



# the Pileated Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

VOLUME 25

NUMBER 9

DECEMBER, 2000

## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 2000

Up until the turn of the last century, people commonly engaged in a holiday tradition known as the Christmas "Side Hunt." They would choose sides and go afield with their guns. Whoever brought in the biggest pile of feathered quarry won. Conservation was in its beginning stages at the turn of the century, and many observers were becoming concerned about the indiscriminate slaughter of wildlife, and concurrent declines in bird populations.

On Christmas Day 1900, ornithologist Frank Chapman, an early officer in the then budding Audubon Society, called for an end to the slaughter. He suggested that, rather than shooting birds, people count them instead. So began the Christmas Bird Count.

Thanks to the inspiration of Frank M. Chapman and the perspiration of twenty-seven dedicated birders, twenty-five Christmas Bird Counts were held that day. The locations ranged from Toronto, Ontario to Pacific Grove, California with most counts in or near the population centers of northeastern North America. Those original 27 Christmas Bird Counters tallied a total of 90 species on all the counts combined. Who among those original 27 counters would have imagined that 100 years later this bold new idea would have grown into the largest bird survey ever conducted?

The Christmas Bird Count has become the world's largest all-volunteer bird survey and the ultimate source of information about early-winter birds. The results of these efforts have been compiled into the longest running database in ornithology, representing close to one hundred years of unbroken data on trends of early-winter bird populations across the Americas. The Christmas Bird Count, or "CBC", is citizen science in action.

A unique combination of factors is responsible for the importance of CBC data. These include time span, geographic extent, and census protocol. With the conclusion of this year's 100th CBC, a century of data will be contained in the Christmas Bird Count database. Long-standing counts span the length and breadth of North America and beyond. This means that CBC data may be analyzed over long periods of time, comparing decade or quarter-century long periods. Although observers well know the weather in specific regions can vary significantly from one count season to the next, given a century's span of data, the weather becomes less important to the analyses. Because effort data are collected each season for every count, the potential effects of observer variability may be accounted for during analyses of CBC data. Since Christmas Bird Count census circles cover a significant portion of the North American landmass, an accurate view of the status and distribution of early-winter bird populations is within reach.

Fundamental to the success of the CBC is the strong commitment of the participants. The efforts of the first 27 CBC participants have blossomed to some 50,000 participants covering 1800 count circles across the Western Hemisphere. Whatever it is that motivates each of us - prospect of finding a rare bird, birding with old friends - to take a day (or series of days!) out of the holiday season to count birds, it's key to the CBC. The scientific and conservation values of the Christmas Bird Count are inestimable, and they grow with each season. But the social and competitive values are equally important, as they can give birders further reason to get out into the field.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3







## CHICKADEE CHATTER

The sunshine is streaming through the windows as I sit here contemplating. I have done everything possible to postpone sitting and writing. The birdfeeders are full and clean (are yours?), I have trimmed pine boughs for decorations, I spend a little bit of time just enjoying an especially warm and beautiful late November day and I sorted through a stack of papers to put into the recycling pile. Some days are like that and so I sit here with the sunshine and the faint calls of the birds and think about what has come to pass in the past year. It is a good day for pondering and reminiscing. I would like to share a few of those memories with you.

On a beautiful sunny day in February my sister and I drove up to Glacier Park. We hiked in the deep snow up to John's Lake, the first time I have ever been there. It is one of those places that is easy to pass by on the way to grander spots. We walked a bit and soon we were in a place just as grand as any vista in the Park. The thick forest there was so very quiet and the sounds of our human world could not be heard. We were spellbound by the quiet and for a long while could only stop and listen. There was the occasional soft call of a faraway, feathered one, the plop of snow falling from branches far overhead, the creaks of trees as a gentle wind blew through them and our breathing. It was a wonderful experience hiking in the snowy woods and sliding down the snowy hills and listening to the not so silent snowy forest.

In the middle of April it snowed and by morning there was nearly 12" of the wet heavy stuff on the ground at my house. The robins had been arriving all the prior week and there were dozens of robins in the yard. I had a bag of old apples and feeling very concerned about those red breasted birds I threw the apples out on the shoveled pathway. Some thing remarkable happened. Within a few hours I had over 70 robins and several flickers visiting. Apparently, news travels fast. It is a sight I will not soon forget.

I spent many hours up in the Pleasant Valley this year. The new wildlife refuge, Lost Trail, is truly a jewel. It has become one of my favorite places. The variety of birds there is amazing. You can drive along the road through the Pleasant Valley and have encounters with swallows and snipe and bald eagles and any number of ducks. There are meadowlarks and blackbirds sitting on the fence-posts and in the trees: warblers and vireos and woodpeckers. Two pairs of Sandhill Cranes nested near the largest lake in the valley this year. The field trip up to the refuge at the end of May yielded 50 species of birds. I enjoyed every minute of it.

