



the Pileated Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

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MONTANA AUDUBON'S FLATHEAD BIRD FESTIVAL

"Three days of celebrating birds, birds and birds". That sums up the philosophy of Montana Audubon's Flathead Bird Festival, June 2-4 in Polson. A quick peek at the program shows that there is plenty to back up that philosophy. There are ten scheduled field trips to places such as Ninepipe and Pablo National Wildlife Refuges, the Mission Mountains and Glacier National Park. And kids of all ages having fun searching for bluebirds - and perhaps taking part in a banding demonstration that allows participants the chance to hold a bluebird in their hands. Or workshops that focus on Loons, beginning birding or Montana's rare birds.

The aviary amusement won't end when the sun goes down. There will be plenty of time to socialize and visit with other bird enthusiasts from across the state. And the silent auction and raffle are sure to be fun and exciting. A major prize in the raffle will be a top-of-the-line pair of Swarovski binoculars - any birders dream!

This festival, co-hosted by Mission Mountain Audubon and Flathead Audubon, is the first of its kind in Montana. Registration forms will be sent to all Audubon members by mid-April. You can get more information by contacting the Montana Audubon office at 443-3949 or at the web site: www.audubon.org/chapter/mt/mt.
BY LOREN FLYNN, MT AUDUBON



FAMILY FORESTRY EXPO XI

When: May 6 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM
May 7 Noon to 4:00 PM

Where: Stoltze Lumber Co.s' Trumble Creek Experimental Forest (Go to the Blue Moon Bar at the intersection of Hwy 2 and Hwy 40 and head north, follow the signs)

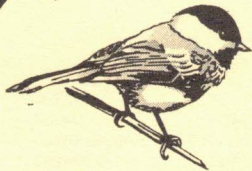
What to do: Each year Flathead Audubon staffs one of the many stations about modern forest harvest practices. Visit stations about water quality, fisheries and wildlife and many more. Demonstrations are given on modern equipment and their uses in the forest as well as logging sports demonstrations. Tours of some of Plum Creeks facilities are another possibility that the entire family can enjoy. If you arrive around lunch a fine picnic is provided free of charge!

We encourage all Audubon members to come to Family Forestry Expo. It is a great opportunity for the a family to learn about our forests and our neighbors that make their living in the Forest Products Industry.
BY NEAL BROWN

EARTH DAY IS APRIL 22

Thinking about what we can do for the Earth is something we should do every day but EarthDay gives us a special day. Let's make sure that we are green consumers, that we recycle at every possible opportunity, that we reuse items. It is all about waste reduction and being conscientious. Think about what changes you can make and be environmentally friendly.

If recycling is on your mind you can help Flathead Audubon by going to Valley Recycling, tell them that you want the money from your recyclables to go to Flathead Audubon. Valley Recycling is located at 1410 Hwy 2 West, Kalispell. Don't forget to be Earth friendly everyday!



CHICKADEE CHATTER

The first day of spring has come and gone and this year it looks as if spring is truly here. The last patch of snow in my neighborhood was gone this morning and there are signs of spring everywhere. The yard has been full of bird song, it is a joy just to stand outside and listen to all of the sounds. The best time is in the early morning or an hour or so before sunset. The hour before sunset is one of my favorite times, not only are all of the newly arrived birds singing and making all kinds of comments but so are the owls.

The Robins are here en-mass and are singing and talking away. Just plain, old, ordinary robin song is music to ears that have missed it these many months of winter. The Canadian Geese have been paired up for many weeks already, they are now in search of safe places for their nests. There are several pairs near here and I hear their constant honking. So, too, have there been many flocks of geese and ducks passing overhead, if they fly close enough to the earth you can hear the great rush of wind through their wings.

A Song Sparrow has taken up residence in a Western Serviceberry tree where he sings his beautiful song. This little bird is such a pleasure to have in ones yard with his lovely song and avian enthusiasm. This is the first Song Sparrow I have had in the yard in many years and I hope he finds his true love and they settle down and raise a family so that I may have more sweet song in my yard in the future.

