



# the Pileated Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

Volume 23

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March 1998

## Wolf recovery needs

**you.** *Re: Court Ruling on  
Yellowstone/Idaho Wolves*

On December 12, in a case brought by the Farm Bureau Federation, District Judge Downes ruled that wolves had been brought illegally into Yellowstone and Central Idaho using an "experimental nonessential" status (ENE) and he ordered their removal. He then stayed the order to allow appeals, which have been filed by several groups. In a separate claim, addressing concerns by the Earth Justice Legal Defense Fund and a National Audubon Coalition, he ruled that the Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) had illegally classified Idaho's "naturally occurring" wolves as experimental nonessential, stripping them of protection under the Endangered Species Act.

The National Audubon suit addressed only Idaho, not Yellowstone. We did not argue that the use of experimental nonessential wolves was illegal. We maintained that the natural wolves in Central Idaho should retain their full ESA protection when the government brought in experimental wolves with less protection.

The Farm Bureau suit addressed both Yellowstone and Idaho and sought an injunction to stop wolf recovery. They claimed that the only appropriate remedy was to remove all the reintroduced wolves and their offspring, which is strenuously opposed by Audubon. In both his ruling (ENE is illegal) and his "remedy" (remove the wolves), the judge agreed with the Farm Bureau. If the Audubon Coalition had not sued to protect the Idaho wolves, the ruling and remedy would have been the same because they were central points in the Farm Bureau claims.

Unless the lawsuit ruling is overturned on appeal, it would be a stunning setback to wolf

recovery in Yellowstone and Central Idaho. If conservationists win on appeal, the problem's solved — the wolves stay. If the appeal is lost, the wolves fate will likely turn on a political decision by Interior Secretary Babbitt and perhaps Congress. That's where you can help.

We cannot afford to await the appeal outcome. If action isn't taken now, it is possible that livestock interests will once again be successful in the eradication of wolves on public land. Send your letter or postcard to: Secretary Bruce Babbitt, Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.

Some of the following points can be used:

- The American people and the majority of us in Montana, Wyoming and Idaho support wolf recovery. The Farm Bureau is attempting to subvert this clear public mandate.
- Wolf recovery in Yellowstone and Central Idaho is one of the greatest conservation victories of this century and must be preserved. Wolves are playing an important role in restoring the ecological balance in Yellowstone and Idaho. It is ahead of schedule and below budget.
- All the wolves of Yellowstone and Central Idaho should be given full protection under the ESA if that's what it takes to keep them on the ground.
- Do not allow ranching interests to take away wolves a second time, by holding our wildlife heritage and public land hostage

Don't wait to write. Do it today. **Brian Peck**

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## The editor's spotting scope

In September, 1990, a fledgling editor assumed the responsibilities of *The Pileated Post*. Using a typewriter, scissors and pot of glue, and with the assistance and cooperation of board members and the Gull Printing staff in Polson, I plunged ahead.

Learning on the job was an adventure in editing and in birding. Bird counts and field trips developed respect for those who knew when I didn't, and personal travel was enhanced by a new point of view which eventually found its way into print.

My life list expanded as I gradually became more adept with bird identification. Bird songs alluded me, but I found they could be enjoyed even though I didn't know which bird did the singing. A total failure with seagulls, I learned to live with failure and not allow it to depress or stress me, and I can give the seagulls credit for that lesson.

As an environmentalist, my anger and outrage or disgust could be channeled in a positive way with writing and editing and, hopefully, make some kind of difference.

Changes occurred over the years. The typewriter gave way to a computer; a fax machine came into valuable use and a simple glue stick retired the pot of glue, but the cooperation and assistance of the people involved remained the same. Producing a newsletter is not a solitary task.

Now it's time to move on — not away from birding or writing, but in a new direction. Leslie Kehoe of Bigfork will take over as editor, and she's wished the best of luck.

As for you, the birding readers, even though I don't know all of you, you've been a part of my life for nearly eight years and I'm gonna miss you. Happy birding always.

Sharon Bergman



## Hotline Highlights ☎☎☎

Can spring be far behind? In early February flocks of **Robins** and **Song Sparrows** were seen in the Gateway West Mall area. Near Bigfork, **Red Crossbills** and at least two species of **Finches** were caught singing a happy song, and in Somers, a **Double-crested Cormorant** and a **Kingfisher** were spotted. **Bluebirds** were reported at the north end of the Swan Valley Highway, and in the Ronan area, **Red-winged Blackbirds** were chortling that they're glad to be back. **Ospreys** were seen in Happy Valley and Hawks and other predators have been very active throughout the region, dining on Redpolls.

