

the Flatheaded Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

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Wetlands campaign scores with reforms to permit program

Thanks to the hard work of Audubon wetland activists, chapter leaders and Audubon staff, Audubon's wetlands campaign has scored a major victory by obtaining major reforms to the Army Corps of Engineers wetlands "general permit" program. The Corps has agreed to *eliminate* the most egregious general permit, nationwide 26. The Corps also has agreed to make several other significant, immediate improvements to the general permit program.

The Army Corps has decided to rescind nationwide permit completely effective December, 1998. In its current form, nationwide permit 26 allows the filling of up to ten acres of wetlands — an area equal in size to seven and one-half football fields — without an individual permit application and without any advance public notice. Over the next two years, pending rescission of nationwide 26, the ceiling for use of nationwide 26 will be lowered to 3 acres, and a developer will be required to provide advance notice to the Corps of project affecting one-third of an acre or more.

Accounts from Florida to Montana demonstrate that nationwide 26 has resulted in the destruction of tens of thousands of valuable wetland acres each year, with serious adverse individual and cumulative impacts. Narrowing and ultimately repealing nationwide 26 will not, however, automatically halt this development. Instead the reform means that individual permit applications will have to be filed on all or most projects now authorized under nationwide 26, and the public will have an opportunity to review and comment on the applications. More careful

project review as a result of the repeal of nationwide 26 should reduce wetland losses and save thousands of wetlands acres each year.

Two cautionary notes. The Army Corps maintains that even though nationwide 26 is environmentally destructive, some subset of the activities authorized under the program truly do have minimal impacts and can be properly authorized under general permits. Over the next two years, as it prepares to phase out nationwide 26, the Army Corps plans to develop a package of activity-specific general permits for at least some of the actions now covered by nationwide 26. Audubon will be monitoring the development of these substitute general permits carefully to ensure that they avoid the environmental destruction nationwide 26 has produced.

FAS Mission Statement

The Flathead Audubon Society is a local chapter of the National Audubon Society.

- Our mission is to conserve birds, wildlife habitat and ecosystem diversity.
- Awareness and appreciation of the natural world is promoted through educational activities and advocacy programs.
- We work with diverse groups and agencies to achieve sound decisions on natural resource issues.
- Our community outreach includes school programs, work projects and field trips.
- While focusing our efforts in northwest Montana, we believe in the protection of the earth and all its inhabitants.

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The editor's spotting scope

Some pioneer women were handy with a gun. Annie Oakley and Calamity Jane immediately come to mind. As the west became settled and more "civilized" women, for the most part, left firearms to the men folks.

But not all women. My stepmother was a crack shot with a .22 rifle. Living on the East Shore out of Polson, she tended an orchard and raspberry patch, raised an annual garden of both vegetables and flowers and milked a cow daily. The fruits of each project were well-received by the family, but also required a certain amount of protection from invading wildlife.

Deer, bears, porcupines and Chinese pheasants were sent scurrying from the place when spotted. And on more than one occasion, a window was opened quickly and quietly and a shot rang out. Pheasant for supper! She was a crack shot with a rifle, and that's the way things were during the 40's.

All that came to mind a few weeks ago when I walked into my back yard and scared up a covey of seven Chinese Pheasants. They flew up and over the fence with a whirring flap of wings and squawks of anxiety. My only thought at seeing and hearing them was sheer delight that they were here, sharing the place with me.

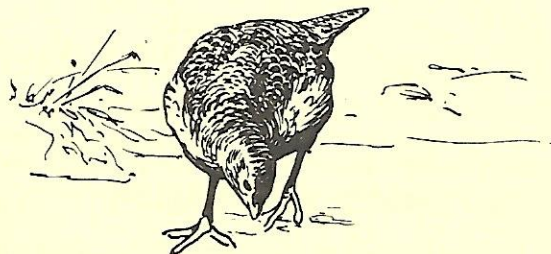
What a difference 50 years can make. My dad taught me to handle a rifle when I was 12 years old and my targets ranged from tin cans to cactus apples to rattle snakes (I was raised on the Arizona desert) and then to jack rabbits and cottontails. It has been a number of years since I last fired a shot, but I have lost (outgrown ?) all desire to shoot to kill, whether the target be for food or protection.

Years ago I admired my stepmother's ability with a rifle (and relished the treat of fried pheasant for supper), but now my viewpoint has changed. I would rather watch and listen to the pheasant, and if circumstances dictate, perhaps even photograph them.

I'll treasure my memories of the East Shore in the 40's, but will enjoy the pheasants of

the 90's in a different way. I wonder if they'll hang around till summer and how much of the garden will be damaged ???

