

Bitterroot AUDUBON



OCTOBER 2010

NEWSLETTER

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The Rise & Fall of Knapweed

An evolving biological control success story in western Montana will be the program for the October meeting of Bitterroot Audubon Society. Because of a scheduling conflict, this meeting will **not** be at the USFS Building as expected. Instead, we will meet in the Community Meeting Room, downstairs at the Bitterroot Public Library, at the corner of State and 4th Streets in Hamilton.

Knapweed, an invasive plant from Eastern Europe, has been the bane of farmers, land managers, homeowners, etc. in Montana, especially western Montana, for decades. Now, after 36 years of research and hard work, one man, Jim Story, can declare success in combating this noxious weed. Jim, a recently retired research professor of entomology with Montana State University, will present his research and findings at the Bitterroot Audubon Society meeting, October 18th.



Knapweed Root Weevil

Jim was located at the MSU-Western Agricultural Research Center at Corvallis, MT, where he worked on the biological control of invasive weeds in Montana, with an emphasis on

spotted knapweed. Although his program was a statewide research effort, most of his work centered in western Montana. He also spent time in Eastern Europe (Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Greece) in the mid-1980s (prior to the end of the cold war) studying spotted knapweed, its habitats and natural

enemies in its native area. As a result of his research into all aspects of weed management, he became very interested in the development of procedures for the mass rearing of biocontrol agents. In his presentation, he will be discussing the history, procedures and status of biocontrol of spotted knapweed in Montana.

It is not often that one has the opportunity to meet and listen to someone who has made such a huge contribution to the protection of our environment. **Please join us at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, Oct. 18th at the Hamilton Public Library, downstairs in the Community Meeting Room.** The public is invited. For more details, contact Kay Fulton at 642-3794.

Audubon in the Gulf

By Fred Weisbecker, Conservation Chair

As I watch things unfold in the gulf following the massive oil spill, I notice National Audubon's role stays the same: advocating for birds and their habitats. In times like these Audubon plays a critical role in saving oil covered birds and working with government agencies to rehabilitate the marshes along the gulf. I think back to one of their first causes, the stopping of market hunters along the southern coasts who were shooting herons and egrets for their feathers for ladies' hats. As time went on whole colonies of these birds began to disappear. Alarmed at this trend, the early Audubon Society convinced Congress to pass laws protecting these birds and even hired wardens to enforce the new laws. Several of these early wardens even lost their lives for the cause. Audubon also encouraged women to not buy and wear hats with bird plume feathers attached. Eventually this fashion went by the wayside and the whole story has almost been forgotten over time. It is nice to know though that the Audubon Society will always be out there advocating for birds and the many challenges they confront.

Letter from the President

By Peter Allen

After a most unusual spring and some summer, here it is autumn, which I always greet with somewhat mixed feelings. The maple trees we planted a few years ago are getting big enough to display some glorious color which we missed last year. The Canada Geese are flying around; a Stellar's Jay made his presence known in the yard, and we saw some Bald Eagles soaring overhead as if getting ready to head south.



About the time you read this, Helen and I will be winging our way south too, to Australia and New Zealand. Many of you know that I was born in Australia, and I haven't been back since I left at the age of 12. I hope to visit some of the scenes of my childhood, visit rarely-seen family, and perhaps show Helen a bit of why I am the way I am. We'll try to do a little birding along the way and maybe I'll be able to tell you about it in future issues.

In the meantime, I leave Bitterroot Audubon in the capable and experienced hands of Fred Weisbecker, who will not only be Vice-President and Conservation Chair, but, with Karen Griffing, will be filling in as interim editor for the next newsletter. Our thanks to both for stepping in.

Peregrine Falcon Recovery

By Dave Lockman, Biologist
Bitterroot Nat'l Forest

Peregrine falcons were common, widespread raptors across much of North America until the 1950s, but they were one of the species most impacted by DDT. Not a single peregrine aerie was known to exist in Montana in the early 1980s. Following a ban on DDT and intensive reintroduction efforts across the west and in Montana, peregrine numbers have rebounded dramatically. Peregrine falcons were reintroduced to several locations in the Bitterroot from 1989 to 1993, largely through the efforts of BAS board member John Ormiston, who was the Forest Biologist on the Bitterroot NF at the time.