For up-to-date sightings or to share your own sightings, call the Flathead Audubon Hotline at 756-5595. ♦ ♦ ♦

## Election Coming Up

Although the election of officers and directors is scheduled for the May meeting, it's not too early to start thinking about who will run for office. If you are interested in running, or want to nominate someone, contact a member of the nominating committee. Serving on the committee are Jim Rogers, Chairman (883-3611); Dan Casey (857-3143) and Ferne Cohen (862-2028).

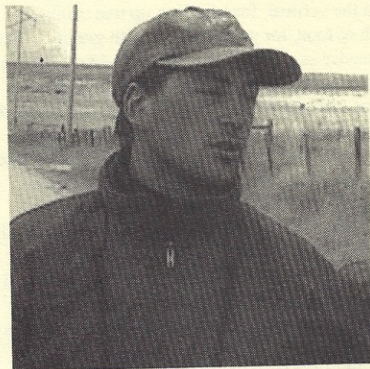
## March General Meeting

Monday, March 9, 1998

Fish, Wildlife & Parks Bldg.  
490 N. Meridian Rd. Kalispell  
Meeting starts at 7:30 pm.

**Program:** "The Ecology of Flathead Lake: *Mysis*, Bulls and Macs," a slide report, will be presented by Barry Hansen, Fisheries Biologist for the Salish & Kootenai Tribes, and Mark Deleray, Fisheries Biologist with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks. Hansen and Deleray will discuss the aquatic ecology of Flathead Lake, the recent changes in its fish communities and the role of *Mysis* shrimp in these changes. Focus will be on the increased lake trout population and its influence on other lake species, especially Bull Trout and Westslope Cutthroat. They will present information on the decision to be made on whether to maintain the current size of the lake trout population or try to reduce it in order to restore the native fish communities that have historically flourished in Flathead Lake.





*Chad Olson of Missoula conducted a winter field trip in the Ninepipe area for avid bird watchers. The winter outing highlighted the sighting of various raptors, such as Rough-legged and Red-tailed Hawks, Harriers and Owls.*

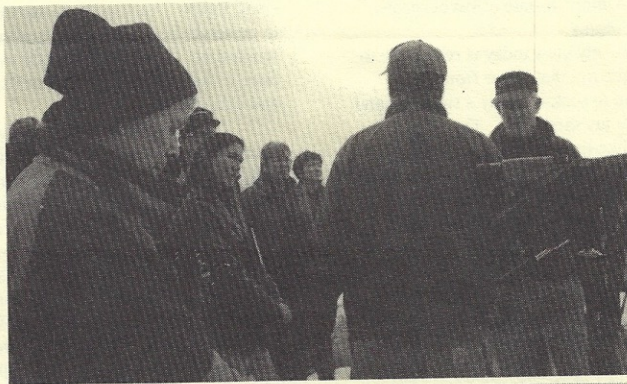
## First field trips of spring scheduled

Waterfowl tours in the Lower Valley are scheduled for **Sunday, March 22 and April 5**, led by Dan Casey.

**The Lower Valley Waterfowl Tour** in March will explore the wetland sites in the Somers area. Participants can expect to see a large number of dabbling ducks, as well as a variety of Flathead Valley's early spring arrivals.

**The Second Waterfowl Tour** of the wetland sites will feature a variety of resident and migrating waterfowl and more spring arrivals. Over 20 species are often seen on these field trips, which last approximately four hours.

Participants will meet at the Somers Recreation Area (Boat Ramp) on Highway 93 at Somers Bay, at 8:30 a.m. Bring binoculars or scope and a sack lunch. For further information, call Dan Casey at 857-3143.







## President's Page ➤ ➤

It's late February and 48° in the shade. On the sunnyside of the house, where I'm enjoying lunch on the deck, that radiance feels as therapeutic as a warm bath. This could be heaven, I think as my face turns to the sky like a sunflower. What a difference a year makes.

Last February was glacial. A mountain of snow would have nearly blocked the sun where I now sit, the accumulation of daily shovelings. What at first seemed exciting and awe inspiring slowly turned to a suffocating claustrophobia as the snowfall engulfed us. We began to worry — what if it never stops! Or at least, where can we keep piling it till spring arrives? Thank goodness, spring did arrive, as surely as migrating robins.

Interestingly, if we could combine the record-breaking winter of '97 with the current non-winter of '98 we'd arrive at just about our "average Montana winter". How's that for an oxymoron? The "average Montana winter" exists only at the weather station. In reality, we do indeed live in a state of extremes; and not unlike the contradiction of the "average Montana winter", a state of sweet sorrow and heart-breaking beauty.