Sharon Bergman



You can make a difference!

Flathead Audubon sponsors a community project which furthers the nature education of youngsters through the use of Audubon Adventures.

This activity and information packet is provided to subscribing schools for use in grades 3 through 6. More youngsters and schools could be reached through Audubon members or community organizations, such as the local PTA, who are willing to become sponsors by donating the \$34 subscription rate. Those interested should contact any board member or Kim Davis (755-1311). The children will thank you



Take note!

February General Meeting

Monday, February 10, 1997

Fish, Wildlife & Parks Bldg.

490 N. Meridian Rd, Kalispell

Meeting starts at 7:30 p.m.

Program: "The Prehistory of the Flathead National Forest", a 50-minute slide show will be presented by Gary McLean, Forest Archeologist for the Flathead National Forest since 1980. He will talk about the people, plants and climate of northwest Montana from the last ice age (about 12,000 years ago) to historical times (about 2,000 years ago). He is a native Montanan and has degrees from the University of Montana in Archeology.



President's Page ➤➤

Thirty-six years ago this June I wore my first pair of binoculars: *Tasco 7 x 35's*. They were a gift for my 13th birthday from my mom and dad.

Our home then was at the edge of town; one block south the woods began. "The Woods" was actually a labyrinth of hills and valleys and creek bottoms clothed in hardwood forest: oak, elm, ash, maple and basswood. Old farmers still ran their tractors down some of the bottoms, but their corn patches seemed forever lost to weeds. Through this puzzled geography, a railroad spur line ran true as a gun barrel. "The Tracks" in those days was my road to wilderness.

For want of something to look at on that 13th birthday, I strapped on my new binoculars and hiked down to the tracks. The first thing to catch my eye was a bird flushing from brush and alighting within easy view. I focused on him and was immediately astounded. He was crystal clear. So vivid the black, white and rose of his feathers, so striking the details of his eye and beak I felt as though I was being absorbed into another world. Time stopped. My eyes grew. I was inside of nature.

Within days I bought a field guide and life list. Beside "Rose-breasted Grosbeak" I placed my first checkmark. The rest of that summer, and each of the next several summers, I spent every possible moment with binoculars and field guide, roaming the hills, immersed in my new world of nature.

Those were summers filled with birds: Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Brown Thrasher, Indigo Bunting and Cuckoo, Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks, Great Crested Flycatcher and Great Blue Heron. When I first heard a Wood Thrush my heart pounded. The song seemed to bubble from the earth, yet ring through the forest. It was the song of wildness. I found the secretive, speckled pair at their nest. Day after day I returned, quietly, to the green, shadowed grove to watch and listen. The Thrush on her nest and her attentive mate watched me. Then and there I fell in love with birds.

I know now too that in those youthful days afield I was also falling in love with the places where I found birds: the virgin grove of the Wood Thrush, the abandoned field where Red-tails soared and the forested hills into which they disappeared, a myriad of brushy edges animated with Thrashers. All those places opened for me like the pages of a book, when I walked and watched for birds 36 years ago.

A month ago or so, while visiting home for

Christmas, I made a point to return to "The Woods". I do this from time to time, though not without some anxiety. My hometown has changed much and it changes rapidly. You never know where they'll cut a swath for the next super highway. But this was to be an important and special pilgrimage, for I wanted to show my wife and daughter the places where I grew up. We slipped out of town on skis pulling Linnaea on her sled.

Miraculously, it was all there; very much "The Woods" I once knew so well. Although the railroad tracks have long since been dismantled, a well-used foot and bike path now takes its place. What was then the brush-choked shoulder of the rail line has grown into an overarching canopy of trees. So, too, the abandoned fields down along the creek, overtaken now in second growth timber. The skyline of forested hills that became so familiar 30 and more years ago remained just as I remembered. With great enthusiasm, some disbelief and overwhelming nostalgia, I pointed out all these landmarks to my wife and daughter. They seemed simply to enjoy the walk.

Finally we arrived at the place of my Wood Thrush afternoons, the virgin grove. It could have been yesterday. Indeed, time seemed to stop for me again as we slipped into the trees. I'm sure I found the exact thicket where the Thrush nested, and the maple where I always perched myself to watch. This forest still seemed like a sacred place.

Gliding out the far end, with Linnaea now riding on my shoulders, we came upon a new sign: "RASMUSSEN WOODS NATURE PRESERVE — A Gift to the City of Mankato."

Not that anyone ever knew how I grew up there, but for me, Rasmussen Woods is an incomparable gift. More than a gift. After 36 years it has become my history, my heritage. I am eternally grateful for the opportunity to share this wonderful place with my daughter. Now I can go home again.

