



the Pileated Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

VOLUME 26

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NOVEMBER, 2001

MONTANA BIRD DISTRIBUTION IS NOW ONLINE!

You may now enter your bird sightings by visiting the Montana Bird Distribution website at: <http://nhp.nris.state.mt.us/mbd/>

The website is a joint project of the Montana Natural Heritage Program, Montana Audubon, and the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks. The Montana Natural Heritage Program maintains the website, while Montana Audubon is responsible for maintaining the data entered into the site. The data that you submit will be used to create the new edition of MBD (due out early next year). The earlier you enter your data, the more likely it will be included in the new book. As MBD is a summary of thousands of individual bird observations, for common species, we ask that you submit only one record for a given species in each quarter-latitude. The value of MBD depends on the efforts of hundreds of birdwatchers - so your sightings are important! Submit your bird sightings early..... and often! If have any questions, please feel free to contact Susan Lenard at Montana Audubon (443-3949 or by email: slenard@audubon.org).

Please be advised that you must use Microsoft Explorer or Netscape 6.0 (or higher).

GRANT MONEY FOR WILDLIFE

Montana Audubon will be offering grant money totaling more than \$1000 to fund projects that benefit wildlife. Preference will be given to research and/or education projects that focus on nongame wildlife and their habitats. The funds

nongame wildlife and their habitats. The funds may be used for mileage, supplies, equipment, printing, and communications.

Applications must be postmarked on or before December 12, 2001. Grant winners will be notified by February 28, 2002.

Requests for Audubon Wildlife Fund guidelines can be made by mail to the MTAUD office (P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624), by phone (443-3949), or by email (slenard@audubon.org).

2001 NOVEMBER CALENDAR

Monday, Oct. 12 Flathead Audubon Society General Meeting will feature Dr. Richard Hauer of the Yellow Bay Biological Station who will present a program entitled "Wetlands, Rivers and Clean Water" (see inside for details). The meeting begins at 7:30PM at the Fish, Wildlife & Parks Building at 490 Meridian Road in Kalispell. The Board of Directors meeting will take place a 5:30 prior to the general meeting. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Friday, Nov. 23 Field Trip to Lower McDonald Creek. Join Jim and Sue for a late Fall stroll from the Apgar Visitor Center to the Ox Bow area of McDonald Creek. Continue to the junction of McDonald Creek and the Middle Fork at the Quarter Circle Bridge. (Bring snowshoes if necessary.) Lunch at the Quarter Circle Bridge. Meet at the West Glacier Post Office at 10:00 a.m. Call Jim or Sue 387-4299 or suejim@bigsky.net.
Saturday, Jan. 19, 2002 Field Trip to Lake McDonald Ranger Station. Birdwatching and ski trip from Lake McDonald Lodge to the Ranger Station at the head of Lake McDonald. Lunch at the Ranger Station. Distance is about 8 miles round trip. Meet at Lake McDonald upper parking lot at 10:00 a.m. Call Jim or Sue 387-4299 or suejim@bigsky.net.





CHICKADEE CHATTER

The leaves are falling from the big cottonwood by my house, it is brilliant yellow still but the leaves are falling by ones and twos and tens when a breeze blows. It is one of the last trees to lose its leaves, the service berry and the chokecherry and the thorn apple trees have lost nearly all of theirs. It is an attempt to prepare for winter in a northern climate and it reminds us all that those frosty months of Winter are not so very far away. But for now I will enjoy those yellow leaves as they fall all around me and color the ground beneath the tree with a yellow carpet.

Some of the leaves from the top of the tree are as large as my hand and it seems remarkable to me that I can hold such a thing in my hand. A leaf that spent all spring and summer so high up in the tree, a leaf that was privy to the secrets of birds and bugs and that helped give life to the majestic tree before me. If only leaves could talk what stories they could tell.

Fall is a good time for adventures both large and small. A drive into the mountains this time of the year can be spectacular, around every bend is a vista resplendent with yellows and reds and oranges and greens capped with a mantle of white.

The best adventures seem to be the ones where there is no set goal. And so it was on a beautiful day in late October my sister and I went for a drive. We went west with only a vague plan. The sun was shining through a thin layer of high clouds and the colors of fall in that slightly diluted light were fantastic. We had driven only a short distance on the Highway 2 and saw the road that goes to Hubbard Reservoir and turned onto it and so the adventure began.

