

# Bitterroot AUDUBON



FEBRUARY 2014

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 28, NO. 6

## The Bakken Oil Boom

By George Furniss

On February 17th, geologist George Furniss will present a comprehensive program on the "Bakken" for Bitterroot Audubon. He will cover its geologic history, the current "boom", technologies for extraction and ramifications for the environment. There are many more questions than there are answers, but George will guide us through a short course on what is happening in North Dakota. He will examine the impact on wetlands, water, surrounding landscape and birds. He states, "Everything in the Bakken is about fracking and horizontal drilling two miles deep. A lot of water is involved and I worry about the birds. North Dakota is a major waterfowl flyway." Even though this area is miles away from us, it does have a major impact on us. This will be a great opportunity to learn as much as possible about what is happening. Come prepared with questions.



*Courtesy George Furniss*

The Bakken Oil Field

George is an adjunct professor of geoscience at the UM Bitterroot College in Hamilton, Montana. He began a career at age 18, working with mining company geologists searching for copper in Arizona and gold in Nevada. His explorations for metals extended to

Montana; he earned BS and MS degrees in geology at MSU 1984 and UM 1990 while employed by the mining industry. In the pursuit of authoring science papers George is the first geologist to recognize and age-date climate change and natural acid drainage in one-thousand-year old stream deposits of ferricrete in the upper Blackfoot, in the Beartooth Mountains, and Little Rockies Mountains. He is also the first geologist to recognize microbial M-T calcite in 1.4-billion-year old Belt sedimentary rocks of western Montana. These initial Montana discoveries are identified in similar-age rocks around the world today. He is most enthusiastic about placing local mysteries uncovered by uplift and erosion of the Rocky Mountains within context of global history. George has been known to go out on long walks with his dog in bear country without a gun or pepper spray!

**Come join Bitterroot Audubon Monday, February 17th at 7:00 P.M. at the Forest Service/Natural Resources Building, 1801 N. First Street (Hwy 93, north end of Hamilton). Enter the building from the west side. The Public is invited. Contact Kay Fulton (642-3794) for further information.**



*Courtesy George Furniss*

The Bakken Oil Field

## The 7th Big Hole Christmas Bird Count Results

By Kate Stone

Thirty people participated in the 7th Big Hole Christmas Bird Count. Compared to past years, we enjoyed relatively warm weather (low of 9) and sunny conditions. Some of us encountered deep snow conditions for hiking, but the roads were largely clear of snow. We counted 461 birds of 22 species. Our top bird was the Black-billed Magpie, which we counted a record number, at 170. We also had high counts of Common Ravens (75) and Mountain Chickadees (20). We saw abysmal numbers of Rough-legged Hawks (4), with only one group of participants even seeing a species that the Big Hole is renowned for. We've seen anywhere from 11 to 93 Rough-legged Hawks in the past, so we know their numbers vary from year to year. We also added two new species to the count: the Song Sparrow and the Red Crossbill. Thanks to everyone who participated. You can find a complete species list on the Bitterroot Audubon website.



*Courtesy Kate Stone*

Larry Lockwood wades through the snow in search of birds on the Big Hole Christmas Bird Count.

## The 49th Stevensville Christmas Bird Count Results

By Dave Lockman

The 49<sup>th</sup> annual Stevi CBC took place on December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2013. The balmy weather seemed more appropriate for a spring bird count, with highs in the lower 40s. We had a great turnout of 45 field observers and 20 feederwatchers to help us count the birds around Stevi.

