



the Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

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Endangered Species Act Endangered

Senator Max Baucus is a cosponsor of an Endangered Species bill that will significantly weaken the protection of endangered and threatened plants and animals. It needs to be pointed out to him that the bill will fail to preserve Montana's natural heritage.

In the fall, bill S.1180, the Endangered Species Recovery Act of 1997, was introduced into the Senate. The bill is portrayed as a moderate compromise solution to the endangered species debate, but actually it would substantially reduce protection to the rare species of our state and nation.

S.1180 not only fails to include needed improvements to the current Endangered Species Act, it weakens existing protections that are essential to the survival of our rare plants and animals. Some of the particularly objectionable points are as follows.

- The bill would allow private landowners and federal agencies to lock-in long-term habitat conservation plans that exempt them from further conservation obligations and make changes to land management nearly impossible — even when the survival of a species is at stake.

- Preferential treatment would be granted to industries who apply for use of federal lands (timber, mining, grazing companies), excluding the public from the process entirely.

- Significant new bureaucratic burdens would be added to the listing of new species and to the development of recovery plans; ensuring that the process will become slower and more backlogged - to the detriment of species in need of protection.

- It would be harder for U.S. Fish &

Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service to hold other government agencies accountable for actions that jeopardize species and result in critical habitat destruction.

Although the bill, which has received tentative support from the Clinton Administration, did not make it to the floor of the Senate before the recess, it is anticipated that it will be brought to the floor when Congress reconvenes in February.

There is an Endangered Species bill in Congress that deserves our support. It is bill HR 2351, which is carried by Representative George Miller (D-CA). This bipartisan bill has more than 50 cosponsors and represents a real commitment to protecting our natural heritage through use of sound biological science and not the science of politics.

If you believe that rare plants and animals have a place on this earth, stand up for your beliefs and write to Senator Baucus, telling him your concerns about bill S 1180. He needs to know that the bill he cosponsors would erode essential protection for our unique natural heritage.

Consider taking the time to write for Audubon - write for yourself - write for wildlife! Send your letter to: Senator Max Baucus, 23 S. Last Chance Gulch, Helena, MT 59601. Or phone: (406) 449-5480.

In This Issue —

Meeting notice	page 2
This 'N That	page 3
President's Page	page 4
Field Trip & Program	page 5



The editor's spotting scope

With the advent of a new year before us, we will be bombarded on television, radio and other news media with highlights of the year just past. Following is the *Spotting Scope's* own version of the year's highlights.

On the animal front, you may have noticed that "they" want the wolves taken out of Yellowstone and by the same token, keep the buffalo in the park. At least don't shoot them if they wander past a boundary they can't see in search of food. In or out — make up your mind.

It was noted in the news that deer and elk hunters did not fare as well in Montana, because of the previous severe winter, although reports from other parts of the country indicated that there was an over-abundance of both species. Could it be that our deer population simply migrated, rather than say in Montana with all that cold and snow?

And the Grizzlies — heaven help the poor grizzlies. All they want to do is live in their own habitat peacefully, but the big question to be answered by Man is what type of habitat are we talking about, other than "not in my backyard"?

Each of these highlights could still be animal highlights when 1999 begins.

In the forest, it may come as no surprise that there are no real highlights. Just recently, Mike Dombeck, who is the U.S. Forest Service chief, announced that the agency is not going to turn a profit on logging operations. That wasn't really news, so it can't be considered a highlight.

However, the Associated Press reports that a bill will be introduced in the House to end commercial logging on government land. Co-sponsor of the bill, James Leach, R-Iowa, said last month, "The U.S. government is the only property owner that I know of that pays private parties to deplete its own resources."

If that bill makes it all the way through Congress, it would really be a newsworthy highlight, but it's highly unlikely.

On the birding front, there were several glowing reports about the large number of migrating ducks which seemed to indicate that

the species were bouncing back. It's rather ironic that duck hunters, delighted with the results, will invite friends to join them, to show how much fun duck hunting can be, and that will quickly reduce the flocks to where they were before.

So what have we got with our highlights of the year? As Auduboners, we haven't gained as much as we'd like, but we haven't lost ground either. We have to keep ever on the alert and make sure our own corners of the world don't have any negative highlights. We can live with that kind of status quo. **Sharon Bergman**

Hotline highlights ☎☎☎

On Flathead Lake, south of Blue Bay, a **Loon** was sighted, but it wasn't positively identified as to type. Going further down the lake, hundreds of **American Coots** were seen near the Polson Bridge and city docks, with hungry **Eagles** harrassing them. A large flock of coots was also hanging out in Big Arm Bay on the west shore.

Would you like to sharpen your skills on identification of gulls in winter plumage? Head for the Polson Sanitary Landfill. It may be 'down in the dump', but that's where you'll see a large number of seagulls. Recently, along with the usual residents, a **Glaucous Gull** was spotted, as well as a **Thayer's Gull**. Take your trash and keep your field guide handy. For up-to-date sightings, call the Flathead Audubon Hotline at 756-5595

TAKE NOTE—

January General Meeting

Monday, January 12, 1998
Fish, Wildlife & Parks Bldg.
490 N. Meridian Rd, Kalispell
Meeting starts at 7:30 p.m.