We drove slowly, admiring the world around us and watching for birds and animals. It is nice country to be driving through and we stopped here and there to listen and look. In a meadow a few miles along the road a Northern Harrier took flight from the top of a tree and we watched it glide effortlessly through the air. Further along we stopped in a densely forested area; a tiny stream of water flowed through a small opening in the woods. This place had been logged many, many years ago and the stumps of what must have been gigantic trees were slowly rotting. Willows and dogwood grew along the stream their leaves green and gold and red. The only sounds were the gurgle of the water, the chatter of a squirrel high up in the trees, a nuthatch beep and an occasional high-pitched birdcall (maybe a kinglet

or two). We drove further and came out of the trees; spread before us were rolling grassy hills with lines of brilliant color running up and down every draw. Hundreds of trees were alive with colors, a fine contrast to the brown and tan of the grasses.

We stopped again at the top of a hill to watch a flock of Mountains Bluebirds. I was amazed to see the bright blue birds flying to and fro across the road in front of us. There were 8 or 10 of these lovely birds, we never could get an accurate count with all of the activity. And then they were gone and we went on our way.

This road, if one follows it far enough, leads to the community of Niarada on Highway 28. Coming down out of the mountains we found ourselves in Niarada.

This is an interesting valley to explore if you have a chance. The road we took winds up and down grassy hills and around cattle pastures and along the Little Bitterroot River. We stopped near a bridge that crosses the river to see if there was anything interesting. The leaves on the trees here were brown and crinkled, crisped by a hard frost. There were dozens of American Robins in the trees and flying overhead. They were flying south or so it appeared to me. A Cooper's Hawk sat still and silent in a tree close by. Ducks flew over in pairs and flocks. (Mostly Mallards but there were others too.)

It was only mid-afternoon and we found a road that would take us back up into the mountains. The road wound steadily up into the hills and went through pine forests full of Black-billed magpies and Northern Flickers and chickadees and we even saw a late Western Meadowlark beside the road in a grassy patch.

Soon the forests were thick again, dark green fir and spruce and golden tamarack and here and there the yellow of aspen leaves glowed. We drove slowly enjoying all of the colors and stopped here and there to admire sweeping views of tamarack colored mountainsides. An occasional Blue Grouse could be seen on the road and a few wary White-tailed deer. All too soon it was time to go home, a storm blew in as we stood atop a mountain and the wind blew and tiny flakes of white came down. We were on Snowstorm Mountain after all.

It rained all the way home that evening but that didn't matter our minds and hearts were filled with color and peace. It was a grand adventure. Hope you enjoy these last few days of fall.

Leslie Kehoe





AUDUBON PROGRAM FOR NOVEMBER 12

"Wetlands, Rivers and Clean Water"
Dr. Richard Hauer
Yellow Bay Biological Station

When is a marsh not a wetland? Depends on who you ask. The National Association of Homebuilders and industry groups have quite a different opinion on wetlands then, say, the National Audubon Society, Ducks Unlimited and other conservation organizations. Stuck in the middle of this deepening controversy, the US Army Corps of Engineers holds court over Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, the regulatory legislation that protects wetlands. The Corps mandate is to balance the demands of growth and development with the necessity of conserving the beauty, function and wildlife values of America's remaining wetlands.

Dr. Richard Hauer is perhaps Montana's leading authority on wetland ecology and management and an advisor to the US Army Corps of Engineers. His presentation for Flathead Audubon will illustrate, clarify and extol the value of functioning wetlands, particularly those that comprise the watershed of the Flathead Valley. Dr. Hauer is UM Professor of Limnology (the study of fresh water) at the Flathead Lake Biological Station. For the past 25 years his research has focused on the national treasure of wetlands, lakes and sparkling rivers that is the Flathead River Basin.



REPORT COMMON LOON MIGRATION STOPOVER SITES

The Common Loon Working Group, a coalition of agencies, organizations, and interested persons, is looking to receive reports of Common Loon migration stopover sites in the state. Little information is currently known about migration of loons through Montana. Are there any areas particularly important to migrating

loons? We would like to learn of any lakes or bodies of water where multiple loons are observed during both the Fall and Spring.

The following information on the sighting would be helpful:

- Date
- Lake or water body name
- County
- Nearest town, road, or other landmark
- Map with location identified or good description
- Number of loons observed



Please report your sightings to Gael Bissell by mail, phone, or email: Montana State Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, 490 N. Meridian Road, Kalispell, MT 59901, phone: 752-5501 or by email at gbissell@state.mt.us. You can also request loon observation forms from Gael for easier reporting.