Fortunately, my view today is restricted to this pocket among the firs that is our front yard. I'm perfectly content to soak in today's sunshine and nibble mindlessly on my sandwich. The trees, I notice are tinkling like tiny bells. It's a flock of Crossbills blowing through. Soon they're cascading from the treetops, erratic as leaves, and encircle a slush puddle in the road like a bunch of kids. Crossbills are such exuberant little birds and they do love their liquids.

Soon a roving band of Chickadees and Nuthatches are vying for my attention, having captured the shrubbery close at hand. The Black-caps, as always, seem animated and friendly. Their good buddies, the Nuthatches, by comparison, are still, bull-necked and mechanical, a little robot of a bird. Exuberant, friendly or mechanical, birds so often remind us of ourselves and make us glad.

In a moment they all breeze on to their next stop, except one. Staying behind, picking and probing at the bark of a nearby larch, is the ever solemn and solitary Brown Creeper. The Brown Creeper is an understated bird, barely visible from more than 20 feet away in their cryptic hues. But this one is nearly close enough to touch, if I don't move, so I'm getting a good look. The coloration is actually remarkable and intricately beautiful, like sun-

dappled bark in a deep forest, where these birds are most at home. Clearly too they are well-adapted for life in the vertical, for spiraling up tree trunks in search of food, for getting along with gravity. They are slender as a deer mouse, compact like a rope and endowed with a generous tail, which they use as a prop as they march up a tree. Creepers are happy so long as they are pointing uphill on a tree trunk.

But they do need trees; plenty of trees, and big ones. The Creeper's life in the deep forest begins on the trunk of a big tree, in a nest built under and protected by a loosened sheaf of bark. It takes a good-sized Douglas Fir, Ponderosa Pine or Western Larch to produce the sort of bark that will accommodate a Creeper's nest and shield it like a shingle on a rooftop. Consequently, these are birds of old-growth forest. But I'm convinced they are adaptable enough to range into adjacent forests of second growth or small trees for foraging, as they do on our property of 60 and 70-year-old fir and larch.

Down the road is a stand of big, old Doug firs that I'm betting has produced many generations of Brown Creepers and the Creeper families that now come to explore our small forest. That to me seems like reason enough to preserve the few remnant groves of big trees remaining. In addition to their own grace and beauty, these groves serve as wellsprings of unique and varied wildlife.

When our immediate neighbors chose to open their woodlot for the better view, I couldn't help but wonder, what is better than the intimate view of a sheltering forest? Certainly not the nearby homes and street traffic that opened to them when the trees came down. In the two years since that woods was logged we've nearly lost the chorus of Swainson's Thrush on June sunsets and the midsummer song of Townsend's Warbler is gone from the treetops. Like Brown Creepers, these too are lovers of the deep forest, though even less adaptable. They are the birds that tell me we need to keep our forests intact ecologically and connected geographically.

For the moment though, here with my face shining in the February sun, it's my job to appreciate what is given. I'm grateful for the birds we have; for the friendly Chickadees that seem to love our company, and for the reclusive Brown Creeper who ventured from the woods today and reminded me for some the woods is a place of their own and a great deal more respect is needed from us. Who better to bring that message than a modest Brown Creeper.

Leo Keane





## ~Volunteers needed~

Flathead Audubon works on the volunteer system. Many members would like to lend a hand, but don't know how their talents and skills would be of benefit to the chapter. There are at least two areas of need at this time.

Are you a CPA or bookkeeper? The board (and the treasurer) would like to have the treasurer's books audited at least once a year. The records are on computer and are up-to-date. If interested in donating your time, contact President Leo Keane (862-5807) or Treasurer Susan Hitchcox (837-4645).

The Wetlands Chairman, Neal Brown, needs an assistant to monitor the Polson/Ronan area. If you have the time and the interest in helping to preserve the wetlands, contact Neal (837-5018) or Jim Rogers (883-3611).



## Glacier Institute ready for spring

The Glacier Institute kicks off its 1998 season with a slate of exciting field courses.

**Owls of Glacier**, on the weekend of April 4-5, will feature an intensive introduction to the nine owl species that breed in Glacier National Park and the North Fork Valley. Denver Holt and Michael Maples of the Owl Research Institute in Missoula will conduct day and night field trips to teach the habits, adaptations and life histories of these impressive predators.

Course fee: \$100; lodging and 3 meals: \$50. Includes transportation.

On Sunday, May 17, John Ashley will teach a one-day course on **Glacier's Harlequins**. The Pacific Harlequin is the only duck in the world that divides its time between the sea and mountain streams. By May, female Harlequins have returned to Glacier to reproduce along the stream where they were born. The group will visit McDonald Creek in Glacier National Park to watch the Harlequins court and feed in the foaming rapids, and will learn about the threats faced on both ends of their migratory route and what can be done to aid in their conservation.