Program: Chad Olson, currently a graduate student at U. of M., will present a program on "Winter Roosting Ecology of Rough-legged Hawks in the Mission Valley." The presentation, illustrated with slides, will focus on the roosting dynamics and foraging habits of the hawks in a stand of Douglas firs and Ponderosa pines east of Ronan. Olson has been studying the site for the last three years, and it contains the largest number of roosting Rough-legged Hawks in the world.

A field trip to the area will be conducted by Olson on the following Saturday. See Page 5 for details.



THIS 'N THAT

National Audubon Online

Anyone with an Internet connection can find detailed board meeting information on the web, provided by Chuck Bragg, regional board member from California. Chuck takes detailed notes at all board sessions he attends and then posts them on the Audubon web site, at his chapter's home page - Santa Monica Bay Audubon Society. Check the NAS site at <http://www.audubon.org> and look for the chapter link.



From Montana Audubon

*** It's Official** — Montana Audubon officially became a National Audubon field office in October. For the past seven years, the Montana Audubon office has worked independently. This new partnership will improve the work Audubon does in Montana for both organizations by improving communication and coordination of programs within Audubon.

*** Convention in Great Falls** — Montana Audubon will hold its 1998 Annual Meeting on May 1 - 3 in Great Falls. This year's conference will focus on wetlands. Speakers will address the following range of questions: what is a wetland; what types of wetlands does Montana have; why are wetlands important; what are the biggest threats to wetlands; and what can citizens do to help protect and restore wetlands?

Further information on convention plans will appear in future newsletters.



Thank you, Thank you, Thanks

Thanks to those who have donated dollars to Flathead Audubon through recycling at Valley Recycling. Through your efforts, \$37.48 came to our treasury which we would not have had otherwise, and your recycling efforts helped relieve the pressure at the landfill. Valley Recycling is located at 1410 Hwy 2 W in

Kalispell. Be a name dropper. They pay FAS for aluminum cans, cardboard, newspapers, magazines and office paper donated by you, when you mention our name.



Raffle Coming Up — A limited number of raffle tickets will be sold at the January meeting for **2 Big Mountain Ski Passes**, valued at \$40 each.

Raffle tickets are \$2 each or three for \$5. The sale of the tickets and the drawing will be conducted at the membership meeting on January 12. Those who can't make it to the meeting, but want raffle tickets can contact Susan Hitchcox at 837-4645 to make arrangements.



Chance of a Lifetime — Someone out there in reader-land may not realize it, but here is a great opportunity to give vent to your creative juices, influence a few people and serve Flathead Audubon at the same time.

I have served as the editor of *The Pileated Post* since 1990 and it's time I moved on and gave someone else a chance at it. It's been a wonderful challenge and there have been many adventures and numerous friends made over the years.

The job requires about three days of effort a month and the editor makes most of the decisions on content and style. I use a computer, but if you don't have one, FAS will provide an electric typewriter, as well as other office supplies and materials. If you're interested, or think you know someone who might be, give me a call and let's talk about it.

The newsletter is published nine times a year, starting with the September issue and ending with the May issue. The summer months are yours. If you can come on board in the next month or so, I'll be here to help you get started.

Let me hear from you.

Editor Sharon (849-5286)



President's Page >>

It's a song as old as the hills. Wolves are back and the ranchers are howling. Little wonder. Wolves and ranchers have been at each other's throats since the advent of the cow.

Not that *Canis lupus* ever had much of a chance against *Homo sapiens* ranchero. Cowboys and their Winchesters, their poisons, steel traps and even their airplanes, blew the lights out of the last Montana wolf 50 years ago. Exit a highly intelligent, complex, prolific, adaptable and big predator. Another in the long list of big predators a generation or two of our species has systematically been removing from the planet.

Enter the Endangered Species Act. If it says anything, the Endangered Species Act affirms the *right* of every creature to a place on the Earth. That in itself is a giant leap for mankind; to acknowledge that we share the Earth — not own it. In effect, the Endangered Species Act is a declaration of our *responsibility* to let nature flourish.

And she does, when given half a chance. It didn't take long at all for the intelligent and adaptable gray wolf to call our bluff. They're back in a big way, filtering down from northern strongholds and replenishing their former haunts — from the North Fork to the Front Range to the Thompson to the Bitterroot; wherever it's still wild or even, to our consternation, at the edge of wild. They are back. And they've come to test our mettle.

There was a time I had little patience for the ranchers' lament, this howling and carrying on about profits vanishing in the night. It seems there is always something for ranchers to howl about: it's the wolves and it's the coyotes; it's the elk or the bison, the other ungulates that eat some grass and need part of the pasture that is often in our National Forest or Grassland, and for which we invariably charge too much. Then it's the weather. And, of course, there's always fence to fix.

