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FLATHEAD AUDUBON HOLDS NEIBORHOOD MEETING ON OWEN SOWERWINE NATURAL AREA

Flathead Audubon has initiated a new effort to bring the high wildlife habitat values of The Owen Sowerwine Natural Area to the attention of the Kalispell community. We launched the effort by going door to door in the Leisure Lane and Willow Glenn neighborhoods. We invited the neighbors of the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area to attend a meeting at the New Montessori on Willow Glenn Dr. school on the evening of October the 21st.

We were pleased to welcome fifteen people from the neighborhood to the gathering. We started the meeting with a historical review of the area (Owen Sowerwine was Flathead County's First Parks Commissioner). Then we reviewed maps and discussed the current lease status (we hope to be able to afford the new lease but the final cost has yet to be determine) and explained the management plan for the area (basically, the management plan is for foot travel only, no motorized or horse travel please, no structures or logging or developed trails).

It was a great aid to have Gail Bissell and Dan Casey both of Montana Fish and Wildlife and Parks present to help explain how other state lands in the area are managed and to help emphasize the very high wildlife values of Owen Sowerwine and the adjacent braided channels area of the Flathead River riparian ecosystem. (Dan and Gail attended on their own time and deserve our special thanks!)

The Owen Sowerwine Natural Area is a strong link in the Flathead River ecosystem.

It is functioning as an ancient forest should with a broad variety of plants in a wide cycle of maturity and regeneration. The great variety of riparian habitat provides sustenance and shelter to a great variety of our bird species. In three years of conducting point counts at Owen Sowerwine, Dan Casev has documented 80 species of birds. Considering that he has certainly not been able to document all the species that use the area, it is not out of the question to expect that 100 of the 200 species of birds that inhabit the Flathead Valley can be found in Owen Sowerwine. This fact alone emphasizes the importance of preserving riparian habitat in general and the Owen Sowerwine in particular. It is truly a special place.

Flathead Audubon thanks the neighbors of Owen Sowerwine. They are interested in their neighborhood and include The Owen Sowerwine Natural Area as land deserving respect. The area has remained in very good condition for years and years, a direct reflection of the neighborhood. Their care and respect for Owen Sowerwine is evident by a visit to the area. It is clean and without litter: invasive weeds are at a minimum; no fire rings, and the trails that exist are primarily game trails rather than people trails. We hope that the future will bring new interest to The Owen Sowerwine Natural Area, and that interest will include the spirit of being a good neighbor, a spirit of consideration for People and Earth, a spirit of respect and thoughtfulness for all life. By Neal Brown, President Flathead Audubon





CHICKADEE CHATTER

It has been another truly beautiful fall here in the Flathead Valley. Every year seems to be more beautiful than the last. I may simply have a short memory or it may be that it is just difficult to remember from year to year the vibrancy of the colors and the clear crispy days. It may just be that the human mind cannot completely remember such beauty and so we live it anew each year.

I was driving home from the last Flathead Audubon meeting several weeks ago now, contemplating what I had heard at the meeting. The presentation had been on the population and the problems it is causing now and will cause in the near future(our future). I had turned the radio on to keep my thoughts company. Two men were talking, I don't really remember what the conversation was about but one of the men made a comment that got me thinking in a whole new direction. The comment went something like this: 'WE TAKE TO MANY THINGS FOR GRANTED, WE NEED TO PAY GREATER ATTENTION AND THINK MORE DEEPLY...'. We have all heard comments like this and we should use them as wake-up calls. We humans seem to need reminders at regular intervals.

A comment like this can be interpreted in many ways and everyone will have a different rendition. All of us take things for granted at times, it is easy to do; but with such a wonderful fall underway we should all make an effort to stray from the daily routine and look around. Here are some ideas: We could turn the TV off and go out for a wander in the mountains or even in the neighborhood, walking or driving it doesn't matter, just pay attention to the world around you. Maybe get up early in the morning before dawn and watch the sun as it rises slowly above the horizon. It is a magical time of the day; the colors of fall sunrises can warm the soul. Find a Western Larch on a windy day and stand under it as the golden needles fall through the air to land on you and the ground, thinking deeply about gravity and the color of the needles as they swirl down.

I have tried to stray from the daily routine and succeeded in small ways, here are some the things that have warmed my soul this fall:

A friend and I went walking in Glacier Park one sunny afternoon in the middle of October. We came upon a small stream of water, it was making its way down the face if a mossy rock and was falling the rest of the way to the ground. As the drips fell, one by myriad one, the sun caught them and turned them into pure gold, if only for a moment. We watched for many moments.

