



Pileated **the Post**

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

Volume 22

Number 5

May 1997

Wetlands are for the Birds

May has been designated American Wetlands Month by the Environmental Protection Agency. National Audubon is encouraging local chapters to celebrate the time by educating congressional leaders about the importance of wetlands by inviting them on a tour of local wetlands during the Memorial Day recess.

Members of Congress should be reminded about the values of wetlands in the community, the public's interest in protecting and restoring wetlands and the need for a strong Clean Water Act.

It is likely that a major effort will be made to push the Clean Water Act reauthorization forward. Finally achieving reauthorization would be a major accomplishment that would remove wetlands and water quality issues as a perennial focus of debate in congress.

Wetlands and birds are inextricably linked — wetlands are homes and migration refueling places for one-third of all bird species. Among the most productive ecosystems in North America, wetlands are biological "factories" of energy-rich resources vital to our birds.

Birders and duck hunters have a common cause — the conservation of wetlands that are of vital importance to hundreds of bird species.

Today in the United States, approximately 100,000 acres of wetlands are

lost to development each year, with over half of the wetlands in the lower 48 lost since North America was settled by the Europeans.

Sharp declines of waterfowl and shorebird populations have accompanied the destruction of wetlands. Wetland birds total almost half of the species currently listed as threatened or endangered.

With over 60 million birders in the country making birdwatching the second most popular outdoor activity after gardening, and two million Americans hunting the waterfowl that inhabit wetlands, over \$19 billion a year is contributed to the national economy.

The conservation of wetland habitat for birds makes sound sense biologically and economically. Our congressmen need to know this.



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The Editor's Spotting Scope

What does it take to be a parent? For a start: a lot of patience, a natural instinct and being a glutton for punishment.. That's for human parents. (A sense of humor helps tremendously.)

How about our friends in the wild? The same goes for them: patience, instinct and being a glutton for punishment. (A sense of humor would help them too, but I've never heard laughter from an eagle or any other bird.)

Birds work hard at parenting. Just feeding the offspring takes up most of their waking hours. And it doesn't always cease when the young have fledged. Last summer I heard a bird commotion in the backyard and went to check it out. There was a robin frantically searching for worms while the nearly full-grown youngster hopped along behind, chirping and squawking for an afternoon snack. As a human parent I couldn't help but wonder why that chick wasn't big enough to get its own snack. Only a robin parent would know the answer to that one.

It's spring now, of course, and there are obvious signs of it everywhere. Here in Reno, the wetland pond near my apartment is beginning to change with the season. The winter rains and subsequent flooding created a large, deep pond that attracted birds of every caliber and they set up housekeeping. Canada Geese, Black-crowned Night Herons, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Red-winged Blackbirds have all nested and started families. Others have too, I'm sure, but I just haven't seen them.

The pond is well-populated with passers-through and each morning I am highly entertained with the latest arrivals: American White Pelicans, a lone, lonely-looking Snow Goose, Western Grebes, Buffleheads and more.

A few days ago I was suddenly aware of a goose that was obviously walking in the pond instead of swimming. I blinked and looked again. The pond water is receding! More water is going out through evaporation than flowing in from The Creek.

It occurred to me that the goose and night heron parents are faced with a dilemma. What do they teach their young first? How to swim, how

to walk or how to fly? They're going to have to move their broods off the grass islands and out to deeper water near the flow of The Creek in order to raise them to fledge. (You can see how my human parenting skills have kicked in.) If they don't start the lessons soon, there won't be a choice. The offspring will have to learn to walk in mud.

There's no question, those parents will meet the problem head-on and resolve it. I'm glad it's their problem and not mine. If those kids have to learn to walk in mud, I'll bet that would make an eagle laugh.

Sharon Bergman



Take note! This is Special!

May General Meeting

Monday, May 12, 1997

Lone Pine State Park

Visitor's Center

Mingle & Meet the Board — 5 p.m.

Potluck Supper — 6 p.m.

(Bring a potluck dish and your own service.)

Needed —

Nature-oriented Silent Auction Items

The election of officers and directors will be held during the business meeting.

Program — Flathead Audubon treasurer Susan Hitchcox will present a program on "Fire, Salvage-logging and Cavity-nesting Birds." Susan recently finished her Master's degree in biology at the University of Montana. She will present the results of three years of work investigating the combined effects of fire and salvage-logging on breeding cavity-nesting bird density and nesting success in northwestern Montana.