BOB LOPP APPOINTED TO FAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Bob Lopp was unanimously elected to the Flathead Audubon Board of Directors at the October Quarterly Meeting of the Board. Bob replaces Jay Shepherd, who resigned from the Board when he left the Flathead last summer to return to school in Idaho.

Bob is an enthusiastic birder and a strong supporter of Flathead Audubon. He and his wife Jane are long-time residents of Kalispell. They have been active participants in many local civic organizations and community projects.

For many years Bob taught at Flathead High School, where he founded and organized the German student exchange program that is still a highlight of the German program at the school. He and Jane own and operate a Prudential Insurance and Investment Office in Kalispell.





FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

A Burning Question about Fire; Friend or Foe?



Close your eyes. Now, what images come to mind when I say the word "fire"? Suffocating smoke? Burning homes? Destroyed forests? Terrified animals fleeing? Do you want to run? Or are you cozy around a campfire, eating smores, or burning a brush pile in your backyard? Fire is a complex, dynamic force of change that we as a society have had strong emotions towards; fear, anger, fascination and awe. We are still working to understand its complex role in ecosystems, and learning how to best manage fire, as more and more people are living in the wildland-urban interface.

This summer will go down in history as one of the biggest fire seasons in the Flathead Valley since 1929, when the Half Moon Fire, started by a locomotive, burned 108,342 acres north of Columbia Falls to West Glacier and Apgar. Rumor has it that it is the same locomotive that sits on Railway Street in Columbia Falls today, that started this huge blaze. As the Moose Fire took off and burned through green, moisture laden vegetation, our jaws dropped as we watched a 30,000 foot tall pyrocumuluous cloud form on September 1st. We all began to wonder what would be left in the wake of such a seemingly devastating natural disaster. Or was it such a disaster? No people lost their lives or their homes and there weren't any fire related injuries to those fighting the fire.

Fire has been part of this landscape for longer than we have been around. Along with windstorms, beetle infestations, floods and avalanches, fire is a natural process critical to keeping a naturally functioning ecosystem healthy and diverse. The Native peoples that have lived in the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem for 10,000 years knew this. They used fire as a tool for warfare, to rejuvenate forage and herd bison, clear forests and improve crops. Waterton National Park's fire history study shows the shortest time interval between fires of anywhere along the Rocky Mountain front range, burning every seven years. Interestingly enough, only 22% of the fires they had historically were lightening strikes. 78% were started by tribal people, using fire as a tool.

So how are we to look at the recent Moose Fire? Friend or Foe? Maybe as both, or neither. It is a part of nature that is as natural as rain, or sunshine. Rain can be negative if you want to get out for a hike, or if you get too much, too fast. But without it, we could not survive. When looking at the effects of the Moose Fire, it is important to get a perspective of how much land was impacted. 71,000 acres is within the perimeter of the fire. This does not mean that this whole area burned. When driving up the North Fork, you see a classic example of the mosaic, or pattern of varying degrees of burn. Much of the area is still green, leading many to ask "where is the Moose Fire"? Some is brown, singed pine needles still clinging to the trees. And other areas are black and gray, having burned severely. For comparison, 700,000 acres were within the perimeter of the Yellowstone fire of 1988. On average, only 1/3 of the area within the perimeter of a large fire actually burns.

So take a drive up the North Fork Road. See for yourself how fire reshapes a landscape. And return in the spring, to see the workings of mother nature. Already, grass has re-sprouted in many areas. Bear Grass tufts remain to start anew. Animals wander the burn. Scavengers such as bear, coyote and vultures benefit from the ill fortune of some, like small mammals hiding in burrows. Many rodents can survive in burrows 3 inches or deeper, but some suffocate due to lack of oxygen. Clark's Nutcrackers, Pine Siskins and other seed eating birds are busy eating Lodgepole Pine seeds dispersed from resin sealed cones that only fire will open. These serotinous cones can stay on a tree, waiting to be opened by fire, for 25 years, and don't form until the tree is 20-50 years old. The Black Back Woodpeckers, who flock to burned areas can eat up to 13,500 beetle larvae a year. These fire-loving birds have already been seen in the Werner Peak Fire, which was started from the same lightening storm as the Moose Fire. This is a great opportunity to learn more, first hand, about fire. It will happen again. The more we know, the better off we will be.

