



the Pileated Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

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ISLANDS OF SOLID GROUND

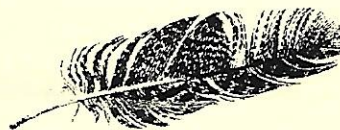
One of the most daunting tasks in all of biological conservation is to protect a migratory bird in trouble. To save the land where it nests means nothing if the land where it winters cannot be saved. To guard either end of its biannual journey goes for naught if a barrier arises between here and there. To build security into such a far-flung life could require a bridge to span the continents.

To then do so for a bird whose path remains fogged with mystery—that is the conservation challenge presented by the golden-cheeked warbler. The golden-cheeked warbler is a little black-and-yellow songbird surviving in patchy numbers that put it among the most endangered of U.S. species. There may be no more than 16,000 breeding pairs of golden-cheeks; and for a period from early March to late July the whole of them can be found no farther than the oak-juniper woodlands in the limestone hills and canyons of central Texas. Their woodlands have been heavily cleared and fragmented; their nests, where unguarded, are flagrantly violated by brown-headed cowbirds, whose eggs and young replace those of the warblers.

By late July, the surviving golden-cheeks are airborne, heading south. There the picture turns sketchy. Based on a smattering of fortuitous sightings, the birds head south through the highlands of Mexico's Sierra Madre Oriental. They settle for the winter in the pine-oak forests of Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico and who knows where else. Finding them here is largely a

needle-in-a-haystack affair as the birds scatter and melt inconspicuously into mixed flocks of fellow songbirds high in the trees. And, of course, the forests of which they are most fond are those rapidly giving way to farm plots, pastures and clear cuts.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MARCH 6, 2001 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING will be held at 6:00PM at the Glacier Unitarian Universalist Fellowship at 1515 Trumble Creek Road. The public and Audubon are always welcome.

MARCH 12, 2001 THE FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY GENERAL MEETING will be held at 7:30PM at the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Building at 490 N. Meridian Road in Kalispell. The program will be a double-header with John and Linda Winnie presenting their video about a loon rescue on Rogers Lake and free-lance photographer, Chuck Haney will present a slide show featuring some of his most recent work.

FIELD TRIPS

MARCH 24 & 25, 2001 Join the Casey's for an overnight trip to Freezeout Lake.

APRIL 8, 2001 Lower Valley Waterfowl Tour, Flathead Audubon will explore wetland areas in search of migrating waterfowl.

SEE INSIDE FOR MORE DETAILS



CHICKADEE CHATTER

SPRING is in the air. It's true even though it is only the end of February. The birds around the Valley are starting their age old rituals of spring. I, of course, being an egocentric member of the human race can look at the calendar and know beyond a shadow of a doubt that Spring is still some time from now. The snow on the ground is still very deep and there are still too many snow flakes coming down. I walk outside and I listen to the enthusiastic songs of hundreds of birds and think that the birds are confused. It is my hope that they know something that I do not.

March and April are always difficult months for me to bear. There are all those tantalizing hints that SPRING will soon be here but after months of winter it is hard to wait. And then those darn birds start their spring antics at the end of February and I want it to truly be May.

The area around my house is at this very moment filled with birds and birdsong. It is extraordinary just to wander out of the door. I am held captive by the sound, I will find any excuse to wander out just to listen. It is especially wonderful in the morning. The spring songs of Song Sparrows and Tree Sparrows are so beautiful, somehow lilting and unexpected from such tiny brown bodies. There are a dozen or so of each species here right now. They have been quite civil to one another this winter up last week and now they are chasing one another all over the yard. The area under the bird feeders isn't big enough for more than two Song Sparrows at one time now.

The House and Cassin's Finches are also thinking spring thoughts. The males are starting to get their brilliant red feathers and will sit in the trees singing, it too is a beautiful song. They are chasing the females all over the yard. So too are the chickadees, they have been singing their 'phoebe' songs quite regularly. They like the lilac bushes and will sit there and sing and sing with the

occasional excursion into the feeder for a sunflower seed.

The woodpeckers are making quite a bit of noise, as well. Apparently they are thinking spring, too. They come to visit the suet as pairs now, two pairs of Downy Woodpeckers and one pair of Hairy Woodpeckers. They don't let each other get far out sight, where one is the other is sure to follow. It is the Pileated Woodpeckers that make the most noise, whether they are pounding on the power pole or chattering on the wing it is clear that they are present. It is rare to see one of those big birds without its' partner. There has been at least one pair of the Pileated Woodpeckers here since I can remember. They always hold my attention.