The next day we went for a short walk in an old growth forest in one of my favorite places, the Ross Creek Cedars near Troy. We walked in the cool humid air under the giant trees and looked at holes in the trees where woodpeckers had once dined, we stopped beside an ancient tree that had fallen beside the trail and spent some few moments looking at a habitat in miniature. Upon the fallen old one a community of mosses and lichens has found a home. There were many different varieties in a hundred different colors of green and brown and tan. Some shaped like tiny horns, some fuzzy bright green ones, some were long and looked like green hair, and some were flat like plates with a ruffled rim. And there were tiny spiders and even tinier ants. And out in the forest a beautiful song began and a Winter Wren showed himself for a few brief minutes. It is hard to take anything in this place for granted it is a truly remarkable spot. So remember to pay attention and if at all possible think deeply.

Leslie Kehoe

NOVEMBER MEETING

Monday, November 8,1999 Fish, Wildlife & Parks Building 490 W. Meridian Rd., Kalispell Business Meeting begins at 5:15PM General Meeting begins at 7:30PM

PROGRAM

"Rare, Native Fish of Montana - Jewels of the Treasure State", a slide show by Beth Gardner that studies the 16 rare fish species of Montana. Some of these, like the bull trout. are well known. Others, like the sicklefin chub and white sturgeon, may be more obscure, but are just as fascinating.

Beth is a Fish Biologist with the Flathead National Forest, currently stationed in the Swan Ranger District. She has about 10 years of experience at this job and promises to tell us a few good fish stories!

MISSION MOUNTAIN AUDUBON

The first meeting of the new Mission
Mountain Audubon chapter was a resounding
success. Eighty-eight people were on hand for
Denver Holt's exciting presentation on Montana's
owls. The second gathering brought 87 folks to
hear Dr. E.B. Eiselein talk about "American Indian
History: Ignored
But Not Forgotten."

The Polson-based chapter is being organized within the limits of the Flathead Indian Reservation, out of territory already covered by Flathead Audubon. Since this could significantly impact their membership base and financial resources, the unanimous approval for the formation of Mission Mountain Audubon by the Flathead Board of Directors was most commendable and representative of the close relationship shared between these two chapters as part of their effort to advance the Audubon cause.

In addition to recruiting new members to work on reservation related environmental issues, a key focus for the chapter will be to develop and sustain a cooperative partnership among the Salish, Kootenai, and Pend'Oreille peoples in order to support their role as guardians of the Flathead's land and water.

Special attention will be given to promoting the participation of young people in Mission Mountain Audubon's meetings and activities. In fact, over 20 teenagers were not only present for the first meeting, but several Polson High School students are on the steering committee helping to organize the new chapter and it is most likely that some will serve on the board.

Another goal of Mission Mountain
Audubon is to host the Flathead Birding Festival
sometime in May or early June of next year. The
big event will feature local birders and
professional biologists that will lead field trips to
the region's birding hotspots and give
presentations and conduct workshops on all
aspects of birds including identification, breeding
behavior, habitat requirements, photography, local
species, and more.

So far, Mission Mountain Audubon will meet on the second Tuesday of each month, beginning with the business session at 5:30 PM, which is followed by the evening program at 7:30 PM. in the Polson City Library's meeting room. October's program is co-hosted by the Montana Committee for the Humanities and will feature

"American Indian History: Ignored But Not Forgotten," with Dr. E.B. Eiselein. This presentation will confront some of the popular misconceptions about Indians in American history including the Columbus myth and the story about a "virgin" land or a "wildemess" which is "discovered" and settled by European colonists. Come by and join us.

For more information, please contact: Jim Rogers at 883-6351 ext. 247 or jrogers@polson.k12.mt.us.

DANCING PRAIRIE BIRD CLUB

The November 22nd meeting of the Dancing Prairie Bird Club of Eureka will feature a slide show presentation by Tim Thier, a Wildlife Biologist with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. His topic will be the Plum Creek Thompson-Fisher Rivers Proposed Conservation Easement with FW&P.

The Bird Club, a satellite chapter of Flathead Audubon, meets the 4th Monday of the month at the Eureka Ranger Station at 7PM. Members and others share bird sightings, find help with identifications and enjoy a variety of programs and refreshments. Everyone is welcome.