By Sonja Hartman

Fun Fire Facts



Note: Sources for much of these facts comes from;

- **"Forest Fires; An introduction to wildland fire behavior, management, firefighting and prevention"**, by Margaret Fuller
- **"Fire-Loving Wildlife"**, by Deborah Richie Oberbillig, produced for Wild Outdoor World, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation's magazine for kids.
- Information from Moose Fire Tours, FHN/GN

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5



SEED SALE THANK-YOUS

THANK YOU to all who purchased your bird seed from Flathead Audubon in our Fall Seed Sale. Over 400 sacks have been sold already this year. Your generosity is the primary source of support for a wide variety of Flathead Audubon's education, conservation, and community support activities.

THANK YOU also to all those who helped to organize the sale and distribute the seed.

June and Rod Ash are (and have for many years been) the cornerstones of this effort. Rod arranges for the purchase and transportation of the seed, and June keeps track of all the orders and gets information out to the site coordinators.

The volunteers at our five community sites this year were: Bigfork -- Pattie and Neal Brown (Coordinators), Lisa Disco and Jim Fiddler; Columbia Falls -- Sonja Hartmann (Coordinator), and Steve Prather; Condon -- June and Rod Ash (Coordinators); Kalispell -- Linda Winnie (Coordinator), John Bruninga, Dick Fretheim, Bob Lopp, Kay and Brent Mitchell.

Finally, a VERY BIG THANK YOU to Vi Starks of Whitefish, who for many years has provided storage space for the hundred or so sacks that we have left after the fall distribution day, and who enthusiastically helps sell these sacks throughout the winter and spring.

Vi's basement is once again full of 50-pound sacks of bird seed that can now be purchased by special arrangement. Site coordinators also have a few sacks still available.

To purchase bird seed, call the site coordinator nearest you (for phone numbers, see the Directory on the last page of the newsletter).

By Linda Winnie



- Fire fighting costs over **10x as much as prescribed burns**, with prescribed burns costing on average \$80.00/ hectare(in Canada)
- **Flame lengths** -- measurement of fire intensity
 - 4ft or less, can use hand tools, does not crown out
 - 4-8 ft, dozers and large machines used, can easily crown out, causing 100ft. flames
 - 8ft or more, fall back, use aircraft to fight fire
- **Fire retardant** costs **2 dollars a gallon**, and is made of phosphates. They therefore act as fertilizer for plants and trees. Therefore, you don't want to use it near streams, which may cause nutrient loading
- **Water buckets** carry 3-4 hundred gallons (medium size), 6-7 hundred gallons (large)
- For every dollar spent on prescribed burning, forest thinning and training of fire management personnel, **7 dollars worth of savings** are realized in costs of having to extinguish big fires
- The **Half Moon Fire** was 108,324 acres within the perimeter, at a cost of 114,169. It started on August 16, and was out around Sept. 7th. Believed to have been started from a spark from the "Donkey Engine" used in loader/jammer for loading logs onto flat cars along the RR, or a steam loader burning wood. This equipment was being used on State Lumber Co. land, that is now owned by Stoltz Timber
- The **Moose Fire** has 71,000 acres within its perimeter, 96 miles around the perimeter, and cost 19,265,000 (at Oct. 4th), to fight
- A fire **Incident Command Team** contains divisions such as logistics (30% of operations), finance, direct operations (put fire out)

FUN FIRE FACTS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

General Information

- Usually only **1/3 of an area** within the perimeter of a large fire actually burns
- Fire burns **16x faster upslope** than on flat ground
- **Smokey the bear** arrived on the scene in 1950
- Over the last 65 years, the area burned in Rocky Mountain Parks(Canadian), has dwindled to less than **10% of historic levels**

Facts about Moose Fire Camp

- Housed at its peak, **1,200 people**
- From 5am-7am one morning, 620 people drank **250 gallons of coffee!**
- **7,000 LBS of food** have been donated from fire camp to surrounding food banks

MORE FUN FIRE FACTS NEXT MONTH...