Leo Keane





Christmas Bird Count Report by Dan Casey

Bigfork—12/21/96 TOTALS: 72 species (plus 4 during count week); 5,674 individuals.

Bad weather, including deep blowing snow and bitter wind-chill factors in parts of the count circle were the primary reasons for our lowest species and individuals totals since 1986. (Our 10-year averages are 81 species and 13,122 individuals.) There were 35 intrepid observers in 13 field parties and although no new species were added to the 23-year cumulative list of 136 species, new high counts for three species were recorded and one other tied for the high (these are underlined below).

Appropriately, one was the **Snow Bunting** and our second count week **Snowy Owl**, which has been around for a month, but was not found on count day. For the first time in 23 years there were no Ruffed Grouse in the count circle, and no Ring-billed Gulls were found. Most waterfowl had their lowest totals in over a decade, because the weather prevented the field parties from surveying traditional concentration areas on the Flathead Waterfowl Production Area. Even Mallard and Canada Geese numbers were way down.

Horned Grebe	2	Snowy Owl	cw
Great Blue Heron	3	Belted Kingfisher	7
Canada Goose	1010	Downy Woodpecker	21
Mallard	1015	Hairy Woodpecker	23
Northern Shoveler	2	Northern Flicker	42
Gadwall	1	Pileated Woodpecker	15
Redhead	2	Gray Jay	8
Ring-necked Duck	2	Steller's Jay	5
Greater Scaup	4	Blue Jay	4
Lesser Scaup	1	Clark's Nutcracker	3
scaup, species	3	Black-billed Magpie	49
Common Goldeneye	177	American Crow	158
Barrow's Goldeneye	12	Common Raven	150
Bufflehead	44	Black-capped Chickadee	398
Hooded Merganser	4	Mountain Chickadee	46
Common Merganser	44	Chestnut-backed Chickadee	33
duck, species	2	chickadee, species	5
Bald Eagle	26	Red-breasted Nuthatch	71
Northern Harrier	2	Pygmy Nuthatch	7
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	Brown Creeper	2
Cooper's Hawk	cw	American Dipper	3
Northern Goshawk	cw	Golden-crowned Kinglet	149
Accipiter, species	1	Townsend's Solitaire	2
(Harlan's) Red-tailed Hawk	1	Bohemian Waxwing	27
Rough-legged Hawk	19	Cedar Waxwing	9
hawk, species	3	Northern Shrike	4
Golden Eagle	2	European Starling	123
Merlin	1	American Tree Sparrow	19
Peregrine Falcon	cw	Song Sparrow	18
falcon, species	1	Dark-eyed Junco	53
Gray Partridge	32	<u>Snow Bunting</u>	65
Ring-necked Pheasant	51	<u>Red-winged Blackbird</u>	285
Wild Turkey	583	Brewer's Blackbird	50
American Coot	4	Pine Grosbeak	52
Killdeer	1	Cassin's Finch	5
California Gull	4	House Finch	85
Herring Gull	1	Red Crossbill	9
gull, species	4	Pine Siskin	111
Rock Dove	123	<u>American Goldfinch</u>	183
Mourning Dove	21	finch, species	10
<u>Great Horned Owl</u>	6	Evening Grosbeak	44
Northern Pygmy-Owl	3	House Sparrow	103



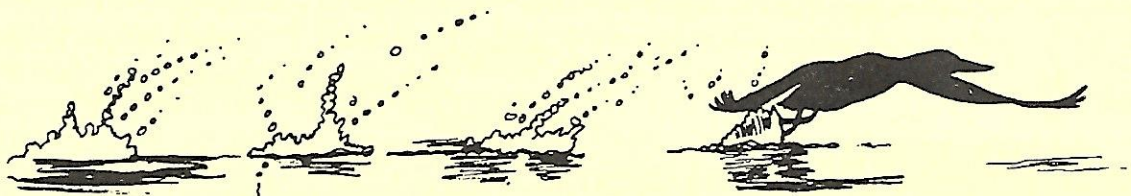
bird count report continued

Ninepipe National Wildlife Refuge — 12/22/96

TOTALS: 69 species; 12,058 individuals

With slightly better weather than the previous day's counts at Bigfork and Missoula, 16 people were glad to be traveling the less snowy roads and trails of the Mission Valley. Though no new species were found, high totals were noted for the **Wood Duck**, **Ring-necked Pheasant** and **American Goldfinch**. As usual in years with high prey (vole) numbers, excellent raptor numbers were recorded, including potentially the national high count for **Rough-legged Hawks**, although we saw fewer than the count high of 226 seen in 1993. Waterfowl numbers were down somewhat from recent years because Ninepipe Reservoir was completely frozen.