Cost: \$40.

On June 14, summer begins with **Songbirds, Swallows and Swifts: Birding Glacier's West Side**. Birding enthusiasts can join expert birder Lou Bruno for a tour through lakeshore, meadow, old growth forest and alpine habitats to look and listen for Glacier's birds as they sing for mates and mark territories.

Cost: \$45, which includes transportation.

This year, the Glacier Institute celebrates its 15<sup>th</sup> year of offering field-based education in the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem. We hope you'll join us for an educational adventure. For more information or a complete course brochure, contact the Institute at (406) 755-1211; [glacinst@digisys.net](mailto:glacinst@digisys.net).

Jenny Tollefson, Program Director



## Do you owe us some money?

Flathead Audubon is \$165 out-of-pocket and it's our fault. When the Christmas Bird Counts were conducted, the leaders were supposed to collect \$5 from each participant, but some forgot to mention it so 32 people didn't pay. The money helps to defray the cost of publishing the collected data.

If you took part in the Bird Count and didn't pay the \$5, bring it to the next meeting or send it along to Treasurer Susan Hitchcox, 4755 Foothill Rd., Bigfork, MT 59911. Thank you.

## Meet the new editor —

Leslie Kehoe of Bigfork answered the call and will take over as the new editor with the next issue of *The Pileated Post*.

Leslie comes from a birding family. Her mother took out a family membership in Flathead Audubon years ago. "I've always been interested in birds and birding," she commented. She looks forward to the newsletter challenges ahead.

To contact the new editor, call 837- 4467 or write 1020 Holt Dr., Bigfork, MT 59911.

Welcome, Leslie!





## Flathead Audubon Society Directory

### OFFICERS

President  
Vice President  
Secretary  
Treasurer  
Past President

Leo Keane, 514 Pine Place, Whitefish, MT 59937  
Geoff Poole, 4755 Foothill Road, Bigfork, MT 59911  
Gail Sullivan, 932 Columbia Avenue, Whitefish, MT 59937  
Susan Hitchcox, 4755 Foothill Road, Bigfork, 59911  
Brent Mitchell, 960 Kienas Rd, Kalispell, MT 59901

862-5807  
837-4645  
862-5775  
837-4645  
756-8130

### DIRECTORS

1997-2000  
1997-98  
1997-2000  
1996-99  
1996-99  
1997-2000

William Breen, 335 Mountain Meadow Rd., Kalispell, MT 59901  
Neal Brown, 560 Wolf Creek Dr, Bigfork, MT 59911  
Sharon DeLong, 2495 Grave Creek Rd., Eureka, MT 59917  
Sonja Hartman, P.O. Box 1388, Columbia Falls, MT 59912  
Jim Rogers, P.O. Box 984, Polson, MT 59860  
Bruce Tannehill, 239 Deer Trail, Whitefish, MT 59937

755-2142  
837-5018  
  
758-8516  
883-3611  
862-4548

### CHAIRS

Audubon Adventures  
Conservation  
Field Trips  
Hospitality

Kim Davis, 1230 Rhodes Draw, Kalispell, MT 59901  
Geoff Poole, 4755 Foothill Road, Bigfork, MT 59911  
Betty Winzenburg, 1436 Rogers Lane, Kila, MT 59920  
Betty Winzenburg (see above)

755-1311  
837-4645  
755-1697

Librarian  
Membership  
Newsletter  
Program  
Publicity  
Quality of Life  
Refuge Projects  
Wetlands/Waterfowl

Debby Rossi, P.O. Box 1884, Columbia Falls, MT 59912  
Gail Leonard, 514 Pine Place, Whitefish, MT 59937  
June Ash, P.O. Box 1129, Condon, MT 59826  
Leslie Kehoe, 1020 Holt Dr., Bigfork, MT 59911  
Jim Rogers, P.O. Box 984, Polson, MT 59860  
Linda Winnie, P.O. Box 220, Kila, MT 59920  
Ferne Cohen, P.O. Box 1782, Whitefish, MT 59937  
Lynn Kelly, 6525 Rocky Point Road, Polson, MT 59860  
Neal Brown, 560 Wolf Creek Drive, Bigfork, MT 59911

892-1317  
862-5807  
754-2289  
837-4467  
883-3611  
755-1406  
862-2028  
883-5797  
837-5018

## Montana Audubon

OFFICE  
PRESIDENT

Janet Ellis, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624  
Howard Strause, 1917 W. Hill Pl., Great Falls, MT 59404

443-3949  
727-7516

**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.



**the Pileated Post**  
Flathead Audubon Society

P.O. Box 9173  
Kalispell, MT 59904

## 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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Life	\$1500	<input type="checkbox"/>
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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

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