A pair of Black-billed Magpies are building a nest in a Blue Spruce on the edge of the garden. The tree was planted about thirty years ago by my mother and it is just now getting large enough for a magpie nest. Magpies build enormous nests filled with sticks and mud. It may take 50 days for them to build the nest and this pair has a good start on theirs. They started the project ten days ago or so. It has been interesting watching them come and go with sticks twice their size. They must be fairly intelligent birds as they must figure out how to get a long, heavy stick from the ground up into the tree. It has been very entertaining. The problems with magpies are that they can get very loud and they adore peanuts and cat food. They are also gregarious by nature and can be found in family groups, the question in the back of my mind is just how many magpies will I have in my yard in the coming months and how many magpies do I care to have in my backyard? Some questions just can't be

adequately answered and I will just let nature take its course.

The Ring-billed Gulls and the California Gulls are here in abundance this year. There have been many in the bay by my house, spots of bright white all up and down the river. They have such a lonely cry and I have looked up often of late to find them flying overhead in large numbers. They fly so beautifully, a lovely arc of wings and bright white bellies and heads. Silently they pass over my head and I wonder where they are flying.

For many years the Great Horned Owls have lived near. I remember hearing them from childhood and I have not missed a year of listening to them my entire life. There are several pairs this year and their call always stops me in my tracks to listen and hope they will call once more. This past week I was in the woods at dusk and heard the great owl call, looking up in the trees, toward the setting sun, I saw the great wings unfold to fly. The great owl landed in another tree and I watched him until the sun set behind the mountains and he flew off towards the meadow for the evening meal I must presume.

Happy spring to one and all. Please take some time out of your day to listen to the beginning of the day or the end. The fresh sounds of spring can renew our outlook and we all need just little attitude adjustment on occasion.

LESLIE KEHOE



APRIL MEETING
MONDAY, APRIL 10, 2000
Fish, Wildlife and Parks Building
490 W. Meridian Rd., Kalispell
Business Meeting begins at 5:30PM
General Meeting begins at 7:30PM

PROGRAM: FOREST FIRE HISTORY AND MODERN CONSERVATION A slide presentation by research ecologist Steve Barrett that will explore the historical role of forest fires in shaping ecosystem functions, and how our modern forest practices and fire suppression have changed today's forest ecosystems. In other words, what good are forest fires? Do they merely lay waste to a valuable natural resource, or are they a key component in shaping healthy forest structure and sustainability? Steve is a consulting research forester who specializes in fire history and ecology of the Northern Rockies. His studies have included Glacier and Yellowstone national parks, the Selway/Bitterroot Wilderness and the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness.



INTERNATIONAL WILDLIFE FILMS COMING TO KALISPELL

The Montana Wilderness Society will once again host the winning films from the International Wildlife Film Festival held in Missoula. The Wildlife Film Festival is one of the Post Festival Tours that stem from the week-long International Film Festival, now in its 23rd year. It's the longest running juried wildlife film festival anywhere.

Circle May 5th, 2000 on your calendars, everyone is welcome. It will be held at the Flathead High School Auditorium at 7:00PM. Admission is \$5 for adults and \$3 for children. A bake sale and raffle will also be held. Come and join the party.

WATCHABLE WILDLIFE CHECKOFF REMINDER

It is time to file our taxes and on your 1999 Montana Income Tax Return you will find a box with an eagle in it, it is the watchable wildlife check-off. Please consider making to a contribution to the State Fish & Wildlife non-game program. Your contribution will support programs to protect Montana's songbirds and other non-game wildlife. Mark the box and support Watchable Wildlife!

FLATHEAD BASIN COMMISSION SEEKS VOLUTEERS

The Flathead Basin Commission is seeking participants for a new citizen volunteer program designed to monitor wetlands in Flathead and Lake counties.