Great Blue Heron	1	Great Horned Owl	12
Canada Goose	903	Northern Pygmy-Owl	2
<u>Wood Duck</u>	65	Belted Kingfisher	3
Green-winged Teal	15	Downy Woodpecker	10
Mallard	4908	Hairy Woodpecker	2
Gadwall	18	Northern Flicker	43
American Wigeon	2	Pileated Woodpecker	1
Redhead	1	Black-billed Magpie	368
Common Goldeneye	25	American Crow	40
Barrow's Goldeneye	5	Common Raven	85
goldeneye, species	14	Black-capped Chickadee	140
Bufflehead	1	Mountain Chickadee	5
Hooded Merganser	4	Red-breasted Nuthatch	9
Common Merganser	7	White-breasted Nuthatch	2
duck, species	2	Pygmy Nuthatch	15
Bald Eagle	47	Winter Wren	1
Northern Harrier	16	Marsh Wren	1
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	American Dipper	3
Northern Goshawk	1	Golden-crowned Kinglet	17
(Harlan's) Red-tailed Hawk	3	Townsend's Solitaire	23
Red-tailed Hawk	51	American Robin	2
Rough-legged Hawk	208	Bohemian Waxwing	125
Buteo, species	16	Cedar Waxwing	23
Golden Eagle	2	Northern Shrike	12
American Kestrel	4	European Starling	1034
Merlin	3	American Tree Sparrow	140
Gyr Falcon	2	Song Sparrow	44
Prairie Falcon	1	Dark-eyed Junco	21
falcon, species	1	Snow Bunting	22
Gray Partridge	42	Red-winged Blackbird	230
<u>Ring-necked Pheasant</u>	813	Brewer's Blackbird	12
Ruffed Grouse	1	House Finch	165
Wild Turkey	17	Red Crossbill	5
Killdeer	1	Pine Siskin	5
Common Snipe	2	<u>American Goldfinch</u>	200
Rock Dove	96	Evening Grosbeak	38
Mourning Dove	8	House Sparrow	1891





About the population—

The population of the United States now stands at over 266,000,000. It is increasing at a rate of about three million a year. About 50 percent of this annual growth is caused by immigration, both legal and illegal. At current trends, the U.S. population will soar to 500 million by 2050, a level this country cannot possibly sustain and enjoy the quality of life we now have. Clearly, immigration, though contentious, is a cause that demands careful scrutiny.

Nearly one million immigrants are admitted to the U.S. each year. Another 300,000 - 500,000 enter illegally and stay. This has not always been so. Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1990, increasing the allowable number of immigrants by 40 percent. The pressure from illegals is also steadily greater.

As attested by the Statue of Liberty, opening our shores to immigration has been a matter of pride to most Americans for nearly two centuries. After all, we are all immigrants or are descended from immigrants, even Native North Americans who crossed over from Siberia 11,000 years ago. Then, and until recently, this was an empty land. People were wanted and needed, except by our earliest arrivals, to settle it and exploit its fabulous riches. This we have done with a vengeance. But the land is no longer empty, our rich resources are over-exploited, we are polluting our environment and the quality of life is declining. Now we have too many people, with a lot more coming.

Professor Donald Huddle of Rice University has been studying the economics of immigration for a number of years. His most recent analysis tells us that in 1994 immigrants paid \$75 billion in taxes, but required \$126 billion for such services as education, Medicaid, Social Security, etc., resulting in a net cost to taxpayers of over \$52 billion. His projected cost to taxpayers from 1995 - 2004 is \$688 billion. As someone noted, immigration is our largest unfunded federal mandate. California, Texas and Florida will attest to this.

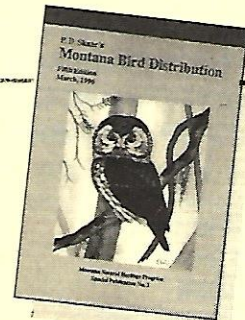
In 1996, the 104th Congress considered a number of immigration bills. The one getting the most attention would hold legal immigration at about 700,000, but with loopholes and exemptions it would probably have resulted in allowing 800,000 to 900,000 people into the U.S. each year. It failed, partly at least, to reluctance by members of Congress to reverse the trend of openness to immigration, by heavy lobbying of special interest groups wanting to keep unabated the supply of cheap labor and presumed adverse effects on Social Security.

In many respects, it is just as well it didn't pass, for it would not have gotten the job done that is sorely needed. Congress did pass legislation that will help curb illegal immigration.