Birds seemed kind of scattered, but we found a total of 83 species and 15,385 individual birds, about 49% of which were either Canada Geese or Mallards. We didn't find any new species, so our cumulative count remains at 157 species over the 49 years of the Count. The most unusual species we found was a Lincoln's Sparrow, a species that normally winters from southern Arizona to Costa Rica. Oddly, the only species we set a new record for was Trumpeter Swan. Other than swans, Canada Geese and Mallards, waterfowl numbers were lower than usual. Numbers of Red-tailed and Rough-legged Hawks were much lower than usual, but numbers of Bald Eagles, Northern Harriers and American Kestrels were above average. We found large numbers of Bohemian Waxwings, but few "winter finches" including siskins, redpolls, Cassin's Finches or Red Crossbills. Numbers of two recent invaders, California Quail and Eurasian Collared-Dove, were down slightly from last year, but still indicated strong populations that appear to be permanent additions to our local bird community. Thanks to all who participated! Visit <http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count> for more information about this and other CBCs.

## The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)

By Susie Duff

Join one of the largest citizen science projects in the world by counting the birds in your own backyard for only 15 minutes any time between February 14 and 17! Bird watchers from more than 100 countries are expected to participate in the 17th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) and enter their sightings at [www.BirdCount.org](http://www.BirdCount.org). It's easy and it's fun! You can count as often, as long, and in as many places as you want during that four day stretch. Include in your counts the greatest number of each species seen AT ONE TIME. (eg. if you see 15 house finches now, but later you see 8, you would record the 15.) For more information on doing your count, log into [www.BirdCount.org](http://www.BirdCount.org).

Make it even more fun by getting together with your friends and do a house to house count: breakfast at the first house, coffee and snacks at the next and end for lunch!

The information gathered by tens of thousands of volunteers helps track the health of bird populations at a scale that would not otherwise be possible. In North America, GBBC participants will add their data to help define the magnitude of a dramatic irruption of magnificent Snowy Owls. Bird watchers will also be on the lookout for the invasive Eurasian Collared-Dove to see if it has expanded its range again. GBBC observations may help show whether or not numbers of American Crows will continue to rebound after being hit hard by the West Nile virus and whether more insect-eating species are showing up in new areas, possibly because of changing climate.

The GBBC is a joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society with partner Bird Studies Canada and made possible in part by sponsor Wild Birds Unlimited.

### **MPG Ranch Great Backyard Bird Count Field Trip: Monday, February 17th, 8am-2pm**

*By Kate Stone*

Once you've finished counting the birds in your backyard, please consider helping the MPG Ranch staff count the birds in their 10,000-acre yard! The MPG Ranch will host a field day to count as many birds and species as possible, as part of National Audubon's Great Backyard Bird Count.

Participants will split into small groups led by MPG Ranch staff. They will spend the morning hiking through a wide variety of habitats, including floodplain forest, open agricultural fields, shrubby draws, and upland conifer forest. At 1 pm, we will gather at one of the ranch houses for a brown bag lunch and to make a list of species observed.

Species we may see include: Snow Bunting, American Tree Sparrow, Lapland Longspur, Horned Lark, Pine Grosbeak, Rough-legged Hawk, Northern Harrier, Golden Eagle, Pygmy Nuthatch, and many more!

Please note: All of our surveying will be on foot, and participants need to possess the ability to hike for several hours in winter conditions.

#### We suggest the following gear:

Sturdy, insulated winter hiking boots, Gaiters, Hiking poles, YakTracks, Microspikes, (or something similar to prevent slipping on ice), Warm clothing, Food and

water for morning, Brown bag lunch, Binoculars, Field guide, and a camera

Participants **MUST REGISTER** for this field trip by February 14<sup>th</sup> by contacting Kate Stone (381-1115, [kstone@mpgranch.com](mailto:kstone@mpgranch.com)). Additional information and directions will be sent to registered participants.