In the bay the ducks are pairing up, Mallards and Common Goldeneye's and Common Mergansers. The Canadian Geese have been making quite a fuss, they sure can make a lot of noise when they get excited.

I am so glad that the birds think spring is here. I am going to have to reserve judgement though; there is still too much snow on the ground and the thermometer still hasn't gotten much above 40F. The birds can't trick me into thinking spring is here, I am a wily human being and I know better than that. There is a little part of me in the very back of my mind that rejoices with the birds. What is that? An American Robin singing at the top of the old birch tree...excuse me I've got to go...spring is calling me.

LESLIE KEHOE



TAKE NOTE SIBLEY GUIDES FOR SALE FROM FAS

The Flathead Audubon Society will have copies of the National Audubon Society's new Sibley Guide to Birds for sale. They will cost \$25.00 each. It is a wonderful addition to any birdwatchers library and will put a few dollars into Flathead Audubon Society's bank account. Please call Neal Brown if you are interested in purchasing one of these exceptional bird guides, 837-5018.



SPRING FIELD TRIPS

MARCH 24 & 25 OVERNIGHT TRIP TO FREEZEOUT LAKE

Join the Casey's and Flathead Audubon for a trip east of the mountains. The annual spring migration of millions of birds will have begun and Freezeout Lake is one of their stopping areas on the journey north. It is a bird extravaganza, it is possible to see 100,000 Snow Geese at the Freezeout Lake Wildlife Management Area at this time as well as thousands of ducks and some early shorebirds. We should be able to see Bald and Golden Eagles and various hawks, some gulls, a White Pelican or two and some of the early songbirds. Freezeout Lake WMA during spring migration is a sight to behold, please join for this unique experience.

Please contact Dan Casey at 756-2681 during the day or 857-3143 evenings to sign up for this trip. We will be meeting at the Tidyman's parking lot at 10:30AM Saturday morning and we should be a Pond 1 at the Wildlife Management Area by 3:00PM, just in time for the evening flight. The group will be staying at the Bella Vista Motel in Choteau, please make your own reservations. You can reach the Bella Vista at 406-466-5711. Up early for more bird watching. We plan to leave Freezeout around 12:00PM and will be back in Kalispell around 5:00PM Sunday evening.

APRIL 7, LOWER VALLEY WATERFOWL TOUR

Please join Flathead Audubon for a 3 to 4 hour guided birding tour of wetland areas in the Somers area and north shore of Flathead Lake. We will be searching for resident and migrating waterfowl mostly but we should also see a wide variety of early songbirds and raptors. This a great time to bone up on your ducks and get into the spirit of spring. Please join us for a morning of early spring bird watching. We will meet at the Somers Recreation Area (the boat ramp) on Highway 93 on Somer Bay at 8:30AM. Bring your binoculars and snacks. For more information please contact Leslie Kehoe at 837-4467. See you there.



MARCH PROGRAM OFFERS DOUBLE TREAT

The March meeting of FAS will offer two very special presentations, so if winter has gotten you down, here is a great chance to get out of the house for a fun and informative evening!

First, Linda and John Winnie will present their video documentary of a loon rescue on Rogers Lake. This event occurred in the fall of 1999 when a Common Loon became trapped by ice during a fall cold snap and involved several FAS members in a daring rescue and relocation of the Loon.

Next, Whitefish free-lance photographer, Chuck Haney will present a slide program of some of his most recent work. Chuck travels across the country in pursuit of scenic grandeur and interesting subjects and his landscapes, agricultural and outdoor sports photos and articles have been published in numerous national and regional magazines. Chuck currently has three books on the market: *Wild and Beautiful Montana*, published by Farcountry Press in 1999 and *Wild and Beautiful Glacier* and *Badlands On The High Plains*, which have just been released. These books will be available for purchase and Chuck will do a book signing after the slide show.

IT WILL SOON BE BIRDATHON TIME

We will soon be seeing the first migrant birds returning to the Flathead Valley so birders get your binoculars and start watching. And while you are out there having fun watching and counting birds one day, why not raise money for your local Audubon Society at the same time. You can do this by simply participating in the Audubon Society's annual Birdathon, which is one of our biggest fundraising events of the year. The Audubon Birdathon is a nationwide social and sporting event that takes place in every state. Half the money raised will go to the National Audubon Society's work to protect wetlands and the other half will go to local wetland conservation efforts.