Enrollment is limited to 15 volunteers. Those selected will be required to complete two days of classroom work and two days of field training. Training sessions will be scheduled for later in the spring or early summer.

Once trained, the volunteer will be assigned a wetland study site where they will collect field data and conduct proscribed observations several times throughout the year. The information will be logged by the Flathead Basin Commission and made available to agencies, the public and others who request it.

The wetland monitor program will complement Flathead Basin Commission volunteer programs already in existence for lakes and streams.

For more information, contact Mark Holston at 752-0081 or email at fbc@digisys.net

SPRING FIELD TRIPS

SATURDAY MAY 13, 2000, HARLEQUIN DUCKS AND AMERICAN DIPPERS

See first hand the amazing adaptations of Harlequin Ducks, one of Montana's rarest birds. We will watch them courting in the rapids alongside the American Dipper, a hearty year-round resident. Easy, all morning trip with short level walks. Glacier National Park entrance fee or pass required. The number of participants will be limited to minimize disturbance to these shy ducks. Please call John Ashley to register and arrange a meeting time and place at 892-3825.

SATURDAY, MAY 13, 2000 INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY AT THE NATIONAL BISON RANGE

The Red Sleep Mountain long drive is scheduled to open on this date. There are several birding walks and talks planned, as well as interactive displays. The walks are by appointment and will be lead by Bison Range staff, please call ahead to register. The Bison Range is a fee area, cost per vehicle is \$4, Golden Eagle Passports and Duck Stamps are also accepted. You may call Ms. Pat Jamieson at the National Bison Range for more information and to register for the walks at 406-644-2211, ext. 207.



SATURDAY, MAY 20, 2000 FLATHEAD AUDUBON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY WARBLER WALK

Flathead Audubon will celebrate International Migratory Bird Day with a walk in the woods to find and identify some of the neotropical migrants that fly here to Montana, warblers and redstarts and swallows, just to name a few. This will be a guided birding trip into the Swan Lake Waterfowl Production Area. It is great opportunity for novices to learn from local warbler experts and for experienced birders to brush up on their warblers. Meet at the Swan Lake Campground (north of Swan Lake Townsite) at 8:30AM. Please call Leo Keane for more information at 862-5807



FROM THE PRESIDENT

To Pave or Not to Pave. That is the question.

As many of our members know a move is afoot to pave the North Fork Road to the Camas Creek entrance to Glacier National Park. At first glance this might seem to be progress as usual, paving means easy motorized travel, dust reduction, speedy access up the valley of North Fork of the Flathead River.

At Flathead Audubon's March Board Meeting we discussed the ramifications of paving the North fork Road. The ramification that most concerned our Board of Directors was habitat degradation and fragmentation due to increased traffic, and the potential for increased development of the lands adjoining Glacier National Park. The last time paving of the North Fork was proposed an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) was conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and it was determined that paving of the North Fork would be detrimental to the efforts to recover the Grizzly Bear from its Threatened status under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Since the last EIS on this paving issue, two other species have been listed under the ESA, the Bull Trout and the Lynx, all three of these species find valuable habitat within the North Fork corridor.

It would appear that there are now three times the reasons not to encourage increased use of the North Fork road. It also appears that a new EIS would be required and taxpayer money would be needlessly spent. It was decided by the Flathead Audubon Board of Directors that it would be appropriate to ask our membership to give input to the Federal Highway Commission at this time. We do not ask our membership to follow any "official" line of comment but we do encourage you to become informed, then comment as you wish.

Please make your comment to the following address as soon as possible.

Federal Highway Administration
Western Federal Lands Highway Div.
610 East Fifth St.
Vancouver, WA 98661-3893

Ron Burnett / highway design and project manager
Kristi Swisher / environmental specialist
360 696-7528 ph
360-696-7846 fx



What follows is an alternative plan for management of the North Fork Road that does not require pavement through prime Grizzly, Bull Trout and Lynx habitat.