### **Five Valleys Audubon Advanced Birding Workshop**

*By Larry Weeks*

Five Valleys Audubon has scheduled an advanced birding workshop for February and March 2014 that will include seven sessions on Thursday nights from 7pm – 9:30 pm at the Fish, Wildlife & Parks Regional Office on Spurgin Road in Missoula. Each session will be devoted to one bird group. The date, subject and presenter of each session are as follows:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Bird Group</b>	<b>Presenter</b>
Feb 13	Flycatchers	Christian Meny
Feb 20	Owls	Matt Larson
Feb 27	Raptors	Steve Hoffman
Mar 6	Shorebirds	Jim Brown
Mar 13	Forest Birds	Jim Sparks
Mar 20	Gulls	Terry McEneaney
Mar 27	Sparrows	Terry McEneaney

A person may decide to attend a single session, any combination of sessions or all 7 sessions. The cost will be \$15 per session or \$70 for all 7 sessions. To sign up, contact Larry Weeks at 549-5632 or [bwsgenea@centric.net](mailto:bwsgenea@centric.net).



*Courtesy Kate Stone*

Which flycatcher is this? Learn your flycatchers and more by participating in Five Valleys Audubon's Advanced Birding Workshops.



## Stevensville CBC Results 12/28/2013

Great Blue Heron	38		Belted Kingfisher	21
Tundra Swan	6		Downy Woodpecker	55
<b>Trumpeter Swan</b>	<b>20</b>		Hairy Woodpecker	33
Canada Goose	3,181		Northern Flicker	198
Green-winged Teal	44		Pileated Woodpecker	11
Mallard	4,333		Horned Lark	103
Northern Shoveler	1		Gray Jay	1
Northern Pintail	20		Steller's Jay	12
Gadwall	15		Clark's Nutcracker	44
American Wigeon	4		Black-billed Magpie	522
Ring-necked Duck	12		American Crow	24
Lesser Scaup	1		Common Raven	210
Greater Scaup	1		Black-capped Chickadee	405
Common Goldeneye	24		Mountain Chickadee	4
Bufflehead	8		Red-breasted Nuthatch	54
Hooded Merganser	12		White-breasted Nuthatch	65
Common Merganser	10		Pygmy Nuthatch	82
Ruddy Duck	1		Brown Creeper	3
Bald Eagle total	60		Pacific Wren	2
Northern Harrier	17		Marsh Wren	11
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1		Canyon Wren	1
Cooper's Hawk	5		American Dipper	12
Red-tailed Hawk	49		Golden-crowned Kinglet	6
Rough-legged Hawk	36		Townsend's Solitaire	31
Golden Eagle total	3		American Robin	2
American Kestrel	22		Bohemian Waxwing	1,323
Merlin	1		Cedar Waxwing	48
Prairie Falcon	2		Northern Shrike	7
Gray Partridge	3		European Starling	311
Ring-necked Pheasant	62		American Tree Sparrow	17
Ruffed Grouse	6		Song Sparrow	75
Wild Turkey	169		Lincoln's Sparrow	1
California Quail	680		Dark-eyed Junco total	153
American Coot	9		Red-winged Blackbird	313
Virginia Rail	1		Brewer's Blackbird	120
Killdeer	8		House Finch	512
Wilson's Snipe	6		Common Redpoll	2
Rock Pigeon	267		Pine Siskin	20
Mourning Dove	214		American Goldfinch	164
Eurasian Collared-Dove	329		Evening Grosbeak	33
Great Horned Owl	15		House Sparrow	676
Northern Saw-whet Owl	1		Unknown Accipiter	1
<b>83 Species</b>			<b>15,385 birds</b>	

Note: Species in **red** indicate record high counts for the Stevensville CBC.

# News and Notes

## Bitterroot Audubon Society is going GREEN

By Sara Ashline and Karen Griffing, BAS Editors

Beginning Fall 2013, Bitterroot Audubon began delivering monthly newsletter electronically. If you haven't already done so, please send us your email address to receive your newsletter via email. Starting this fall, we'll send a meeting reminder by postcard, but the full newsletter will be sent to your email address and is always available at [www.bitterrootaudubon.org](http://www.bitterrootaudubon.org). This will allow us to reduce printing and mailing costs and waste, while offering full color pictures and expanded coverage of Bitterroot Audubon activities. For those without computer access, we will continue to mail you an individual copy of the newsletter; please send a note to **Bitterroot Audubon, PO Box 326, Hamilton, MT 59840** requesting this service. Please send your email address to Susie Duff at [audubonmembership@gmail.com](mailto:audubonmembership@gmail.com) to begin receiving your newsletter electronically

### Chapter Members Renewal Deadline

If you are a BAS chapter member, your membership fee (\$15) was due by January 31, 2014. If you haven't done so already, please send payment to Bitterroot Audubon Society, PO Box 326, Hamilton, MT 59840.

