

# Bitterroot AUDUBON



NOVEMBER 2016

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 31, NO. 3

## Adventuring and Birding in Costa Rica on Your Own

By Kay Fulton



*Courtesy Jill Davies*

*Iguana in Costa Rica.*

There are many travel companies that take people around the world on wonderful adventures, many of them specializing in wildlife and birds. Imagine, though, being your own travel guide and doing it all on your own. That is exactly what Jill Davies and two of her “Birder Friends,” Mary and Pat, did when they set off for Costa Rica in late January for a three week adventure! They arrived in San Jose with a hotel reservation and the name of a bird guide. From that point they embarked on amazing adventures throughout the country, sometimes with a guide and often on their own following suggestions from people they encountered:

The bird guide drove them around central Costa Rica in her car for four days to the best birding sites and they stayed at her eco-lodge in the “cloud forest,” hiking and birding. The guide knew all of the birds by sight and sound. From there they got a ride to the Pacific coast, found a hostel and had four days adventuring out to tour a national park, kayak in mangroves, snorkel on a coral reef and “boogey



*Courtesy Jill Davies*

*Slaty-tailed Trogon.*

board” in the surf. They then continued south to a lodge on the coast to visit a beach and marine park. Finally they were driven to the most southern part of Costa Rica where they were ferried by a small boat down a big river to the ocean and along the coast to a very comfortable tent camp on the Osa Peninsula. While there they toured a national park, snorkeled a coral reef, kayaked in the ocean to a lagoon and hiked along the coast, all along seeing hundreds of birds and native animals.



*Courtesy Jill Davies*

*Capuchin (White-faced Monkey).*

On Monday, November 21st, Jill will present a program at the Bitterroot Audubon meeting, on this exciting trip to Costa Rica. She will show photos of many of the 300 birds seen or heard. (She

discovered that the best way to view hummingbirds and colorful fruit eating birds was to sit out on a deck and eat delicious food while watching the birds swarm the bird feeders!)

Jill is an amateur naturalist, organic farmer, food activist, outdoor enthusiast (hiker, skier, kayaker), and Director of Sustainable Living Systems, a non-profit organization.

**Come join Bitterroot Audubon 7:00 P.M. Monday, November 21 at the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge Visitors' Center. The Refuge is located on Wildfowl, north east of Stevensville. THE PUBLIC IS INVITED. For more information contact Kay Fulton at 642-3794.**

### **Letter from the President**

*By Becky Peters, BAS President*



Happy

Thanksgiving! I am thankful for our members and our new members! It's that time of year to renew our BAS memberships (a mere \$15 folks!) and time to bring on new members. As your president that's one of my duties --to bring on new members. So you'll excuse the ageism here, I'm also trying to bring on young families. Some of what I hear back is "Oh, I'm no birder." or " But how can I be a better birder?"

So I'll repeat myself here when I say if you are a beginner birder - find an experienced birder and tag along. Join BAS or Five Valleys Audubon on one of our field trips. Come with BAS on our CBCs this December. Visit, visit, visit Wildlife Refuges. The main thing is to just get out and observe the birds. Two books I'd recommend - *How To Be A Better Birder* by Derek Lovitch and *Birding For Beginners* by Sheila Buff.

Their sound advice hinges on observing. Yes, buy a field guide and then maybe another one. But really and truly buy a simple notebook and some good mechanical pencils. Leave those new guides at home. Go outside for a walk and start sketching that unknown bird you see. Note the size, the colors, shape of the bill, the head, the wings, and tail. What's its behavior? What habitat does it like? Note its song, its call. No field guide can take the place of your time outside, your observations. Once back home go over your notes and start making some

guesses and then go to your field guides. It's great brain work.

Along with your own learning consider helping our Bitterroot Valley school children learn about birds and support an entire classroom for a year with the Audubon Adventures package of \$45.50. (How about that for a segue?) Just send a check into BAS. Thank you!

### **Trumpeter Swan 5T1**

*By Tom Reed, Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge Manager*

On October 15th, I received a call at home that a Trumpeter Swan had been shot at the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge. The swan had used the refuge for some time and was a year-round resident. The swan had been banded and neck collared prior to release on the Flathead Indian Reservation 3 miles south of Polson in June of 2007. The collar and one leg band were labeled 5T1 in white on red. At the time it was banded and collared, the swan was a second year bird and its sex was not determined. The swan had been hand reared and was released with 9 other second year birds.