A trip up the inside North Fork road in early June was wonderful. I spent some time in the meadows at Camas Creek. It is hard to describe the beauty of the place; the meadows were periwinkle blue with undertones of purple and liberally sprinkled with floating bits of yellow. It was simply a spectacular

display of nature; the entire field was full of camas and shooting stars and biscuit root. The meadow was full of color and the song. Sparrow song and warbler song and vireo song all in harmony with one another. One tries to linger in such places, memorizing each little detail and hoping that it will remain in the memory untarnished.

The first baby osprey showed up the first week of August. That first day was not a good one for the young one, flying does not come easy. He spent most of one day perched on top of the power pole by the house. Testing wings that were unused to flying. The parents brought him fish and sometimes there were three osprey on top of the power pole. The parents cajoled the young one for hours. It was how I discovered the young one on the pole they made such a clamor I thought some terrible thing had happened. It was only a reluctant young one.

In October the mountains beckoned me and I took a drive up into the golden and green woods. It was another fall full of splendor. The golden leaves fell, floating down onto the road covering it in a blanket of yellow almost to pretty to drive on. A peaceful afternoon was spent on a mountainside above the valley. Far away little curls of smoke rose and on Flathead Lake tiny sparkles glinted and the leaves fell in front of my eyes and a chickadee sang up above me.

I hope you can find the time to reminisce and recall some of the fine times of a year nearly past. Happy Holidays and a wonderful New Year!

Leslie Kehoe



**DECEMBER MEETING**  
**MONDAY, DECEMBER 11, 200**  
**Fish, Wildlife & Parks Building**  
**490 N. Meridian Road, Kalispell**  
**Business Meeting begins at 5:30PM**  
**General Meeting begins at 7:30PM**

**PROGRAM:** Dan Casey, will present a slide show and talk about the various birds that will most likely be seen in the area Christmas Bird Count. Dan is a local bird authority, the Christmas Bird count chairman for Flathead Audubon and the Coordinator for the Northern Rockies Bird Conservation Region for the American Bird Conservancy. He will talk about the 101<sup>st</sup> Christmas Bird Count and what we have learned from the data that has been gathered from previous counts. Dan will give tips on bird identification and may make a few predictions about what unusual birds or birds may be seen this year. This will be the Flathead Valley's 27<sup>th</sup> Bird Count and if you wish to participate you should plan on attending this informative and entertaining talk. Please join us!

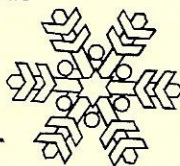




## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Christmas Bird Count participants have their own reasons for participating, and our understanding of the early-winter bird populations of the Western Hemisphere grows from all of them.

To learn more about the CBC, including the data that has been collected over the years and lessons that have been learned from this data, visit the National Audubon website: [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org).



## LOCAL BIRD COUNT INFORMATION

Come one, come all to count the birds. We urge birders of all skills to come join in the fun. We will pair less experienced birders with veteran counters and you can never have enough bird counters. Everyone is welcome. The following is a schedule of the Bird Counts in and around the area. Pick the one that fits your schedule and join in the fun.

**Bigfork**--Saturday, December 16<sup>th</sup> If you are interested please plan to attend the Dec. meeting or you can call Dan Casey at 857-3143

**Kalispell**--Sunday, December 31<sup>st</sup> Please attend the Dec. meeting or call Dan Casey at 857-3143 for more information.

**Ninepipes**--Sunday, December 17--Meet at the Ninepipes Lodge restaurant at 7:30 am. For further information contact Jim Rogers at 883-6351, EXT. 247 or [rogers@polson.k12.mt.us](mailto:rogers@polson.k12.mt.us)

**Glacier Park**--Wednesday, December 20--They welcome anyone interested in participating. Contact Steve Gniadek 888-7800(work), 892-7406(home) or [gniadek@nps.gov](mailto:gniadek@nps.gov) for further information.

**Swan Valley**--Thursday, December 28--Contact Rod Ash at 754-2289 for more information.

**Eureka**--Tentatively set for Saturday, December 16--Date to be verified at November 27 meeting. Call Lewis or Lynda Young at 889-3492 to verify date or get more information.



## THREE GREAT GIFT IDEAS

### 1.) AUDUBON 2001 CALENDAR

Get yours at our December 11 meeting at a very reasonable \$7.00.

### 2.) NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY SIBLEY GUIDE TO BIRDS

By far the very best field guide on the market today. It is easy to use, has accurate illustrations and it comes with a water proof cover. A must for any birder.

Available at bookstores across the valley and at The Bird Feeder in Kalispell. Published by Random House for \$35.00.