Sincerely,
Neal A. Brown
President, Flathead Audubon Society

100 YEAR ALTERNATIVE PREAMBLE

The North Fork Road is an established tertiary road providing access to private and federal lands, and the US - Canadian border. More importantly, however, the North Fork Road crosses land of international significance. The North Fork of the Flathead River is designated in the US as a Wild and Scenic River. The river, its floodplain, and the surrounding landscape sustain a diversity of wildlife found nowhere else in the lower 48 states.

The North Fork is a vestige of an earlier, simpler and more natural time. The people who have made their homes in the valley have done so in order to live in a life style that is virtually extinct elsewhere. Across America, natural landscapes have given way to human development and the integrity of ecosystems lost. In the North Fork, nature holds on. The Glacier - Waterton International Peace Parks are more than the sum contained within their border. The North Fork Valley is the life-blood of the Parks. Wildlife defines the Parks as much as the mountains and vegetation. The North Fork is where wildlife has its sanctuary, both in and out of the Parks.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT, THE 100 YEAR ALTERNATIVE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

An improved road, and particularly a paved road, even as short at the ten miles proposed for paving between Canyon and Camas Creeks, would change the current equilibrium in the Valley. The difficult access is a barrier to the casual traveler, settler, land speculator, or others whose careless presence would be a threat to wildlife and the other natural and cultural values of Valley.

Even without an improved road, the advance of technology allows people to communicate and conduct business from practically any location. Including the North Fork Valley. Settlement and construction of new homes is increasing even without paved roads and other amenities. However, the change is slow, and perhaps manageable. A paved road would drastically increase the rate of settlement and development beyond anyone's ability or the ability of wildlife to adjust and adapt. A paved road would lead to rapid changes that would forever diminish a landscape that is now wild, quiet, and unhurried. A paved road would inevitably change and devalue the quality and experience of the visitor to the Glacier - Waterton International Peace Parks.

In the interest of conserving the existing values of the Peace Parks, the North Fork Valley and the rare lifestyle that is possible there, the North Fork Protective Association and the Montana Wilderness Association propose an alternative to the paving of the North Fork Road from Canyon to Camas Creeks. This alternative proposal conforms with the expressed wishes of the residents of the North Fork "to seek alternatives other than paving", as contained in the North Fork Conceptual Strategy of 1992. This alternative is intended to be long-term and sustainable both to the natural and cultural resource values of the Parks and North Fork Valley as well as to the pocket-book of taxpayers. The proposal is titled "The 100 Year Alternative" to reflect the intent to settle the road transportation issue along the North Fork Road for the foreseeable future.

THE 100 YEAR ALTERNATIVE



Road Issues: Current road issues include rough road surface, periodic dust, the difficulty and expense to Flathead County taxpayers to maintain the road, and the threat to natural resources through human settlement and land speculation.

a. **Rough Road Surface:** The current gravel road surface was graded flat by Flathead County to accommodate an asphalt surface. The present configuration retains water. Heavy traffic results in a de-graded road surface and severe pot-holing.

100 Year Solution: Re-contour the road bed to shed water and retain gravel. This solution helps maintain the integrity of the road bed and reduces overall maintenance of the road.

b. **Road Dust:** The current road dust situation is in part due to the gravel used to surface the road. Flathead County uses a gravel mix that has a higher percentage of fine material in order to help bind the gravel to the road bed. During dry spells, it is this fine material that becomes airborne.

100 Year Solution: In the process of re-contouring the road bed select and use a gravel matrix that has substantially less binder or fines. A properly contoured road surface should retain gravel better and not require such materials.

c. **Road Maintenance:** The current difficulty with road maintenance is the expense of periodic upkeep as well as the procurement and delivery of gravel to surface the road. These can be addressed in two ways.

100 Year Solution: Expense: The proposed road pavement project was allocated a \$2.4 million by Congress. Portions of these funds (after road re-grading and other expenditures) could be placed in a permanent fund dedicated to maintaining the road.