## Bird Shots



*Courtesy Bill and Becky Peters*

Varied Thrush seen in Hamilton, MT. December 2013.

**Bitterroot Audubon is on Facebook!** If you use Facebook, please look for Bitterroot Audubon and "Like" us!

**Call for Photos** Bitterroot Audubon is seeking images of birds for a feature in our newsletter: *Bird Shots*. If you have taken a great photo and would like to submit it for consideration, please email the jpeg image, with a brief description, to [BASeditors@gmail.com](mailto:BASeditors@gmail.com).

**Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT** New to birding? Beginner Bird Walks at the refuge sponsored by Bitterroot Audubon and Five Valleys Audubon are held the third Saturday of each month. Meet at the Refuge Visitor's Center on February 15th at 10AM for a two hour bird walk. Bring binoculars if you have them. Contact the refuge at [\(406\) 777-5552](tel:4067775552) for more information.

## Calendar of Events

**Feb 15-** Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, 10AM-12PM, Call 777-5552 for more information.

**Feb 17-** Audubon Meeting, Forest Service/DNRC Building, Hamilton, 7PM, **Board Mtg. 5PM**

**Feb 14-17-** Great Backyard Bird Count

**Mar 29-** Welcome Back Waterfowl Day, details soon!

**Mar 29-** Lee Metcalf NWR 50th Anniversary, details soon!

**Jun 6-8-** Wings Across the Big Sky birding festival, Bozeman, MT

BITTERROOT AUDUBON  
PO BOX 326  
HAMILTON MT 59840-0326

### Officers

President	Kay Fulton*	642-3794
Vice-Pres. & Conservation Chair	Fred Weisbecker*	375-9317
Secretary	John Ormiston*	363-5464
Treasurer	Jim Story*	961-4689

### Directors & Committee Chairs

IBA Program	Sherry Ritter	777-7409
Website & Field Trips	Kate Stone*	381-1115
Education	Leslie Nyce* <a href="mailto:bas4education@hotmail.com">bas4education@hotmail.com</a>	
Newsltr Eds &	Sara Ashline* <a href="mailto:baseditors@gmail.com">baseditors@gmail.com</a>	
Distribution	Karen Griffing*	961-0181
Hospitality	Rosan Stover	
Membership	Susie Duff*	961-5455
Publicity	Dave Lockman	777-2929
Rep. to MT		
Audubon	Becky Peters*	
At large	Judy Hoy*	777-2487
Scholarship	Skip Horner*	642-6840
At large	Campbell Massey	381-0197
At large	Alex Shaffer*	

\* Board Member

EMAIL: [contactus@bitterrootaudubon.org](mailto:contactus@bitterrootaudubon.org)  
WEBSITE: [www.BitterrootAudubon.org](http://www.BitterrootAudubon.org)

## Chapter Only Membership

The Bitterroot Audubon Chapter Only Membership is \$15/year. These members will be supporting local chapter activities, receive the full color e-newsletter, and enjoy Chapter benefits. To join as a Chapter Only Member, complete this form.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_  
State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Send this application with \$15 to:



Bitterroot Audubon Society  
PO Box 326  
Hamilton, MT 59840-0326

## NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Become a member of the **National Audubon Society** and **Bitterroot Audubon** [Chapter Code C1ZN580Z]. You will receive *Audubon* magazine, *Bitterroot Audubon Newsletter* and a membership card. *Introductory membership is \$20.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_  
State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Send this application and your check to:



# Audubon

Membership Data Center  
PO Box 422250  
Palm Coast FL 32142-2250