### 3.) NATURAL CAPITALISM (Creating The Next Industrial Revolution) Authored by Paul Hawken, Amory Lovins, L. Hunter Lovins.

Rather than another book telling us of another environmental crisis, Natural Capitalism is a book of optimistic solutions. Hawken and the Lovins explain and document how mixing sound capitalist economics, environmental planning and technological innovation has the potential to bring our natural systems and human needs into harmony.

Our politicians need to read it. Our clergy need to read it. Our business leaders need read it. A must read for everyone. 396 pages, with notes and references. Published Little Brown and Company for \$17.95

Available locally at: Books West, Kalispell; Bookworks, Whitefish; Electric Avenue Books, Bigfork.



The Board of Directors of Flathead Audubon would like to say thank you to all of our members for your generous contributions of time and money this past year. Many thanks and we would like to wish you and yours a very wonderful holiday and a joyous New Year





## FROM THE QUALITY OF LIFE CHAIR



### TURKEY BLUES

There are too many turkeys in my life right now. I manage the Bigfork Food Pantry and give out 50 turkey dinner boxes to clients for Thanksgiving and again for Christmas. I get tired of handling the frozen turkeys, and by Christmas I'd rather bowl with them than eat one. The Butterball is far removed from the real wild bird. The Butterball Hotline and the Audubon Hotline have only one thing in common. You talk on the telephone about birds.

One of my greatest pleasures is bringing the car to a complete stop, while the turkeys cross the road. I always smile, talk to them, tell them to hurry, be more careful, and to look both ways. If another car has stopped, we always wave to each other when we finally pass. I love the fact that Flathead Audubon has the most turkeys in the U.S. in our Christmas Bird Count. The turkey nearly became the national bird of the U.S., losing by one vote in congressional ballot. It is the Al Gore Bird this season.

And what a display. The Birder's Handbook describes it, "Males gobble and strut with plumage erect, tail fanned, head ornaments swollen, and wings drooped with quills rattling." The commercial frozen turkey is as different from the wild bird as shopping for meat at Smith's is from hunting. I am talking about real hunters, the Ben Longs of the outdoor world hunting elk, not the fellas in the pick-up truck with the cooler of beer in the back who want to drive to the deer and shoot from the truck.

"The Pain of the Hunt", Ben Long's column in the Daily Interlake, Thurs., Nov. 9 cuts to the chase. After packing the elk to the truck, experiencing elation and exhaustion, he concludes, "It's a feeling few people have anymore. And maybe few people want it. They are willing to trade it for convenience, and I can understand why. But I still think they are missing something.

There's nothing particularly grueling about going to the fast-food joint and buying a hamburger. We Americans could feed entire nations with the food we throw away. Trust me, after you've packed your food 85 pounds at a time over two rough miles, you won't willingly throw away one tiny morsel. One of the great values of hunting is that it reminds us that the price of our food is indeed very great."

The price of our purchased food is also great, but the costs are hidden. Ironically, the cheaper the item, the greater the cost. I have become far removed from the products I buy. I know our American consumption is the major factor contributing to deforestation and habitat loss in other countries. I am aware of the appalling conditions of factory farmed animals. But still I buy, and I buy cheap. I have not yet burned my CostCo card. Eating meat is a huge waste of resources. It takes 16 pounds of grain to produce a single pound of feedlot beef. Forty five percent of the total land in the U.S. is used to raise animals for food or for crops for animal feed. Twenty vegetarians could be fed on the same amount of land needed to feed just one meat-eater.

I don't want to ruin your prime rib or turkey dinner by talking about animal cruelty, hormones and chemicals, misuse of forest and agricultural land. We need to buy with a greater degree of consciousness and intention. The education process begins by asking questions. What country is it from? How was it raised? How was it killed? What do we do with all the excess packaging? Do I really need it? For some of the answers, I can recommend some books. *Voluntary Simplicity* by Duane Elgin; *The Consumer's Guide to Effective Environmental Choices*, Union of Concerned Scientists, Michael Brower and Warren Leon; *The Way of Compassion*, Edited by Martin Rowe; *Natural Capitalism* by Paul Hawken, Amory Lovins, L. Hunter Lovins.

And you know what, dear friends? If I had to hunt my own turkey for Christmas dinner, I wouldn't be such a Butterball, and if I had to kill a wild turkey,.....let's face it, I couldn't kill anything that has a face. I'd be eating beans and rice along with the majority of the citizens of the world. And maybe I should.