FEED BIRDS, NOT BEARS!

Fall is upon us and bird enthusiasts are digging their dusty bird feeders out of storage in preparation for hanging. For those of us living in bear habitat, special precautions are needed.

To keep bears from dining in your yard, hang feeders after bears are in the den, and remember to remove them in the spring before bears emerge. Seeing that bears don't stick to the same exact schedule of slumber every year, this can be tricky! During a typical year Fish, Wildlife & Parks recommend taking down feeders from March to November, this year Eric Wemun of FWP thinks that bears will head to their dens in late November. The safest option is to make sure your feeders are bear proof. Hang them 4 ft. out from the nearest house or trees, and at least 10 ft. up. Be creative! Some Auduboners are known to have successfully rigged pulley systems to accomplish this task.

Living in bear country does not have to mean you can't feed the birds. Just make sure you are being smarter than the average bear! For more information, contact Tim Manley at MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks or Eric Wenum at 756-1776.

By Sonia Hartman

FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT



On Protecting the Ordinary

We still have a common loon hanging out at Rogers Lake. Every summer loons nest in the marsh at the south end of the lake, and this is probably one that was here this summer. This one is developing a white patch around the beak, beginning to shift from breeding to winter plumage.

John and I have never seen a loon stay long enough to start molting. That is probably because this is only our fifth fall on the lake. Previously, we were only able to spend summers in Montana. We both taught at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana, which at least allowed us move kids and dog and unimaginable amounts of gear to our place on Rogers Lake for the months school was out. After 10 years of trekking back and forth, the kids took off for college and John and I finally retired.

Now we are here to watch the summer's crop of hooded mergansers take on their adult plumage as the weather cools, and view an amazing variety of birds stop by during fall migration. We get to listen to the lake freeze and see pileated woodpeckers balancing on our suet cages on icy cold mornings. We watch swans dropping by in early spring, sometimes barely making their landing among the patches of ice still floating in the lake. And finally, when the *oonk-a-hunk* of a bittern floats over the lake from the marsh, we know we are coming back to the time we used to arrive in spring.

John and I have found that along with this privilege comes the weight of responsibility. Because we and our neighbors are in the unique position of having a ring-side seat for this natural cycle, we can easily recognize the changes and pressures that threaten the lake and surrounding habitat and the wildlife that depend on it. We feel grateful that most of our neighbors are as concerned as we are about minimizing our own contributions to these pressures, and about finding ways to limit the impacts of future development.

The fact that about one-third of our lakeshore is the wet edge of a section owned by Plum Creek has been a mixed blessing. For years this section has been used to grow and harvest timber. Our neighborhood association has had frequent conversations with Plum Creek about the impacts of this activity, and Plum Creek has been fairly responsive to our concerns. But at least during this period, that piece of lakeshore has been free of residential development.

Now the lake half of Plumb Creek's section is up for sale. Our neighborhood plan puts strong limits on the number of houses that could be built along and above the lakeshore, and establishes pretty good set backs from the lakeshore and streams. Our big concern at this point is the marsh, summer home of that noisy bittern and the loons, as well as nesting osprey, red-necked grebes, lesser scaups and ring-necks, mallards, Canada geese, red-winged and yellow-headed blackbirds, marsh wrens, and lots of other wetland species. It is also a feeding area for bald eagles and black terns and families of moose. We've seen the Plum Creek sale coming for several years, and have been exploring different ways we might get conservation protection on this marsh.

If we could discover some rare plant in the big mat of vegetation floating in that marsh, we could get some powerful help in providing this protection. But two different professional surveys of the area have firmly established that this is just an ordinary marsh. It contains three "common wetland communities" of plants, "which are "all in good condition." Because the marsh is "in good condition" we've been able to generate some outside interest in helping us protect it, and I am optimistic that we will succeed.

Perhaps it is not surprising that it is much easier to find help when the issue is preserving something rare, rather than just a healthy example of the ordinary. Nonetheless, it is alarming. Clearly, if our rich wildlife and plant communities are going to survive here in Montana, we have to be in the business of preserving not just the rare, but also the ordinary.

Flathead Audubon is already engaged in such a project. The Owen-Sowerwine Natural Area is an example of a common riparian habitat that is still "in good condition." Its dynamic cottonwood community is home to a variety of bird and animal species, and it supports a large, active heron rookery. Dan Casey has counted eighty species of birds during his June field trips there, and many more probably show up at other times of year. Right now it looks like we'll be able to negotiate an affordable lease fee for Owen Sowerwine, and so be able to continue this stewardship.