In the 1920's and 30's it looked like Trumpeter Swans were on a pathway toward extinction. The snow white plumage was used for a variety of uses including women's hats. By 1933, fewer than 70 were known to exist. A breeding population was located on spring fed ponds (Culver or Widow's Pond) in the Centennial Valley and on geothermally warmed waters in and near Yellowstone National Park. In 1935, the spring fed ponds in the Centennial Valley were protected by executive order, creating Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. In order to boost the swan population, winter feeding began shortly thereafter and swan numbers grew. By the late 1980's manager's concerns about disease and lack of migration to pioneer new habitats heightened with the large concentration of birds wintering in close proximity to the wintering feed program. Birds were hazed and the feeding program reduced until it was terminated in the winter of 1992-93. Bird numbers plummeted that year and many were trans-located. Some of the trans-located birds went to Wyoming where the Wyoming Wetland Society managed captive pairs and outsourced their progeny to historic habitats, which is where we get back to 5T1. It is highly likely that the bird shot at Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge was progeny of birds

originally found in the Centennial Valley. Through the public's support of habitat protection, the establishment of Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, and efforts of swan managers, Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge now has resident swans. It is our hope that Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge will eventually fledge cygnets that will disperse to additional habitats in the Bitterroot Valley.

It is extremely disheartening that the swan was shot. Fortunately, the individual who did this turned himself in and accepted responsibility for the action. We are keeping an eye on a pair currently using pond 8 in hopes that they will find appropriate breeding habitat this spring.

### **Byron Weber Memorial Scholarship**

*By Skip Horner*

Bitterroot Audubon is very proud to award the \$500 Byron Weber Memorial Scholarship twice a year to a deserving student attending a Montana college or university. The recipient must be an upperclassman studying in a Natural Resource field. Bitterroot Valley residents are given priority, but any student is eligible. Applications for future scholarships are found on our website. If you know of any student who meets these qualifications, please encourage them to apply.

Our 2016 Fall Semester scholarship goes to David Yake, a senior at Carroll College. This bright and outgoing young man is studying anthrozoology, the interplay between humans and wildlife.

His letters of recommendation tell of a dynamic and multi-talented individual. He is currently a part-time ranger in Yellowstone Park, and he invites us all to come hear his evening programs at Canyons Visitor Center. He is also involved with the drama dept at Carroll and has won awards for his acting. He was even the anonymous 'Bullpup' mascot at their athletic events for two years!

David is our second recipient. For the past three years, each scholarship was won by Philip Williams, another dynamic and well-rounded young man who is currently pursuing his graduate studies at UM in Forestry. He even spoke at the Montana Audubon Annual Meeting in June. We're very proud of Philip. We're pleased to know that our scholarship helped him continue his important studies, and we look forward to a continuing relationship with him moving into the future.

### **Have you seen me?**

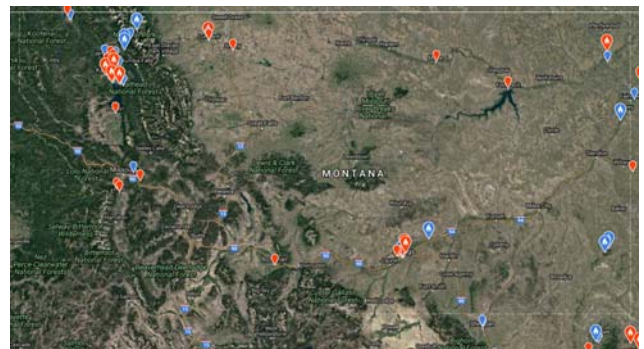
*By Kate Stone*



*Courtesy Kate Stone*

*Blue Jay in Florence, MT.*

Several people have reported seeing Blue Jays in the past few months, and one person shared that he had one over-winter at his Florence house last year. Blue Jays are increasingly becoming year-round Montana residents, and we'd like to document what they are doing in the Bitterroot. If you have seen a Blue Jay this fall, please submit your observation to eBird. If you don't yet use this program, send us an email <[contactus@bitterrootaudubon.org](mailto:contactus@bitterrootaudubon.org)> and include the approximate date and time of your observation, a physical address, and any notes on the bird(s) behavior.



*Map courtesy eBird.*

*Blue Jay observations in Montana reported to eBird in September and October 2016. Red dots indicate an observation within the past 30 days.*

### **What's the story, Story?**

*By Jim Story*

**Question:** *What time of day do birds migrate?*

**Answer:** Most long-distance migrants, especially songbirds (thrushes, thrashers, catbirds, vireos, sparrows, warblers, kinglets, buntings, tanagers, orioles, bobolinks, wrens, etc.), owls, and rails, fly at night. They may fly continuously or land daily around sunrise to rest and forage. Migrants that move only short distances travel during the day, spending only a few hours each morning in

migration. Aerial foragers like swifts and swallows do not stop but fly continuously, feeding in flight while migrating. Raptors tend to fly during the day, making use of the thermal air currents. Many waterfowl and shorebirds migrate during both day and night.