100 Year Solution: Gravel Procurement: There is an existing agreement between the USFS and Flathead County to maintain the North Fork Road. This cooperative agreement could be re-invoked or re-drafted to allow use of USFS gravel sites to be used for North Fork Road maintenance.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT, THE 100 YEAR ALTERNATIVE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

d. Human Settlement and Land Speculation: The proposed road paving project would accelerate human settlement and the subdivision and fracturing of wildlife habitat. Human activity would displace wildlife and/or lead to direct conflict and death of wildlife. In particular, grizzly bears and other predators would suffer most under a scenario of greater human settlement. The wildlife resource would be irreparably harmed throughout the basin.

100 Year Solution: Establish a permanent fund from a portion of the \$2.4 million presently allocated to this project dedicated to land acquisition and the purchase of land development rights. This fund would be the primary mitigation for improving the road to the proposed standard of an improved gravel road.

(Note: some have argued against using any of the \$2.4m and not going to Congress for additional funds. Regardless of the source, a fund should be established as THE primary mitigation for this project. The conservation community can make an effort (as it already is) to funding such an endowment. However, I think a large nest egg should be anted up by the federal government to get the fund off to a good start.) Neal Brown

MATADOR RANCH BIRD BLITZ WEEKEND

Audubon is joining the The Nature Conservancy to assist with an inventory of the rich biological diversity of the Matador Ranch, a newly acquired property of the Conservancy. The Matador is located in one of the premiere birding areas in the northern Great Plains, providing habitat for numerous rare and declining species. Even if you are just a beginning birder, join us June 10th and/or 11th to identify birds of the Matador and learn more about the Conservancy's efforts in grassland conservation and stewardship of the ranch.

Camping is available in the Little Rockies at the Bureau of Land Management Camp Creek Campground. The campground has all of the standard primitive campground facilities and is located about 20 minutes from the Conservancy's ranch headquarters. Motels are available in Malta, (about 50 minutes north of the ranch) and

Lewistown (about 1 hour 45 minutes from the ranch). The Conservancy will be providing burgers and sodas to participants Saturday evening at the Camp Creek Campground.

Persons interested in participating, please call Susan at Montana Audubon (443-3949) (or email: slenard@mcn.net) to reserve a spot. A confirmation letter with directions and other information (ie. meeting times and location) will be sent in early May. For more information about the Matador Ranch call Brian Martin (TNC) at 443-6733.



ANNUAL BLUEBIRD MEETING IN GREAT FALLS

Mountain Bluebird Trails will be holding its annual meeting May 6th & 7th in Great Falls at Fish, Wildlife & Parks Headquarters near Giant Springs. The meeting on Saturday, May 6th will last from 10AM to 4PM. A catered lunch will be served. There will be a short business meeting discussing bluebird topics in Montana and election of officers. Two guest speakers will be featured: Myrna Pearman, a biologist at the Ellis Bird Farm, a bluebird sanctuary north of Red Deer, Alberta. She will discuss the farms unique and interesting history. Kristi Dubois, a wildlife biologist with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks will be discussing bats found in and around Montana and different bat houses you can try. A barbecue will be held at Bob and Lee Neibuhr's home following the meeting.

Sunday morning May 7th at 7:30AM there will be a short visit to the bluebird trail in the Highwood Mountains. Registration is \$10 per person before April 24th, and \$13 thereafter. You don't have to be a member to attend. Please send registrations to: Bob Niebuhr, 600 Central Ave., Suite 320, Great Falls, MT 59401. If you would like more information or have questions you may call or email Bob at 406-453-5143 or 761-5842 or blubrdbob@prodigy.net

From the Missouri River Journal, the newsletter of the Upper Missouri Breaks Audubon Society, March 2000 issue.