She received her Bachelor's degree in Natural Resources from Cornell University and worked for several years on eastern seabird projects. She currently works seasonally for Fish, Wildlife and Parks.



AUDUBON BIRDATHON

The 1997 Birdathon is scheduled for the first weekend in June.

For the uninitiated, a "Birdathon" is a fund raising event sponsored by National Audubon. Birdathons help local chapters raise money, plus get people out birding!

Last year Flathead Audubon had people participating in a number of ways. Some formed teams and had a "big day" birding where they tried to find as many bird species as possible in a 24-hour period, then collect pledges on a per-species basis. Others led bird walks and collected a donation from those who joined them.

Through all the birding fun \$1200 was raised that went to support both National Audubon efforts at protecting endangered species and Flathead Audubon's involvement in wetland protection. The goal this year is \$1500 and, like last year, there will be lots of great prizes for the participants.

June is not that far away, so dust off those binoculars and start making plans to go "birdathoning". If you would like to participate or would just like more information, call Liz Hill at 837-1444.

Liz Hill

10 Year Anniversary to be Observed.

Ten years ago, the U.S.D.A. informed the National Bison Range at Moise of the presence and invasive nature of *Lythrum salicaria*, purple loosestrife, in the Ninepipe Refuge area. Bill West of the Bison Range reports that due to efforts to control and eradicate the plant, there is less today than when it was first reported.

On August 9, at the anniversary pull and celebration, West will recognize those

who have participated in the effort.

Whether you have pulled loosestrife in the past, or want to start now, come to the event to show support and appreciation of West for his dedicated efforts. See the Field Trip Schedule for details, or call Neal Brown at 837-5018.

Patti Brown

Elly's Banding Report

Last year's total banding of birds was 1,448 and was comprised of 35 species. Right now, looking out our window at all the snow, it is a wonder that any bird would return here. It was sad to find a male robin killed on our highway. It had been banded by someone else and I am waiting to hear by whom and where.

Returning hummers will be looking for our feeders soon. Most years it has been during the last week in April. It will be interesting to watch for their arrival this year.

If you have forgotten the nectar formula, it is one cup sugar, four cups water and boil one to two minutes. Please omit red food coloring as it may be harmful to the birds. I freeze extra nectar if it is going slow (June and early July) and clean my feeders every few days.

Hang feeders in the shade — under an eave is a favorite place and offers good viewing. Later on, if wasps become a problem, a little vegetable oil rubbed around the feeder openings will help. **Elly Jones**

Hawk Migration Conference

The 8th biennial Hawk Migration Ass'n. Conference will be held June 12 - 15 at Snowbird, Utah. The theme of the conference is Raptors and the West. For registration information, contact Hawk Watch International, (800) 726-4295 or write P.O. Box 660, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110 - 0060.



President's Page >>>

A tip of the hat to *The Daily Inter Lake* for taking an interest in Flathead Audubon's recent acquisition of the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area. We certainly appreciate writer Ben Long's and photographer Karen Nichol's time in assembling an excellent article about this unique yet little known jewel in Kalispell's backyard.

It is very encouraging to see this kind of clear and straight-forward coverage of natural resource issues. Whether the subject is controversial or not (and what isn't controversial in our otherwise lovely valley?) It is refreshing to find writing/reporting that is information oriented as opposed to "getting the scoop" oriented. I sense a gravitation toward this more responsible coverage from *The Daily Inter Lake*. Good work.

Of course, let us keep in mind that what we "acquired" with the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area is the privilege of paying for the state lease. Such privilege may turn into a serious responsibility as the mandate for state-owned lands to earn greater income works its way out to these small and odd corners of state ownership.

Today our lease is a very affordable \$550 per annum. What a great deal for 443 acres of pristine wildlife habitat! We've been well-advised that someday we may need to budget substantially more than that. Congratulations to your Flathead Audubon's board of directors for shouldering that responsibility and making a commitment to keeping the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area natural. We can earn the money. We can't let go of a swath of riverine woodland irreplaceable in a world devouring nature.

That may well be all we've bought with our state lease — the right to be first in line to speak for nature: the songbirds and eagles, the mallard on her nest, the beaver and muskrat and sleek river otter, cottonwoods that have stood the test of time. But if that is what it costs to stand for wild places in this day and age, then it is

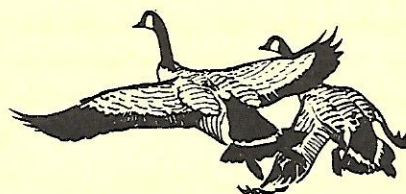
money well spent. Your Audubon dollars at work.