*Local birding expert Jim Story answers your questions about birds and their habits. Jim welcomes your questions at [jstory4689@gmail.com](mailto:jstory4689@gmail.com).*

## **Highway Clean-up Report**

*By Skip Horner*

Our semi-annual Highway Clean-up was very successful on October 19. This is one of many important projects accomplished by Bitterroot Audubon each year, one in which we're proud to show our concern for the visual beauty of our environment. Twelve people showed up, so we were able to cover almost our entire two mile section on both sides of the highway from Mile 64 to Mile 66, in under two hours. New board member Betsy Ballard started things off well by finding a \$20 bill in the first five minutes! Sadly, we also found the skeletons of three beavers, including two juveniles. One can only guess what killed them. They were found together and intact, adjacent to a private property wetlands. Our next Highway clean-up will be in the middle of April. Please come!

## **The Legislature migrates back to Helena.**

*By Amy Seaman*

Here we are again! The 2017 Montana Legislature will convene January 2nd in Helena. As we have since 1981, Montana Audubon will lobby on the front line at the Capitol in our efforts to protect birds, other wildlife, and their habitats. This year, as in 2015, Amy Seaman, our Associate Director of Bird Conservation, will step up as the lead lobbyist with the help of a new legislative intern.

During the last (2015) Legislative session Montana Audubon testified on 68 bills, opposing 24 and supporting 44. Our efforts helped defeat 10 anti-environmental/anti-wildlife bills, and helped pass 20 bills aimed at strengthening our environmental and wildlife laws. We anticipate 2017 to be just as much work, and with so much on the table, we are going to need your help.

You can support our legislative work!

- Donate to Montana Audubon to support face-to-face contact with legislators and our action alert network.
- Sign up for our action alert network by visiting [www.mtaudubon.org](http://www.mtaudubon.org)\*
- Join us for a Montana Audubon Lobby Day –free of charge, for any and all Audubon members. Come to the Capitol and participate directly in democracy. Learn about the legislative process, important Audubon issues, and help influence those making critical decisions about wildlife and the environment. Dates are set in early January.

\*As the legislature faces tough problems concerning wildlife and the environment we need as many conservationists and Audubon Chapter members as possible calling their Representatives and Senators to encourage them to vote responsibly. When local input is needed, Montana Audubon will contact you by email, explain the issue, explain how and why to take action, and let you know which legislators need encouragement.

We limit the use of the action alert program to the most critical issues, but they provide a powerful way to make our voice heard.

### ***Why help with letters and phone calls?***

Sage-Grouse. Fully funding Montana's Sage-grouse conservation program staff is a major issue in addition to securing specific authorization to spend the remainder of a \$10M Sage-grouse stewardship fund.

Habitat Montana. In 2015, Montana legislators put restrictions on Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks' (FWP) main habitat program, largely preventing them from purchasing new parcels. We want to remove this restriction that negatively affects wildlife.

Renewable Energy. We will be supporting at least one bill on the topic of Montanan's generating their own electricity with alternative technologies like solar panels. It allows government buildings (including county courthouses and schools) to invest in solar systems large enough to save on future utility bills.

Colstrip. Global warming is the biggest environmental challenge we face, threatening to

greatly disrupt birds, other wildlife and human communities. Numerous pieces of legislation will be introduced on coal and Colstrip. Montana Audubon will help ensure solutions address climate change, and preserve our constitutional right to a “clean and healthful environment.”

**Clean Water.** Most of the controversy surrounding water rights focus on ‘exempt wells’ in residential housing developments. Montana’s Supreme Court recently ruled that future large subdivisions need to change the way they acquire water. Since subdivisions impact a variety of wildlife, we will focus on the numerous bills anticipated on this issue.

**Wetlands.** Montana legislators will be exploring whether to take over the federal program that allows wetlands to be filled for development (Section 404 of the Clean Water Act). State management of this permit program does not make sense for many reasons, so we will lobby to maintain federal control.

Please assist us with our efforts this year! Find out more at <[www.mtaudubon.org](http://www.mtaudubon.org)>, or by emailing Amy <[aseaman@mtaudubon.org](mailto:aseaman@mtaudubon.org)> where you can sign up to be an Armchair Activist and find out how your legislators voted last session!

### **Welcome New Bitterroot Audubon Board Members!**

Thomas Arminio



Hello, I'm Thomas Arminio and very excited to join the BAS board. I've been in the Bitterroot Valley for about 9 years and enjoy the outdoors and walking our beautiful hills and mountains with my dog Luna.

I'm a nurse by training and retired (mostly) now. I worked at the Rocky Mountain Laboratory as a Biosafety Specialist and before that I worked for the Indian Health Service in AZ and NM.

I've participated in the Byron Weber Memorial Scholarship program and now look forward to becoming more involved in the BAS community.