CANADA LYNX LISTED AS THREATENED

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today listed Canada lynx in the contiguous United States as threatened under the Endangered Species Act while including a special regulation that allows for the take and export of lawfully obtained captive-bred lynx. A species is listed as threatened when it is likely to become endangered throughout all or a significant portion of its range in the foreseeable future.

The lynx occurs predominantly on Federal lands, especially in the West. The Service concluded that the threat to the lynx in the contiguous United States is the lack of guidance to conserve the species in current Federal land management plans. The agency is working with other Federal agencies to conserve lynx habitat.

The Forest Service has signed a Lynx Conservation Agreement that would affect all forest plans within lynx habitat. Additionally, the Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service are also developing lynx conservation agreements.

The Forest Service is also undertaking several analysis processes to amend their forest plans to incorporate direction designed to conserve the lynx. These actions will provide immediate benefits for lynx.

"These proactive Forest Service conservation actions, though independent of our decision to list the lynx, will play a crucial role in our efforts to recover the lynx," said Ralph Morgenweck, regional director of the Fish and Wildlife Service's Mountain-Prairie Region. "The goal of the Endangered Species Act is to recover species to levels where protection under the Act is no longer necessary. These forest management plans will serve as blueprints for recovery," and the public. The Service also announced the availability of and received public comment on a newly completed Lynx Science Report prepared by a team of scientists led by the U.S. Forest Service. Today's listing decision is the result of that review.

The Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), the only lynx in North America, is a rare forest-dwelling cat of northern latitudes. It feeds primarily on snowshoe hares but also will prey on small mammals and birds. Its range extends from Alaska, throughout much of Canada, to the boreal forests in the northeastern United States, the Great Lakes, the Rocky Mountains and the Cascade Mountains.

The lynx is a medium-sized cat, similar to the bobcat, but appears somewhat larger. It has longer hind legs and very large well-furred paws, which make it highly adapted to hunting snowshoe hares in the deep snow typical throughout its range. It also has unique long tufts on the ears and a short, black-tipped tail.

Within the contiguous United States, the lynx's range extends into different regions that are separated from each other by ecological barriers consisting of unsuitable lynx habitat. These regions are the Northeast (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, New York); the Great Lakes (Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan); the Northern Rocky Mountains/Cascades (Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, northwestern Wyoming, Utah); and the Southern Rocky Mountains (Colorado, southeastern Wyoming). Canada lynx in Alaska are not affected by today's listing decision.

The relative importance of each region to the survival and recovery of the species varies. The Northern Rockies/Cascades region supports the largest amount of lynx habitat and has the strongest evidence of long-term occurrence of resident lynx populations, both historically and currently. In the Northeast and Southern Rockies regions, the amount of lynx habitat is relatively limited and does not contribute substantially to the persistence of the contiguous U.S. lynx population.

The Service concluded that the Northern Rockies/Cascades region is the primary region necessary to support the continued long-term existence of lynx in the contiguous United States. However, biologists will continue to examine the role that each region plays in the long-term conservation of lynx during recovery planning for the species.

Today, the Service filed with the *Federal Register* its decision to list the Canada lynx as threatened. The final rule will be published on March 24, 2000 and will take effect 30 days after publication. For more information concerning the final listing decision, visit the Service's lynx web site at: <http://www.r6.fws.gov/endspp/lynx>.

**EXCERPTED FROM A NEWS RELEASE OF
THE U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 134
Union Boulevard Lakewood, Colorado
80228 Date: March 21, 2000 Contact
Kemper McMaster (MT) 406-449-5225 ext
205**





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443-3949
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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 ljkehoe@digisys.net

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"/>
Student	\$15	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual Renewal	\$35	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family	\$38	<input type="checkbox"/>
Senior	\$15	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sustaining	\$50	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supporting	\$100	<input type="checkbox"/>
Life	\$1500	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dual Life	\$2000	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name

Address

City

State Zip

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
380 Tally Lake Rd.,
Whitefish, MT 59937

For address change, call 1-800-274-4201

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