Set aside some time during the week of May 30th to participate in the Flathead Audubon's Annual Birdathon. Watch the newsletter for further details in the coming months. If you want more info or would like to help organize Flathead Audubon's Birdathon you can call Neal Brown at 837-5018.



FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT



The Flathead Audubon Migratory Bird Workshop is coming to town!

Over the last year, you have seen various articles in this newsletter about the workshop and about our Birding Mentors project that ties into it. These articles have given you glimpses of the yearlong planning and preparation effort on the part of Flathead Audubon's Education Committee to launch this new bird education program. I want to take this opportunity to give you a more complete picture of how this new program will work.

On the weekend of March 31-April 1, local teachers and volunteer birding mentors will gather at the Kalispell Montessori School for a two-day workshop led by Bob Petty, the Education Coordinator for Montana Audubon. Participants will learn teaching techniques for identifying birds by sight and sound, and be given information on a variety of methods for incorporating the study of birds into the classroom. Bob will introduce the teachers and mentors to the Songbird Blues Box, a collection of slides, audiotapes, puppets and other educational materials that can be used for teaching the natural history of migratory birds. He will show how to use the materials in the Box, and teach the teachers a some basic facts about migratory birds and the problems they face in both their breeding and non-breeding homes. He will also talk about how to set up a school-yard feeder-watch program, how to organize and carry out a birding field trip, and about other class projects that can be used to enhance bird education.

Each teacher at the workshop will be linked with a Flathead Audubon Birding Mentor who will then help that teacher introduce a unit on birds into their classroom curriculum. The type of help provided by the mentors will vary, depending on what the teacher needs. The mentor might simply be asked to provide the teacher with information about birds or birding, or hunt up some teaching materials, or help the teacher work with students on a class project. Or a mentor might end up teaching students how to identify common birds, and perhaps how to use binoculars and a birding field guide. Some mentors may be asked to help set up a schoolyard bird feeder, help students identify the birds that visit the feeder, and perhaps guide the students in keeping records of what species they observe. We hope that many mentors will get to lead students on birding field trips. Some mentors may also have the opportunity to lead an in-class learning activity or present a lesson on some bird-related topic.

Flathead Audubon is also putting together a field trip kit for the teachers and mentors to use. It will contain binoculars and birding field guides for students who are not able to bring their own.

Teachers will earn professional credits for participating in the workshop. They can enroll for 15-30 OPI (Office of Public Instruction) credits or 2 university graduate credits (from the University of Montana), and are charged a fee accordingly. The volunteer Birding Mentors are required to attend the workshop also, but they are not charged a fee.

There are now about twenty local teachers signed up for the workshop from a variety of schools, ranging from Smith Valley to Columbia Falls. This leaves room for about ten more (the enrollment cap is 30 teachers). Any teacher interested in enrolling in the workshop can contact Kim Davis (755-1311 or kdavis@digisys.net) or Bob Petty (rpetty@montana.com) for more information.

At this point 14 people have volunteered to be Birding Mentors. Since it looks like we will have about twice that many teachers enrolled in the program, we could use more volunteers. Keep in mind that you don't have to be an "expert" to serve as a mentor. Your own personal knowledge of birds and birding will take you a long way, and you will learn more in the two-day workshop. In addition, one of your primary assets will be your knowledge of who to ask or where to look in order to get information or materials that the teacher needs. In addition, the Education Committee will provide assistance when needed. If you are interested in becoming a mentor, contact me (755-1406 or lindawin@cyberport.net) for more information.

It has been exciting – and a privilege – to have been a member of the Flathead Audubon Education Committee this last year. In the course of planning and developing this new educational program, we have worked hard, learned a lot, and had fun too. Sonja Hartmann, the Committee's dynamic and hard-working Chair, has done a great job of keeping us focused and moving forward. Thank you Sonja! -- from your from your Education Committee (Kim Davis, Bruce Tannehill, Linda de Kort and myself). **BY LINDA WINNIE**

"BE A COLUMBUS TO WHOLE NEW CONTINENTS AND WORLDS WITHIN YOU, OPEN NEW CHANNELS, NOT OF TRADE, BUT OF THOUGHT. THE UNIVERSE IS WIDER THAN OUR VIEW OF IT."

HENRY DAVID THOREAU



SEEING THROUGH NATIVE EYES

My mother has commented that I should have been born 200 hundred years ago. It's not that I wanted to live without showers or electricity, but more a desire to feel really close to the natural world. I wanted to have close, personal experiences with wildlife, not just the fleeting glimpses of tails flashing as they run away when I approach. We can see by the tracks and sign left behind that the animals are there; why don't we have close encounters more often? Why don't we see them engaged in all their other behaviors besides running away? Fortunately, I finally met Jon Young.