Now, if you'd like to join us for the Grand Tour, Dan Casey will lead a Father's Day field trip out to the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area on June 15. (Consult your field trip schedule.)

Except for a few sly deer hunters, I'll bet Dan knows that woods better than anyone, having inventoried its varied bird life for the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. And because he loves impenetrable, brush-choked, insect-ridden, screaming wilderness places like these. It's where the birds are!

Actually, you'll find it quite beautiful. We'll discuss the birds, the wildlife, the forest — and the possibilities. These may be as simple as opening up some of the game trails to encourage more user-friendly bird watching and enjoyment of nature. Or, since the Owen Sowerwine is home to several rare or specialized critters, like otters, wood ducks and an array of new tropical songbirds, there may be options for enhancing habitat to bolster their numbers.

Clearly, along with our new responsibility for the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area is the opportunity to link the future of Flathead Audubon in some significant ways with this gem of wildness in our own backyard. **Leo Keane**





1997 Field Trip Schedule

The public is invited to all trips. Come and enjoy!

Standard equipment for ALL trips includes *comfortable shoes, binoculars, scopes, field guides, "fowl" weather gear and a sack lunch or snack*. Further special requirements for some trips are noted. When possible, car pooling for trips will be arranged at the meeting site.

Call Field Trip Chairperson Betty Winzenburg, 755-1697, with questions, changes or for more information. Check the Birding Hotline, 756-5595, for updates or to network for informal outings.

Saturday, May 3 Ruth White's Birthday Walk Leader: Robin Magaddino, 837-4294.

A 3.5 mile hike along the Swan River outside Bigfork. Features early migrants and wild flowers. American Dippers have been spotted. **Meeting time and place:** 9 a.m., Kootenai Gallery, downtown Bigfork.

Saturday, May 10 International Migratory Bird Day (National Bison Range)

Celebrate this day dedicated to the plight of migratory birds in a unique setting. The National Bison Range is holding an open house. Here's a chance to explore the 2-hour Red Sleep Mountain Drive through the Bison Range and see the excellent exhibits at the Range's information center. **Hours and directions:** Red Sleep Mountain Drive is open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Take Hwy 93 south of Ronan to Hwy 212, turn west to the Bison Range. For more information, contact Pat Jamieson, Bison Range, 644-2211.

Sunday, May 18 Church Pond Walk (1401 Church Dr., Kalispell) Leader: Bruce Tennehill, 862-4548.

Leisurely walk exploring the ponds near Stillwater Lutheran Church. Here is a great opportunity to see a variety of shorebirds and possibly Sora and Sandhill Cranes. **Meeting time and place:** 9 a.m., parking lot of Stillwater Free Lutheran Church.

Saturday, May 31 Little Wolf/Blackback Woodpecker Search Leader: Amy Jacobs, 862-2508 or 862-4275

In the Talley Lake area, explore the Little Wolf Creek burn area. Learn about forest bird use of a post-fire habitat. A chance to see Blackbacked Woodpeckers and discuss fire ecology. Until early afternoon. **Meeting time and place:** 10 a.m., Tally Ranger District Office, west of Whitefish, 1335 Hwy 93 West.

Sunday, June 1 Warbler Walk (Swan Lake area) Leaders: Leo Keane, 862-5807 & Neal Brown, 837-5018

A guided birding trip into the Swan Lake Waterfowl Production Area. Find and identify a wide variety of migrating warblers by sight and sound. A great opportunity for novices to learn from local warbler experts and for experienced birders to brush up on their warbler skills. Until 12:30. **Meeting time and place:** 8:30 a.m., Swan Lake Campground (north of Swan Lake townsite).