Members of Flathead Audubon are partners in this stewardship by virtue of paying membership dues. Anyone who buys a sack of sunflower seeds from Flathead Audubon contributes. Those who bought tickets for last spring's raffle of Brett Thuma's print contributed to this effort, and some people just send a special contribution to Flathead Audubon that is earmarked for the Owen Sowerwine lease and insurance.

But I think we, as individuals need to go beyond this group effort. My experience in working to protect the Rogers Lake marsh has made it clear to me that protecting still-healthy but ordinary places is a job that has fallen to us ordinary people. Each of us needs to adopt some piece of at-risk habitat that we see frequently – an area in our own neighborhood or where we go to watch birds or spend outdoor time. Get to know it, learn to recognize its natural changes and identify its unnatural threats. Figure out how to minimize those threats, and when necessary, act to protect it.

Maybe I'm speaking to the choir here. If so - keep singing!



BY LINDA WINNIE

FINANCES OF THE FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY (FAS)

		BUDGETED FOR	ACTUAL TURQUO.
		ALL OF 1999	ACTUAL THROUGH
INCOME		ALL OF 1999	16-Oct-99
	DUES	\$2,020	44 500
	NEWSLETTER	\$2,028 \$120	\$1,528
	RAFFLE		\$70
	DONATIONS TO FAS	\$1,200	\$405
	GENERAL SALES	\$1,520	\$859
	BIRD SEED SALES	\$900	\$484
	TAKEN FROM SAVINGS	\$8,500	\$1,208
	TAKEN FROM SAVINGS	\$1,322	\$1,000
	TOTAL INCOME		
	TOTAL INCOME	\$15,590	\$5,554
EVENOE			
EXPENSE			
	OUR DONATIONS TO OTHERS		
	EDUCATION		\$39
	AUDUBON ADV	\$1,260	\$1,294
	GRANTS	\$1,500	\$1,130
	NATIONAL AUDUBON	\$750	\$269
	MT AUDUBON	\$1,000	
	SCHOLARSHIPS	\$500	\$500
	TOTAL DONATIONS	\$5,010	\$3,232
			at 1 a superior
	FEES (Speakers, etc.)	\$425	\$202
	INSURANCE	\$400	\$472
	INVENTORY	\$400	\$501
	BIRD SEED	\$5,300	700.
	OFFICE	\$405	\$212
	NEWSLETTER	\$3,250	\$2,058
	TRAVEL	\$500	\$57
	*	4000	401
	TOTAL EXPENSES	\$15,690	\$6,734
		. \$15,090	\$0,734
ASSETS		1-JAN-99	46 OOT 00
7,00210		I-JAN-33	16-OCT-99
	CASH		**
	BIRDSEED	\$1	\$1
	GLACIER BANK	\$1,600	\$442
		\$2,575	\$199
	OPERATING FUND	\$9,488	\$9,300
	BAR BAYTER ACTION	*	
	BAB BAXTER ACTION FUND	\$9,852	\$9,952
	CONSERVATION FUND	\$24,745	\$25,009
	TOTAL OF ALL ASSETS	\$48,261	\$44,903
			4

Compiled by Bruce Tannehill, Flathead Audubon Treasurer



SEEDS OF SUCCESS

Pete Barber's Montana Sunflower Company will truck about 7 million pounds of birdseed this year to suburbs up and down the West Coast. His customers are mostly upscale franchise shops catering to an enduring hobby undergoing a dramatic revival: backyard bird watching.

More than 50 million Americans over the age of 16 are making a hobby of backyard bird feeding, according to U.S. Census Bureau estimates. They spent more than \$2.1 billion on commercially prepared and packaged bird food in 1996.

Working from Denton, where his grandfather settled in 1918, Barber has a 700mile advantage over sunflower growers in the Red River Valley of North and South Dakota. where most sunflowers are grown. He's also one of the few birdseed distributors who is in the business from the farm to the retail shelf. giving him a quicker response time for last minute orders.

Today Montana Sunflower consists of seven-Pete and Jan Barber, a marketing director, office manager, mill manager, plant manager and assistant. And even as the company's success grows, it doesn't expect to employ more than a dozen in Denton—a small town company in a small town.

Ninety-eight percent of Montana Sunflower's sales are out of state, bring dollars back into Montana.