You probably haven't heard of Jon before since the wisdom he's sharing has yet to be publicized in the major media. He's in big demand, however, among those who are familiar with his mentoring and nature awareness programs. It's exciting news that his first-ever Montana workshop will be right here in the Flathead. People from across the U.S. are already making plans to attend.

His schedule and workshop registration are coordinated by the non-profit Wilderness Awareness School in Duvall, WA. They can be reached at www.NatureOutlet.com or 425-788-1301. Meadow Creek Center in the Ferndale area is donating the use of its facility to help make this "Language of the Birds" workshop affordable to our community. Mark your calendar for this August 3-5 event.. **Submitted By Jim Fiddler**

ISLANDS OF SOLID GROUND, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The conservationist's best hopes pivot on preserving the most irreplaceable sanctuaries across the warbler's range. Here the picture might even be said to brighten. Several of the bird's best breeding grounds in Texas are already under close study by a team of Conservancy and independent biologists within the guarded confines of the Fort Hood army installation. In Central America, one of the bird's prime wintering havens—Guatemala's Sierra de Las Minas Biosphere Reserve—stands under the care of one of the country's most able conservation groups, Defensores de la Naturaleza.

While far from being declared secure, the wayfaring life of the golden-cheeked warbler has

at least a few remaining islands of solid ground—foundations from which better bridges might one day be built.

This article appeared in the March/April 2001 Magazine of The Nature Conservancy and was written by William Stolzenburg (Copyright 2001 by The Nature Conservancy, 4245 North Fairfax Drive, Arlington Virginia 22203-1606, Web site: www.thc.org)

Editor's Note: There have been so many articles recently outlining the plight of our precious migratory birds. Even though we do not have golden-cheeked warblers here in Montana we do have many other warblers and songbirds that make their way here each year from Central and South America. This tiny warbler's story is one that we must take to heart. One day the name of the warbler in the story may be one of those we are familiar with. LK

THE BEAUTY OF BIRDS

There is still LOTS OF room in the Adult Education class entitled: The Beauty of Birds.

Dates: March 21, March 28, April 4, April 11

Time: 6:30-8:30PM

Place: Room: FHS 233

Topics will include: harlequin ducks, flycatchers, woodpeckers, raptors, birds of Glacier National Park, and bird biology, including the fascinating complexities of avian respiration.

Instructors: John Ashley, Neal Brown (alias Mr. Polar Bear), Patty Brown (alias Ms. Polar Bear), Linda de Kort, Steve Gniadek, Sonja Hartman.

This is a new way to get out the word on birds and conservation to the general public. This is also a way to add some coins to our coffers; the instructors will be donating their income back to Flathead Audubon. If you are interested in helping to fill the classes for our first series please call the high school: 751-3500. So far we have three students; we need at least five students to allow the class to run. If you would like to help with classes in the future, please contact Linda de Kort: 755-3704.

If you prefer working with younger students we also have a great opportunity for you. We are attempting to match adults who would like to share their love of birds with elementary school teachers who would like some help with organizing field studies and classroom activities centering on birds. If this sounds like your cup of tea please contact Linda Winnie who will give you more information about our Teacher Mentor Workshop March 31 and April 1st.





FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY DIRECTORY

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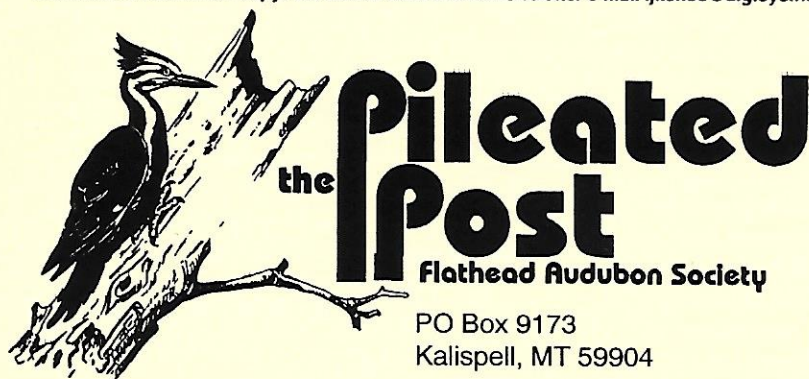
Ray Johnson, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624	443-3949
Dorothy Poulsen, P.O. Box 595, Helena MT 59624	443-3949

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



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