Saturday, June 14 Sprunger-Whitney Nature Trail (Swan Lake area) Leader: Anne Morley, 886-2242

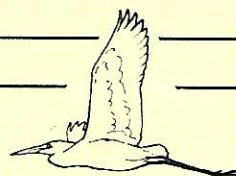
Sponsored jointly with MNPS, explore the new nature trail located near the Point Pleasant Campground south of Swan Lake. Flathead Audubon and MNPS helped Friends of the Wild Swan identify the plants and birds that appear along the trail, providing the information for the interpretive signs. **Note:** The Trail is on Montana State lands, so a *state recreational use permit* is needed. Permits can be purchased anywhere that fishing licenses are sold; \$10 for adults, \$5 for seniors. Proceeds go to the Montana State School Trust. **Meeting time and place:** 8:30 a.m., at Nature Trail site. Turn right about 9 miles south of Swan Lake at the Point Pleasant Campground sign. At the first switchback there is a trail sign. Turn right to the parking area.

Sunday, June 15 Father's Day Canoe Trip/ Owen Sowerwine Leaders: Dan & Susannah Casey, 857-

3143. Half-day exploration of Flathead Audubon's island park in Flathead River. Canoe to the island (easy flat-water paddling) and bushwack through the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area. Features breeding birds and close-up look at the diversity of endangered cottonwood forests. *Bring canoe and a life jacket for each person.* **Meeting time and place:** 7:30 a.m., parking lot of Rosauers, Kalispell.

Saturday, July 12 Loons of the Thompson Chain Leader: Lynn Kelly, 883-5797

Tour of known and potential loon nesting lakes in the Thompson Chain of Lakes on Hwy 2, west of

**1997 Field Trip Schedule continued**

Kalispell, conducted by expert loon researcher. At this time, the loons in the area will be off their nests for 3 to 6 weeks. Expect to see loon families with one or two chicks. 6 hours, including driving time. **Meeting time and place:** 9 a.m., Kalispell office of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, 490 N. Meridian.

Sunday, July 13 Squirmy, Scaly Critter Search (Site to be announced.) **Leader:** Dan Casey, 857-3143.

Join biologists from Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and the U.S. Forest Service on a search for salamanders, snakes, frogs and other reptiles and amphibians. *Bring rubber boots.* **Meeting time and place:** To be announced.

Saturday, July 19 Montana Loon Day **Contact:** Lynn Kelly, 883-5797

Take part in annual census of Montana's loons. The goal is to count all resident or migrating loons on likely lakes in the state, so lots of volunteers are needed. If you can spend all or part of the day at one or more lakes, call Lynn Kelly. She will provide census forms and assign lakes to volunteers according to their preferences.

Sunday, July 20 Flathead River Float (Kalispell area) **Leaders:** Dan & Susannah Casey, 857-3143.

Canoe trip from Presentine Bar Fishing Access to Leisure Island in Kalispell. An easy 6 hours on the river (no whitewater) through a variety of riparian habitats. *Bring canoe, rain gear and a life jacket for each person.* **Meeting time and place:** K-Mart parking lot in Kalispell.

Saturday & Sunday, August 2/3 Open House at Grounded Eagle Center

Visit the nationally known rehabilitation center for birds. Grounded Eagle has the largest flight arena in the U.S. **Hours and Directions:** The Center will be open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. It is located on Hwy 83 in the Swan Valley, at mile marker 37 (corner of Kroft Creek and Hwy 83). **For more information:** Call Ken Wolf, Center Director, 406-754-2882

Saturday, August 9 Purple Loosestrife Pull at Ninepipe Refuge **Leader:** Neal Brown, 837-5018

This working trip is sponsored jointly with MNPS. Help birds and native aquatic plants by reducing competition from the invasive purple loosestrife. An opportunity to be a hands-on conservationist, plus get up close and personal with the Marsh Wren. *Bring gloves and shoes (boots, waders) to wear in water.* **Meeting time and place:** 10 a.m. at Ninepipe Lodge (formerly Allentown). Bring lunch and water — dessert provided.

Sunday, August 10 Danny On Trail Nature Walk (Big Mountain) **Leader:** Susan Hitchcox, 837-4645.

Enjoy a walk (moderate difficulty) or gondola ride up Big Mountain. Bring lunch to eat at the top while enjoying a fantastic view of Glacier Park and Flathead Valley. Special invitation to Snowbirds. Come meet local Audubon members. **Meeting time and place:** 9 a.m. at the gondola ticket booth. Tickets are \$9.50 per person; ages 6 and under, free. If you walk up, the ride back down is free.

Saturday, August 16 Coal Ridge Lookout Hike **Leader:** Betty Kuropat, 862-0877.

