request of Congress, SNEP evaluated the latest scientific information available regarding fire dynamics and other forest issues in and around the Sierra Nevada Mountains. While they found that fire suppression and increased fuel loads are troublesome, they concluded that "... timber harvest, through its effects on forest structure, local microclimate and fuel accumulation, has increased fire severity more than any other recent human activity."

Fire-resistant species (larch and ponderosa pine) are often selectively removed during logging, leaving behind more fire-prone species. Also, after trees are removed by logging, sunlight and wind dry the logged area more thoroughly. The dried fuels ignite more easily and burn more quickly and unpredictably. Finally, forests that grow back after logging are often denser than the original forests, resulting in an increase in fuels over the long term.

Other interesting highlights from the SNEP report include: 1) "virtually no data exist on the ability to mimic ecological functions of natural fire [with selective logging]"; 2) the expectation that large, intense fires are becoming larger "is generally not confirmed by records for 20th century Sierran forests"; 3) based on observations by early settlers, historic forest structures may have varied from dense and

impenetrable to open and park-like; 4) fire is important for biodiversity and sustainability in our forests.

In short, findings of the SNEP suggest that a well-conceived fire management strategy would include occasional wildfire and intentional controlled burning of forests in addition to timber harvests. However, if the goals are to reduce fire hazards and maintain "forest health", we must design timber harvests very carefully. Traditional logging activities may be more detrimental than beneficial.

If you'd like a copy of this report (total report is over 1,600 pages; executive summary is 22 pages), contact the Centers for Water and Wildland Resources, 1072 Academic Square, University of California, Davis, CA 95616-8750. You can also review the report on the World Wide Web at <http://ceres.ca.gov/snep/>.

Geoff Poole, Conservation Chairman



Watchlist information available

National Audubon has made available an information packet about their "Watchlist." The watchlist is a list of birds that are declining throughout some or all of their natural range.

Included in the packet are a pamphlet on how you can help protect birds in your neighborhood and information on how to participate in "Project FeederWatch" where participants monitor their birdfeeders to collect data for scientists at Cornell University.

If you'd like the information packet, which also includes a nice Audubon window decal, leave your name and address with Geoff Poole at 837-4645.



From the president >>>

At press time, Leo Keane and family were enjoying the white Xmas offered in Minnesota. Before they left, Leo sent the following message to the newsletter readers.

On the day of our Christmas bird count, the snow was up, but the bird numbers were down. There was a record amount of snow on the ground and because of that, the numbers of birds seen were vastly reduced from previous years. However, it was a beautiful day to be out in the field and one to be enjoyed.

There has been a smaller number of birds at our yard feeders as well. We have yet to see a chickadee this winter. A few pheasants come in each day and a moose makes a daily visit, so we aren't totally without something to watch, but we miss our usual feeder visitors.

There are exciting plans ahead for our chapter and we thank you for your interest in Audubon concerns. Happy New Year to you all.

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About the population —

The 104th Congress is history, but not what it did.

Among its most devastating actions was the cut in the budget for international voluntary family planning,

effectively slashing funds by 85 percent under the guise of balancing the budget!

Getting the budget under control and a hard look at foreign aid are certainly in order, but international population programs make up only .03% of the total federal budget (or 3 cents on \$100) and are credited as being among the most successful foreign aid programs.

While we in the U.S. unquestionably have a population problem and consume an unconscionably high percent of the world's resources, population growth in many undeveloped countries far exceeds that of developed nations. Many of these emerging nations desperately want and need all the assistance they can get in slowing down the rate at which their populations are growing. Their leaders know that ever more people will further sink them in the mire of poverty, social unrest, starvation and hopelessness.

Generous aid in international volunteer family planning is far from just altruistic motivation on our part. For Audubon people there is especially the destruction of habitat and extinction of species that desperate people bring about in their struggle to survive.

There is also the abandonment of cherished plans for improvements in their countries that will mean more prosperous markets for American goods.

World populations are

going to increase at alarming rates, predicted to double in 50 years unless early and vigorous actions are taken.

Foreign aid for family planning is one of the best investments we in America can make internationally — far more lastingly productive than knee jerk military reactions or emergency food deliveries. And certainly only if we attend to our own population/consumption problems as well.

Our representative and senators need to hear this during the 105th Congress.
Bob Ballou, Quality of Life Committee.

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Squirrel Problems?

Deborah Richie of Missoula comments that one of the most difficult parts of bird feeding occurs where squirrels have taken up residence. How to baffle them?

Suspend your feeder from a tree limb well away from the main trunk. To prevent squirrels from shinnying down from above, place a plastic dome "baffle" over the feeder. One birder suggested a cheap alternative: she places a vinyl record over the feeder and reports both success and satisfaction in finding a use for music replaced by compact disks. Hanging a feeder from a bracket attached to an outside wall usually defeats them as well.

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Coffee & migratory birds-what's the connection?

Last September a group of folks from Coffee Traders, a coffee roasting business headquartered in Whitefish, participated in a Washington D.C. conference on birds and the environment. The conference addressed the relationship between annual bird migrations to Latin America and the Caribbean and the disturbing trend in coffee cultivation that might be having an impact on bird populations.

The Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center hosted the first Sustainable Coffee Congress attended by coffee growers, importers and brokers, coffee roasters, organic crop certifiers, agronomists and, of course, birders. The concern is that over the last 25 years there has been a shift from a traditional shade grown coffee to dense plantings of hybridized sun tolerant coffee. This practice results in a dramatic loss of bird habitat in the wintering areas of many of our popular wild bird species.

For centuries, coffee has grown under shade. It evolved and developed in the ancient, dense rainforests of North Africa. As it was introduced to other coffee growing regions in the world, it was cultivated under a canopy of trees that often provided food and fuel to the farmers.

Coffee is a shrub, sensitive to direct sunlight, which grows a cherry about the size of an olive, the seed of which has become the second most traded commodity in the world (oil being the first). In Central and South America, the traditional shade coffee farms have been a refuge and sanctuary for migratory birds. With the destruction and degradation of natural rainforests these coffee plantations are being recognized more and more as a valuable repository of biodiversity.

Studies have shown that traditionally managed coffee plantations can support over 150 species of birds — a unique situation in agricultural settings — surpassed only in undisturbed tropical forests. However, with the promise of higher yields using sun tolerant hybrid coffee varieties, these traditional farms are increasingly being transformed into densely planted, full sun plantations. The shade canopy is being cut and birds do not like the result. While traditional farms have an abundance of

birds, the sun grown coffee plantations were found to have 94-97 percent fewer bird species.

Coffee production is enormously important to the economies of Latin America and the Caribbean where it is the leading source of foreign exchange. Over 2/3 of the world's production of coffee comes from this region. It is understandable that the lure of increased production is attractive to coffee farmers.

However, switching to a monoculture, intensive, sun coffee crop also demands an increased use of expensive agrochemicals such as fertilizers, insecticides (not bird friendly), herbicides and fungicides. Coffee plants in sun plantations do not live as long as their traditional cousins in the shade and therefore need more frequent replanting. Additionally, increased yields depress prices that further perpetuate a cycle of trying to produce more for less return.

Recognition of a problem is an important step in finding a solution. The Coffee Congress was important in drawing attention to how birds can make a connection for us to larger issues affecting our planet.

Coffee Traders has been involved for several years in working with a coffee cooperative in Costa Rica adjoining the Monteverde Cloud Forest Preserve, a world famous birding destination. Our work in Costa Rica has helped us become aware of many of the complex issues surrounding coffee production. We will be developing a program focusing on traditional shade grown coffee and the issues of sustainability, and will feature coffees that are identified as being "bird friendly" and supporting sustainable initiatives.

Scott Brant
Montana Coffee Traders



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Scott Brant
Montana Coffee Traders



Flathead Audubon Society Directory

OFFICERS

President	Leo Keane, 514 Pine Place, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-5807
Vice President	Geoff Poole, 4755 Foothill Road, Bigfork, MT 59911	837-4645
Secretary	Gail Sullivan, 932 Columbia Avenue, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-5775
Treasurer	Susan Hitchcox, 4755 Foothill Road., Bigfork, 59911	837-4645
Past President	Brent Mitchell, 960 Kienas Rd, Kalispell, MT 59901	756-8130

DIRECTORS

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
1996-99	Sonja Hartman, P.O. Box 1388, Columbia Falls, MT 59912	758-8516
1996-99	Jim Rogers, Polson, MT 59860	883-3611

CHAIRS

Audubon Adventures	Kim Davis, 1230 Rhodes Draw, Kalispell, MT 59901	755-1311
Conservation	Geoff Poole, 4755 Foothill Road, Bigfork, MT 59911	837-4645
Field Trips	Betty Winzenburg, 1436 Rogers Lane, Kila, MT 59920	755-1697
Hospitality	Betty Winzenburg (see above)	
	Debby Rossi, 480 5th Ave. EN, Columbia Falls, MT 59912	892-1317
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

OFFICE	Janet Ellis, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624	443-3949
PRESIDENT	Rod Ash, P.O.Box 1129, Condon, MT 59826	754-2289

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. The regular meeting starts at 7:30 p.m. and includes a featured guest who will present a conservation or nature program. 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. Newsletter Fax: 849-5486.

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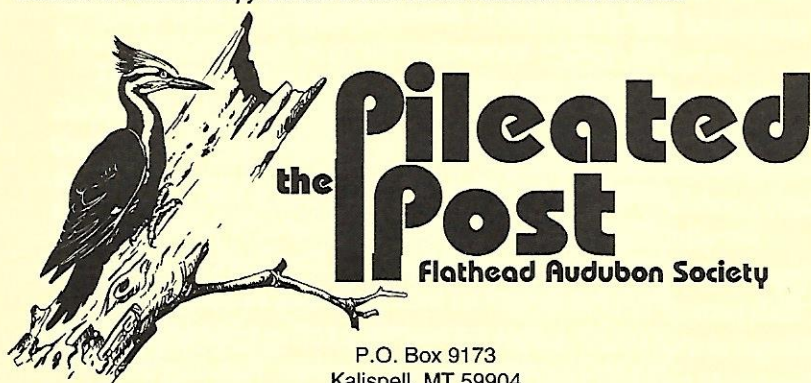
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