FLATHEAD AUDUBON SOCIETY DIRECTORY

OFFICERS

President	Linda Winnie, P.O. Box 220, Kila, MT 59920	755-1406
Vice-President	Sonja Hartman, P.O. Box 316, West Glacier, MT 59936	250-7885
Secretary	Gail Sullivan, 932 Columbia Ave., Whitefish, MT 59937	862-5775
Treasurer	Bruce Tannehill, 239 Deer Trail, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-4548
Past-President	Neal Brown, 670 Wolf Creek Dr., Bigfork, MT 59911	837-5018

DIRECTORS

1999-2002	Linda deKort, 290 Lost Creek Dr., Kalispell, MT 59901	755-3704
1999-2002	Leslie Kehoe, 1020 Holt Dr., Bigfork, MT 59911	837-4467
2000-2003	John Ashley, 3151 Columbia Falls Stage Rd., Col. Falls MT 59912	892-3825
2001-2002	Leo Keane, 514 Pine Place, Whitefish MT 59937	862-5807
2001-2002	Jill Fanning, 380 Tally Lake Rd., Whitefish, 59937	862-8070
2001-2002	Brent Mitchell, 960 Kienas Rd., Kalispell, MT 59901	756-8130
2001-2003	Bob Lopp, 52 West View Drive, Kalispell, 59901	257-6886
2001-2004	Dan Casey, P.O. Box 355, Somers MT 59932	857-3143
2001-2004	Jane Adams, 229 Edgewood Dr., Kalispell MT 59901	257-4527

CHAIRS

Audubon Adventures	Kim Davis, 1230 Rhodes Draw, Kalispell, MT 59901	755-1311
Birdseed Sales	June and Rod Ash, P.O. Box 1129, Condon MT 59826	754-2289
Christmas Bird-Count	Dan Casey, P.O. Box 355, Somers MT 59932	857-3143
Conservation	Brent Mitchell, 960 Kienas Rd., Kalispell, MT 59901	756-8130
Education	Sonja Hartmann, P.O. Box 316, West Glacier, MT 59936	250-7885
Field Trips	Jim Swab, 988 Lake Drive, Columbia Falls, 59912	387-4299
Hospitality	Lois Drobish, 324 Helena Flats Rd. Kalispell, MT 59901	756-7405
	Judy Spence, Box 239, Lakeside MT 59922	857-2599
	Pattie Brown, 760 Wolf Creek Dr., Bigfork, MT 59911	837-5018
	Gail Leonard, 514 Pine Place, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-5807
Librarian	Jill and Mike Fanning, 380 Tally Lake Rd., Whitefish, 59937	862-8070
Membership	Leslie Kehoe, 1020 Holt Dr., Bigfork, MT 59911	837-4467
Newsletter	Leo Keane, 514 Pine Place, Whitefish, MT 59937	862-5807
Program	Jeannie Marcure, 300 Shelter Valley Dr., Kalispell, 59901	862-4806
Publicity	Karen Nichols, 920 6 th Ave. E, Kalispell, MT 59901	756-5763
Refuge Projects	Leslie Kehoe, 1020 Holt Dr., Bigfork MT 59911	837-4467
Wetland/Waterfowl	Neal Brown, 670 Wolf Creek Rd., Bigfork, MT 59911	867-5018

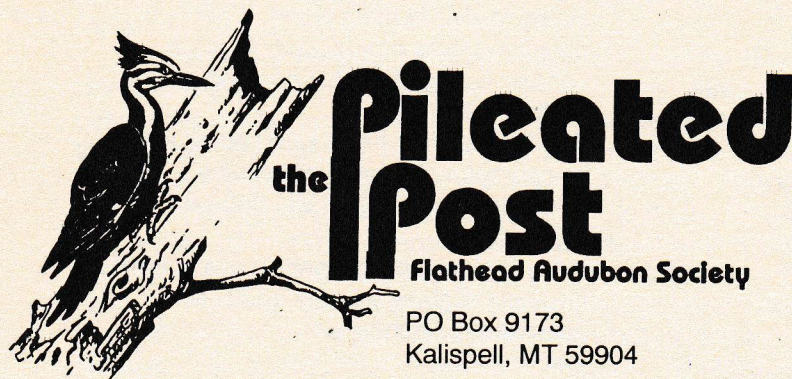
MONTANA AUDUBON

State Office	Ray Johnson, P.O. Box 596, Helena, MT 59624	443-3949
Western Montana Office	Loren Flynn, PO Box 831, Stevensville MT 59870	777-0780
Board President	Jim Brown, 1504 Woods Gulch Road, Missoula MT 59802	549-8052

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



PO Box 9173
Kalispell, MT 59904

National Audubon Society
Membership Application

Enjoy full National Audubon Society benefits and AUDUBON magazine, as well as PILEATED POST newsletter.

Check your category rate from the following:

First-time Applicant	\$20	<input type="checkbox"/>
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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