8 mile hike to Coal Ridge Lookout (moderate difficulty, elevation climb of 1,600 feet). See and discuss old growth forest habitat and sub-alpine wetlands, fire and timber harvest history. Lunch at old forest service lookout with view of Glacier National Park and Whitefish Range. May see Clark's Nutcrackers, Grey Jays, Golden Crown Kinglets and Brown Creepers. *Bring a container for huckleberries!* Pre-register if possible. **Meeting time and place:** 8:30 a.m. at the parking lot of Nite Owl Cafe, Columbia Falls.

Late August or Early September (to be announced) **Swan Valley Logging Tour** **Leader:** Rod Ash, 754-2289

Tour of various logging practices in action, with discussion on the affects they have on wildlife, and of light impact logging methods available to landowners.

Fall Birding Class For more information, call Dan Casey, 857-3143.

Bird identification and habitat. Includes learning field trips.



Science **potlight: Technological** **Fixes for Ecological Problems**

Chinook Salmon have declined in the Merced River (near Sacramento) to levels that are a fraction of what existed a few decades ago.

Public concern over the plight of these fish inspired habitat restoration projects; the state of California spent \$2.5 million to construct spawning riffles in the river channel. Existing gravel in the river, which was too large for salmon spawning, was excavated and backfilled with appropriate-sized spawning gravel and stabilized with strategically placed boulders. In 1994, similar projects were proposed in other locations based on the "success" of the Merced River project, even though no evaluation of the effectiveness of Merced River "improvements" had been conducted.

A recent scientific paper by Mathias Kondolf, Jennifer Vick and Timothy Ramirez of the University of California evaluated the effectiveness of this project. Their data documented that the spawning gravels added to the stream were mobilized and washed away at river flows that occur at least as often as once every several years. They also pointed out that data collected by the very agencies that designed the project suggested that spawning habitat, while reduced from pre-dam levels, did not seem to be currently limiting salmon reproduction. In short, the necessary background work was not done and existing data were not considered before launching into a "restoration" project.

The answers to management dilemmas aren't always as easy as they might seem at first glance. As a society, we often choose to throw tax-dollars at technologically based "fixes" instead of paying up-front costs to *prevent* problems.

When we evaluate these "fixes," they are often ineffective or even detrimental and more costly than preventing the problem in the first place.

Is a dike on the north shore of Flathead Lake a good answer to the erosion problem — or will it simply redirect wave energy elsewhere and cause erosion at other, unprotected places on the lake?

Should we try to enhance native trout populations with hatchery fish — or will the genetic makeup of wild populations suffer?

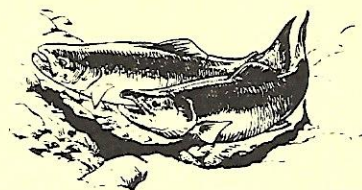
Can losses to floods be reduced over the long-term by constructing levies and other flood "control" structures — or, considering that Evergreen was submerged under ten feet of water in 1964, do levies lull us into a false security and encourage *more* development in flood-prone areas?

When firewood cutters take down snags, can bird houses maintain bird populations by replacing the lost cavities — or do snags provide necessary and irreplaceable foraging sites too?

These are hard questions, but they have one common thread: solutions that strive to work in concert with natural processes are inevitably more effective than those that work in spite of natural processes.

For a copy of the scientific paper, write Dr. Mathias Kondolf, Dept. of Landscape Architecture, 202 Wurster Hall, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720. Request "Salmon Spawning Habitat Restoration on the Merced River, California: An Evaluation of Project Planning and Performance."

Geoff Poole, Conservation Chair





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

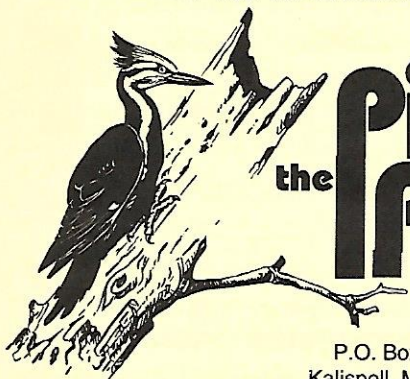
OFFICE	Janet Ellis, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624	443-3949
PRESIDENT	Rod Ash, P.O.Box 1129, Condon, MT 59826	754-2289

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.

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the Pileated Post

Flathead Audubon Society

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N54 7XCHA

Send this application and your check to:

National Audubon Society
Chapter Membership Data Center
P.O. Box 51001
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