I've seen too much to cry too hard for the rancher or farmer, too much of nature erased in the name of profit. I've watched the wetlands and duck ponds go down the drain. I know places where every square inch, literally, of topsoil is under plow.

The thundering legions of 60 million buffalo I'll never see, but I abhor their straggling heirs getting the same treatment. Yet still, when it all adds up to too much trouble for too little money,

many ranchers option to sell the place off for that last crop of houses and move on. Frankly, the chest beating gets a little old.

On the other hand, I'm in business too and one thing I can relate to is tenuous profit margins. Maybe I'm even a bit envious of the federal guarantees and insurance that ranchers and farmers seem favored for against loss, or that occasional subsidy. And what business person wouldn't line up for a Defenders of Wildlife reimbursement on excess overhead expenses. Talk about a cash cow!

But no matter how you cut it, we're all in favor of keeping the rancher and farmer on the land. It's what they want; it's what conservationists prefer by a long shot. For if we are to save thriving wildlife populations, it will be in the fields and forests of agricultural and range land — not in our suburbs.

When we say "open space" we mean ranch or farm. Certainly, I'm not interested in being the one to tell Mr. (or Ms.) Rancher we expect him to shoulder that load too and still turn a profit. But that has been the implication. It seems evident that in a world grown irreversibly complex, if we expect the person working the land to keep us attached to our wild heritage, then we must restructure our economy to favor that: wildlife and natural places be valued like cattle and crops. And not in retrospect, like the legions of buffalo, but now, before it's all gone.

As is so often the case these days, the controversy of wolf and ranch is as complex as the civilization from which it has evolved. Everybody is a little bit right. On the bright side, if you are a lover of wildlife, it's all coming to a head right here in the Flathead, as wolves take up the howl not far at all from your own back door.

To learn more about wolf recovery in Montana, don't miss "The Pack is Back", a special slide presentation by Steve Thompson, which will be held in Whitefish on Thursday, January 29. See page 5 for the details.

Leo Keane





The pack is back

A photographic safari of wolves from Glacier to Yellowstone

This wolf photographic safari attracted an overflow crowd in Kalispell in November, and dozens of people were turned away at the door. In response to numerous requests, the show is being repeated on **January 29, 1998, 7 p.m.**, at the Whitefish Central School Auditorium (corner of 2nd Street & Spokane).

The public is invited to a free slide presentation about wolf recovery in the northern Rockies. Long-time wolf watcher and Whitefish resident

Steve Thompson will present a photographic safari and conversation about wolves in the Rocky Mountain West - past, present and future.



Thompson will trace wolf recovery in Montana from Kishinena — the first known wolf to naturally re-colonize Glacier National Park from Canada — to the reintroduction of wolves in Yellowstone. The show follows the saga of the Rose Creek Pack, the first pack returned to the wilds of Yellowstone National Park. Thompson will also discuss the recent federal court ruling that the reintroduction of wolves as an experimental population was illegal because wolves had begun to naturally re-colonize Yellowstone and Central Idaho.

The show is even-handed, informative and entertaining, and includes a discussion on the legitimate concerns of ranchers and the hunters' fair chase perspective on native predators.

January field trip planned

"The Raptors of Mission Valley" will be the featured birding tour on **January 17**, guided by hawk expert Chad Olson of Missoula. This is the third year that Olson has conducted the field trip, which is expected to last about four hours.

As in the past, it will feature a look at Rough-legged Hawks in the area which use a large communal roost. Also usually seen on this outing are Bald and Golden Eagles, Red-tailed Hawks, owls and other birds of prey.

Olson has been doing research on Rough-legged Hawks in the Mission Valley for over three years and he will demonstrate how he tracks the hawks using radio telemetry. His research is being conducted in cooperation with the Owl Research Institute in Missoula and the Salish and Kootenai tribes. Flathead Audubon has provided partial support for the project.

Those wishing to participate are to meet at 9:30 a.m. at the Ninepipes Lodge (formerly Allentown Restaurant) on Highway 93 south of Ronan, opposite the Ninepipe Wildlife Refuge. Dress warmly and bring a lunch or snack and the usual binoculars.

Happy New Year





Flathead Audubon Society Directory

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Betty Winzenburg (see above)
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June Ash, P.O. Box 1129, Condon, MT 59826
Sharon Bergman, 354 LaBella Lane, Big Arm, MT 59910
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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.

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.

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"/>
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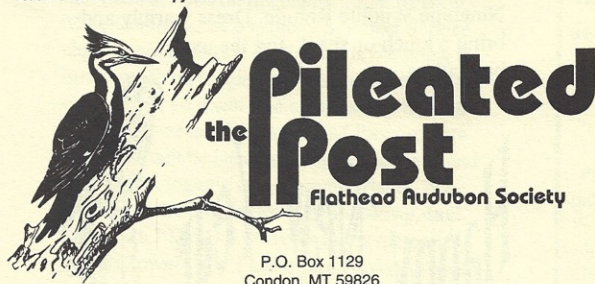
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