By Pattie Brown



WHILE WE ARE BORN WITH CURIOSITY AND WONDER AND OUR EARLY YEARS FULL OF THE ADVENTURE THEY BRING, I KNOW SUCH INHERENT JOYS ARE OFTEN LOST. I ALSO KNOW THAT, BEING DEEP WITHIN US, THEIR LATENT GLOW CAN BE FANNED TO FLAME AGAIN BY AWARENESS AND AN OPEN MIND. BY SIGURD OLSON





## GREEN POWER FOR MONTANA, PART I



"Green Power" is clean power. It doesn't come from nonrenewable fossil fuels such as coal, oil and natural gas, or from nuclear reactors. Green power comes from renewable energy resources – sun, wind, water and biomass – which are constantly replenished. The sun is the source of most renewable energy, either directly or indirectly.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Montana established a strong renewable energy tradition, focused on renewable energy demonstration and outreach programs managed by the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation. With the repeal of federal solar tax credits and the ending of the state renewable energy grant program, interest in renewable energy declined. The continued availability of relatively cheap electric power in the state (6-7 cents/kWh) and the cost of solar energy technologies (as high as \$10/watt) also worked against the widespread implementation of these technologies in Montana.

A new trend in the electric utility industry could change that. Montana, along with some 20 other states, has passed electric utility restructuring legislation. In adopting restructuring in 1997, lawmakers believed that the right of consumers to choose their electric power supplier serves the public interest. At the same time, they agreed that the interests of consumers should be protected through continued funding for public purpose programs for cost-effective local energy conservation, low-income customer weatherization and billing assistance, renewable resource projects and applications and research and development related to energy conservation and renewables.

Boosting demand for renewable energy systems will lower the cost of these technologies, making them available to more people.

As part of a program to increase this demand, Flathead Electric Coop has made green power available to its customers. Flathead Electric has purchased one megawatt of green power for one year for resale to its customers. The utility is charging \$2 per 100-kilowatt hours, one of the lowest retail prices among utility program in the Pacific Northwest. Flathead Audubon applauds this program to make green power available to Flathead consumers. If you have not already signed up for a monthly purchase of green power, please do so. Help shift Montana's power consumption into the green – and at the same time, help exert the economic pressure that will make green power cheaper and more easily accessible to everyone.

DON'T HAVE ENOUGH BIRDSEED FOR YOUR LITTLE FEATHERED ONES? BIRDFEEDERS AND CUPBOARDS LOOKING A LITTLE BARE? FLATHEAD AUDUBON STILL HAS BAGS OF BLACK OIL SUNFLOWER SEED FOR SALE. PLEASE CALL LINDA WINNIE AT 755-1406 OR JUNE ASH AT 754-2289



## GREEN POWER FOR MONTANA PART II

For more information on green power in Montana, check out the Montana Green Power website: [montanagreenpower.com](http://montanagreenpower.com).

This site provides access to a variety of educational resources, such as The Power of Solar Energy: A Curriculum Unit for Grades 7-12. It also provides a variety of links to other websites that will help you learn more about green power in Montana and around the country, as well as ways to reduce your power usage. Here are some examples of these links:

The American Green Network provides information about renewable energy technologies. The Network's "Renewable Energy Information" page offers links to sites on such topics as Solar Power, Wind Power, Geothermal Power, Hydropower, Ocean Energy, and Transportation Technologies. ([www.americangreen.org/renewable\\_links.htm](http://www.americangreen.org/renewable_links.htm))

The Electricity Label Generator is designed to show how your electricity is produced – and how much pollution is created in the process. Where your electricity comes from depends on where you live. To see the facts about your electricity, enter your monthly electricity bill and select Montana. ([www.edf.org/programs/energy/green\\_power/x\\_calculator.html](http://www.edf.org/programs/energy/green_power/x_calculator.html))

Customer Choice provides information on energy sources available to Montanans. Electricity and natural gas customers in Montana Power's service territory now have the opportunity to select the company that provides their supply of energy. The delivery of electricity and natural gas, or the transmission and distribution, stays regulated and will be delivered over the same pipes and wires by present utilities. The generation of electricity and the production of natural gas, or supply, is the part of the industry that is becoming competitive and is the part for which consumers now may have more choices. ([www.mtpower.com/customerchoice](http://www.mtpower.com/customerchoice))

The site provides a whole list of links to various sources of information on how to save money and energy at the same time. Sites on the list include: American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE), Energy Efficient Homes with Healthy Indoor Air, Energy Savers, Home Energy Saver, Residential Energy Factsheets, Simple Savings Calculator, and Simple Steps to Home Energy Efficiency (Lighting and Appliances).

And there is lots more. Check out this website for yourself to learn more about such things as green power technologies, how you and your community can access these technologies, how to reduce energy consumption, and the future prospects for cleaner and more environmentally friendly sources of power. Edited and written by Linda Winnie





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Janet Ellis, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624  
Dorothy Poulsen, P.O. Box 595, Helena MT 59624

443-3949  
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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



# the Pileated Post

Flathead Audubon Society

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