Sunflowers are a good rotation crop with wheat and barley and are known for their ability to condition tired soils and keep grain diseases in check.

Montana Sunflower contracts with 32 growers across the state. That 's about 4,600 acres of sunflower. Barber plans to bump that figure up to nearly 9,000 acres next year.

Barber planted his first crop of sunflowers in the late 1970's. The federal government had slapped crop restrictions on grain, and sunflowers were a drought resistant alternative he could sell to oil-seed producers in the Dakotas.

Barber first became aware of the birdseed market in 1980, when Flathead Audubon approached him to clean and package seed for a fundraiser. "After we'd done it a couple years we started realizing there was potential," Barber said.

In 1995 he sold 3 million pounds of seed to wild bird food stores in Seattle,

Phoenix, Santa Fe and other cities throughout the west. Barber's \$1 million seed cleaning and bagging plant mixes high-tech equipment with a team of good mousing cats.

The 8,500-square foot facility, which came on line in April 1998, is a testament to his confidence in the industry. Controlled by the click of a mouse, the blending and bagging machines can process 20 million pounds of seed a year, up from about 4 million at the company's original location.

Flathead Audubon still sells sunflower seeds from the Montana Sunflower Seed Company in Denton at it annual fundraising event. Please use the form at the back of the newsletter to order your birdseed for the winter, Thanks!

The preceding article by Karen Ivanova was excerpted from an August 15,1999 article in the Great Falls Tribune and the September newsletter of Last Chance Audubon Society in Helena.



The first meeting of the newly formed education committee will be held Tues., Oct. 26th, at the Avalanche Coffeehouse in Kalispell. At present, this committee consists of Linda Winnie, Linda DeKort, Bruce Tannehill, Kim Davis, Ferne Cohen and Sonia Hartmann. We would like to extend an invitation to anyone interested in joining us!

Our first meeting will be a brainstorming of ideas for projects or directions to take. Some topics for discussion will be: what resources/info. are classroom teachers in need of, and can Audubon help with classroom presentations or by compiling resources; what supplementary educational info. can we provide for projects Audubon is already involved in, i.e. more bear info. for people buying bird seed; and are there other existing programs we can get involved in i.e. FREEFLOW stream monitoring, and provide info. on birds in riparian areas. These are just a few ideas. Join us and bring yours! Please contact Sonja Hartmann at 387-9058 for information on our next meeting.



Flathead Audubon's Annual Sunflower Seed Sale

50 lb. sack of Black, Oil Sunflower Seeds - \$17 Highest Quality - Grown in Montana

Feed your feathered friends and support Audubon Projects too!

This is Flathead Audubon's primary fund raising project.
Proceeds support local conservation and educational programs such as

- Distribution of Audubon Adventures to local 5th grade classes.
 - Book Purchase Award to local elementary schools for library books on natural history.
 - Scholarships for environmental education.
 - Research grants for field studies of birds and bird habitat.
 - Educational materials for lectures by Audubon members to local school classes and civic groups.
- Care and upkeep of local refuges such as Ninepipe Reservoir.

Pick Up Locations: Please note your pick-up date, time and place on your calendar!

Bigfork: Lakehills Shopping Center

Saturday, Nov. 13, 10 am - 12 noon; 837-5018

Kalispell: Albertson's Parking Lot - east side

Saturday, Nov. 13, 12:30 - 2:30 pm; 755-2142

Whitefish: Train Depot Parking Lot

Saturday, Nov. 13, 12:30 - 2:30 pm; 862-8070

Condon: Call June Ash, 754-2289

for arrangements

Columbia Falls: Glacier Bank

Saturday, Nov. 13, 10 am - 12 noon; 892-3825

Polson: Super 1 Foods Parking Lot

Sunday, Nov. 14, 12 noon - 2 pm; 883-6895

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Order Form



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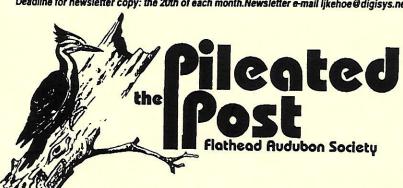
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BIRDING HOTLINE: 756-5595

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.

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 e-mail likehoe@digisys.net





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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	
Student	\$15	
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Family	\$38	
Senior	\$15	
Sustaining	\$50	
Supporting	\$100	
Life	\$1500	
Dual Life	\$2000	

Address

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 to: Flathead Audubon Society Membership;

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