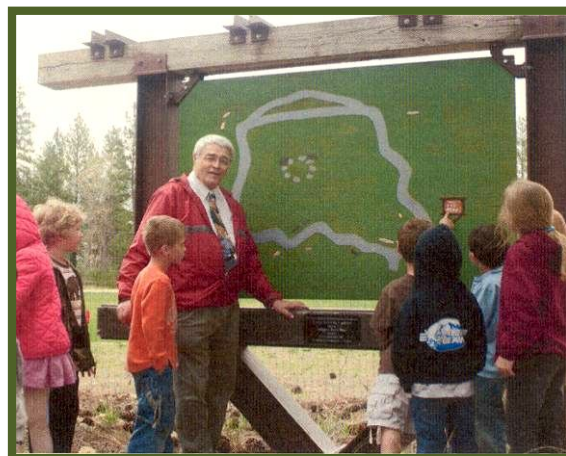


Peregrine numbers in the Bitterroot and across Montana have increased dramatically since reintroduction efforts began, and 2010 was a record-setting year for peregrines in our area. Bitterroot NF

personnel and volunteers documented 13 active aeries, including the first new aerie we've found since 2007. We found at least 31 juveniles fledged from these aeries, a large increase from the previous record of 22 we found in both 2008 and 2009. Average productivity was 2.4 young fledged per active aerie, which is exceptional. Peregrine numbers for Montana in 2010 haven't been finalized yet, but in 2009 there were 84 known active aeries that fledged at least 176 young. Check out the Montana Peregrine Institute website at www.montanaperegrine.org for more information.

Bitterroot Audubon Honors Byron Weber

The Board of Directors chose to honor the late Byron Weber (see last month's newsletter) with a donation to the Outdoor Classroom at Florence-Carlton Elementary School. We recently received a nice thank you note from the school principal.



Thank you very
much for your generous
donation to our
Outdoor Classroom.

Sincerely,
Chrissy Kulla
Elem. Principal

Kids, Education, Birds and FUN!

By Leslie Nyce

Bitterroot Audubon participates in various activities to help educate the children around the valley. This summer we provided an owl activity for the “Kids in the Garden” event at the Daly Mansion. Well over 100 kids attended. Along with the owl craft, Judy Hoy had two of her live owls present for observation. The kids (and grown-ups) absolutely loved the live owls and they were allowed to touch the owls too – what a special treat! It is experiences like these that children will remember for a very long time. Special thanks to Judy Hoy, Susie Duff and Sherry Ritter for helping out.



Bitterroot Audubon also provides an avenue for local schools to learn about the natural world. Every year we offer participation in the Audubon Adventures Program. This year is the 27th season for the program designed by National Audubon. The themes change each year and the 2010-2011 kit is titled “Wildlife on the Move” which will explore animal migration with a key message throughout about migratory species having special conservation needs. Birds, insects, whales and sea turtles are the focal species along with an *Action for the Planet Earth* component focusing on improving habitat for migratory wildlife. Teachers who enroll in the program will receive the following materials for their classrooms: student news magazines, a 48-page teacher’s manual, *Pennies for the Planet*, a nature journaling guide, student



assessment questions and answers to evaluate science and language arts skills, charts showing how the materials meet state and national standards, and much more, including membership in National Audubon and our local chapter.

This program is provided at no cost to teachers because each year Bitterroot Audubon membership sponsors the classrooms. That means that our members pay the cost so that classrooms can receive the materials. If you are a teacher in grades 3-6 and would like to participate in the program, send an email to Leslie Nyce at bas4education@hotmail.com. Include your name, school, and mailing address, grade, and number of students. The cost to sponsor a classroom is \$45.65. Partial contributions for half the amount may also be made. To sponsor a classroom, please make your check payable to Bitterroot Audubon and send it to Bitterroot Audubon, Attn: Audubon Adventures, P.O. Box 326, Hamilton, MT 59840. For more information you may also contact Leslie at 961-3808.

Membership Difficulties?

Quite by accident we recently heard from a member who was receiving two newsletters and couldn't seem to get the matter resolved. We assured her we would take care of it, which we did. If you are frustrated getting something corrected with national or chapter mailings, feel free to email your president and I'll do all I can.

Email me at
President@BitterrootAudubon.org