So much for a very incomplete review of some of the background on this very controversial issue. Next month this column will outline an approach being advanced by an increasing number of organizations and individuals that promises to be economically sound,

environmentally sensitive and very appropriate for our population crisis.

**Bob Ballou, MT Audubon
Quality of Life Committee**



Where Can I Find that Bird?

New Bird Distribution Book for Montana

The long-awaited, newly revised 5th edition of P.D. Skaar's *Montana Bird Distribution* is available. This 130-page book is an excellent companion to your field guide because it tells you where birds are found in Montana. It is a book of maps, showing breeding and wintering areas for every bird species ever observed in the state.

Montana Bird Distribution was first published in 1975. The 5th Edition is a cooperative project between Montana Audubon, the Montana Natural Heritage Program and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

The book is being distributed for \$10 (including postage) by Montana Audubon, P.O. Box 595, Helena, Montana 59601.



Science spotlight: Land Use, Buffer Strips and Stream Health

Riparian buffers are strips of land where land-use activities are curtailed adjacent to streams. They are commonly used to reduce adverse impacts on streams from activities such as logging and agriculture. In Montana, loggers use mandatory riparian buffers and usually implement additional voluntary "best management practices" (BMPs)

Annual audits of the implementation rate and effectiveness of BMPs (including riparian buffers) are conducted on timber harvests across Montana. While *substantially* better than no audits at all, "effectiveness audits" aren't really designed to rigorously document BMP effectiveness. The audits consist of a site visit to see if BMPs were used and document visible failures of BMPs to protect non-timber forest values. Unfortunately, impacts aren't always visible and don't necessarily occur immediately after logging. In some cases, logging creates conditions whereby subsequent natural events have unnaturally large impacts, such as rain-induced mud slides originating in decade-old clear cuts. Additionally, the audits don't account for cumulative impacts — significant environmental degradation resulting from the additive effects of many small or subtle disturbances.

A recent study by authors N.E. Roth, D.J. Allan and D.L. Erickson was designed specifically to test the effectiveness of riparian buffers in protecting draining areas of streams affected by another human disturbance: agriculture. The authors found that, regardless of the presence or absence of riparian buffers, streams' draining areas with little agriculture and large amounts of wetlands and undisturbed forest were generally "healthy" (i.e., maintained high biological integrity). Streams' draining areas with abundant agriculture were generally "unhealthy."

The authors could only detect the

benefits of riparian buffers when they compared streams affected by similar amounts of agriculture. Their summary states: "[Riparian buffers] may be necessary to prevent isolated stream reaches from suffering extreme degradation, but may not be sufficient to maintain highest quality [aquatic] habitat. Upstream processes may overwhelm the ability of local, isolated [riparian buffers] to support stable in-stream habitat."

This study shows that careful documentation of in-stream conditions (rather than visual inspection of riparian buffers) was necessary to document aquatic degradation. Therefore, while useful for documenting the *implementation* of BMPs, BMP audits cannot replace rigorous scientific monitoring of BMP *effectiveness*. This study also suggests that we should not consider site-specific mitigation to be a complete solution for maintaining the economic productivity and biological integrity of our watersheds. We must also manage activities and plan for desired conditions across the entire watershed.

For a copy of the study report, write to Dr. David Allan, School of Natural Resources and Environment, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1115. Ask for "Landscape influences on stream biotic integrity assessed at multiple spatial scales" in the journal *Landscape Ecology*, vol. 11, #3, pp. 141-156.

Geoff Poole, Conservation Chairman

Join the Audubon Legislative Phone Tree ☎

To let your voice be heard about important environmental issues during this legislative session, contact Susannah Casey at Box 7922, Kalispell, MT 59904 or call at 857-3143. Become a vital connection on the Audubon Phone Tree.

If you have any legislative questions, feel free to call the Helena Audubon office at (406) 443-3949 and talk to Janet Ellis (our lobbyist) or Roxanne or Dave.



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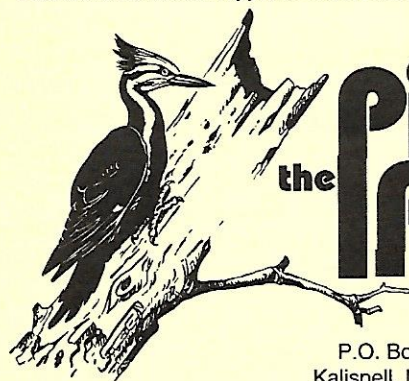
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BIRDING HOTLINE: 756-5595

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.

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the Pileated Post
Flathead Audubon Society

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