Jodi Prout Education Chair



Jodi is excited to call the Bitterroot Valley home after teaching at the McCall Outdoor Science School in Idaho for the past year. She is passionate about getting students outside and exploring the natural world around them. She has worked as a park ranger, trail worker, librarian, and agricultural researcher and holds a masters of science in natural resources and environmental education. Her husband, Stephen, and their two dogs, Mica and Camas, make their home at the MSU Western Agricultural Research Station in Corvallis, where her husband works. They can often be found playing in the garden, hiking in the mountains, or casting their flies on the river.

### **Christmas Bird Count Tune-up Workshops**

*By Michelle Long*

Was that a Red-tailed or Rough-legged Hawk? A Hairy or a Downy Woodpecker? Get some identification tips at Bitterroot Audubon's Tune-up Workshops in advance of the Christmas Bird Count.

Workshops will be held from 7-8 p.m. at the National Forest Service's Hamilton office (1801 N 1st St--enter rear of building) on Monday, December 5th, and at the Lee Metcalf Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center (4567 Wildfowl Lane, Stevensville) on Wednesday, December 7th. Please RSVP to [mickilong@gmail.com](mailto:mickilong@gmail.com) by 12/4 for the Hamilton workshop or 12/6 for the Stevensville workshop.

# News and Notes

## Save the Date! Area Christmas Bird Counts are Coming Up

By John Ormiston

Please plan to help count all the birds in the Hamilton Christmas Bird Count Circle on December 17, 2016. It's our 30th annual count; some things don't change, there will be birds to count, we will meet at The Teller Barn and we will have chili and Oreos for lunch. Please plan to loan your eyes, ears and expertise to make this 30th year a memorable occasion. Also, stay tuned for details on the Stevensville and Big Hole Christmas Bird Counts in next month's newsletter and on our website <<http://www.bitterrootaudubon.org/>>.

## Participate in this Year's Thanksgiving Bird Count

By Judy Hoy

This year's November 24th Thanksgiving Bird Count is the 25th and final Thanksgiving Bird Count. It is fun and only takes as long as you want to count, up to 1 hour, unless you count at two different locations. The form is included in the newsletter or you may find it by using this link: <http://www.utahbirds.org/BirdCountForm.htm>

Dr. John Hewston has been the count coordinator for the Western Thanksgiving Bird Count for many years. He would like the count to go out with high numbers of counts. Hopefully, we can help him with more counters from Montana this year.

## Chapter Members Renewal Deadline

If you are a BAS chapter member, your membership fee (\$15) is due by January 31, 2017. Please send payment to Bitterroot Audubon Society, PO Box 326, Hamilton, MT 59840.

**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).

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

**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 October 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

**Nov 19**-Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT, 10AM-12PM.

**Nov 21**-Audubon Meeting, Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT, 7PM, Board Mtg., 5PM

**Nov 24**-Thanksgiving Bird Count

**Dec 5 & 7**-Christmas Bird Count Workshops. RSVP to [mickilong@gmail.com](mailto:mickilong@gmail.com)

**Dec 17**- Hamilton Christmas Bird Count, Teller Education Building, 7:30 AM

**Dec 17**-Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT, 10AM-12PM.

**Dec**-Area Christmas Bird Counts

**Jan 31**- Chapter-only membership renewal due, \$15

# Bird Shots



Kate Davis photo ©

Courtesy Kate Davis

*This photo went “viral” as they say after a few posts on Facebook, with several comments that it must be fake. Nope, this is right out of the camera, just cropped and lightened a bit. I’ve been photographing a Bald Eagle nest and their neighbors every night on the Bitterroot River by my house. This was their fifth year, and I predicted these two chicks were going to fledge on July 9th. They were a few days earlier than that, both exiting about 2 p.m. When I went down to the beach two hours later, the eagles were in a nearby snag getting attacked by a pair of kestrels. The male falcon was bouncing off the eagle’s back and she fled, to have the female falcon take a ride on her head...twice! This second photo captured it and viewers were worried about the eagle’s eyes which are fine.*

BITTERROOT AUDUBON  
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HAMILTON MT 59840-0326

### Officers

President	Becky Peters*	369-5210
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	370-4778
Programs	Kay Fulton*	642-3794
Website	Kate Stone*	381-1115
Education	Jodi Prout*	
Newsltr Eds & Distribution	Sara Ashline* <a href="mailto:baseditors@gmail.com">baseditors@gmail.com</a>	
Hospitality	Karen Griffing*	
Membership	Rosan Stover	
Publicity	Susie Duff*	961-5455
Rep. to MT	Dave Lockman	777-2929
Audubon	Becky Peters*	
Scholarship	Skip Horner*	642-6840
Aud. Adv.	Betsy Ballard*	
At large	Judy Hoy*	777-2487
At large	Thomas Arminio*	
At large	Susan Nelson*	
At large	Michelle Long*	

\* 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



Renew or Sign up  
for your  
National Audubon Membership at  
[Audubon.org](http://Audubon.org)