

Bitterroot AUDUBON



APRIL 2017

NEWSLETTER

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Bitterroot River Important Bird Area: A Bird's Perspective

By Kay Fulton

Imagine what a bird sees when flying over the Bitterroot River – lots of cottonwoods and pines, perfect for drilling for food or making nests; fish in small pools often created by beavers; dense bushes for cover; berries and other kinds of food, including mice and voles; and of course water. All of the above make for a perfect habitat for living, nesting, resting, foraging, and being safe. These and other factors led to the Bitterroot River's being designated in 2006 as one of the nation's "IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS" (IBAs), a program begun by National Audubon in 1995 resulting in over 2,000 IBAs nationwide and 42 in Montana.



Bitterroot River.

Courtesy Kay Fulton



Courtesy Sara Ashline

Red-naped Sapsucker.

Therefore, it came as a shock to Sherry Ritter, longtime Bitterroot Audubon member and wildlife ecologist, when this April 2008 *Missoulian* headline caught her attention: "Conservation Easement Fails to Save Copse of Cottonwoods." A landowner in Lolo had cut down 15 acres of cottonwood trees on an area that had a conservation easement with Missoula County. The landowner was quoted as saying he didn't know there was a conservation easement, but even worse, from Sherry's standpoint, was this, "I basically wanted to clean up my land, get all these trees and brush out of there and put in some good trees," noting that he'd wanted to plant maple trees.

Within a month, Sherry had set up the Important Bird Areas Committee within Bitterroot Audubon to work on increasing landowner awareness of the value of riparian habitat to birds. The committee focuses on one of two Important Bird Areas (IBAs)

in Ravalli County—the Bitterroot River IBA. This IBA covers more than 30,000 acres within the 500-year floodplain that runs 30 miles along the river from Woodside Crossing to just south of Lolo.

On April 18th at 7:00 P.M., Sherry, the Chairperson of the IBA Committee, will present a program on the Bitterroot IBA, its history, original process of qualifying the Bitterroot River for this designation, and its current status. In 2016, the committee and many volunteers did surveys on public property and some private lands within the IBA and found that many of the birds originally surveyed were doing well. However, there is at least one that isn't. Sherry will discuss what's so great about the IBA, what the committee and others are doing to protect and enhance bird habitat, and what's really needed to help that one species and others.



Courtesy Kelly Colgan

Red-eyed Vireo.

Sherry has a master's degree in wildlife ecology. She started her professional career in 1980 as an environmental biologist for Wyoming Game and Fish and then became the state's non-game bird biologist in 1986 shortly after the birth of her first son. In 1992 she, her husband Dan, and sons Dylan and Torrey moved to Idaho, where she worked as a biologist for Idaho Fish and Game and the University of Idaho. She continued that work after moving to Montana in 1997 and then started working for the US Forest Service in 2001. In 2007, she switched gears and got into Biomimicry, working for the for-profit Biomimicry Guild, then the non-profit Biomimicry Institute. She has focused much of her working career on non-game bird conservation and continues in retirement by volunteering for Bitterroot Audubon as chair of the Important Bird Area committee. She has served as Bitterroot Audubon president, board member, newsletter editor, field trip chair, and education chair. Sherry is on the board of the Bitter Root Water Forum.

Please join Bitterroot Audubon for this important and informative program, Monday, April 18th 7:00 P.M. at the Forest Service/Natural Resources Building, 1801 North 1st (North end of Hamilton, west side of HWY 93). Enter the building on the west side. The Public is invited. Contact Becky Peters for additional information (369-5210).

Letter from the President

By Becky Peters, BAS President

Okay everyone you have an assignment for the month of April, and this is to get you ready for the birds coming in May! Everybody get out your lap tops or cell phones and download eBird and get on eBird now. Last year Kate, Debbie and Eric trained some of us on how to use eBird for either submitting observations or for exploring data that other birders have submitted. It was a great training on how to get our feet wet. The main take away – play around with eBird and get familiar with it. So I try to play around every now and then and I am fascinated. Want to find out when a specific bird comes to our county? And where it was seen? And what has been the pattern of its comings and goings? Then start exploring eBird. I know I am a broken record about eBird but I also know that we all need reminding.



Go to eBird - ebird.org/content/ebird/

Try the View and Explore Data tab- - then Explore a Region – put in Ravalli, Montana, US
You can click on a date and see where a birder saw those 4 Pygmy Nuthatches or where Kate Stone saw 15 Western Meadowlarks! Look at the High Counts tab, and the Bar Charts tab. Check out Eric Rasmussen's total among the Top eBirders! (I couldn't figure out how he got 800 Gray-crowned Rosy-finches till I saw his photo when I opened Show All Details). For sure click on the Top Hot Spots too! Just keep on clicking on anything colored in blue. Don't forget the Bar Charts, and play around with the years and seasons (Really? A Cackling Goose in 2012?).

Now comes the really important part. Go back to the Home page and click on the My eBird tab and make your account. Done? Now go to the Submit Observations tab and submit that Robin you saw earlier today. Were you moving or standing still or was it just happenstance? You'll be putting in the time and distance, etc. eBird will take you through

all the steps. When you get to the species list you don't have to scroll through them all, just write in the bird you're looking for and put in the box the number that you saw. Answer Yes or No if it is a complete list of what you saw. Review your list and click Submit when you are done I know it seems like a lot of steps but it becomes quicker as you submit more observations. I do it from my smart phone now while I'm walking.

Why are you doing all this? Because we need your input. Scientists can't be everywhere, especially since there is less money now. So they rely on you – a Citizen Scientist! “The observations of each participant join those of others in an international network of eBird users. eBird then shares these observations with a global community of educators, land managers, ornithologists, and conservation biologists. In time these data will become the foundation for a better understanding of bird distribution across the western hemisphere and beyond. Any contribution made to eBird increases our understanding of the distribution, richness, and uniqueness of the biodiversity of our planet.” So practice, practice, practice for those birds here now and those coming very soon. And we thank you!

“Big Sky on the Big Screen” at Victor Performing Arts Center, April 22 - EARTH DAY Hosted by The Bitter Root Land Trust

The Bitter Root Land Trust's film-fest— “Big Sky on the Big Screen” —is a first-time EVER evening for viewing 3 film presentations: *Bitterroot Valley Winter Eagle Study*, presented by Kate Stone with Bitterroot Audubon; *The High Divide*, presented by Heart of the Rockies; and *On the Shoulders of Giants*, presented by Bitter Root Land Trust and Montana Association of Land Trusts. The three presentations explore working lands, large landscapes, Bitterroot Valley eagle behavior, and the story of private land conservation in Montana over the last 40 years. Each presentation will leave you feeling more connected and in touch with the beauty and splendor of these wide open spaces we call home. If you "heart" Montana, you won't want to miss this wonderful, touching, cinematic evening at the Victor Performing Arts Center.

Doors Open: 5:30pm

Films start: 6:00pm --*The High Divide*

6:30pm--*Bitterroot Valley Winter Eagle Study*

7:00pm--*On the Shoulders of Giants*

After this FREE community show, join us over at

Cowboy Troy's at 7:30pm for food and drink. A generous portion of the proceeds from food and drink sales at Cowboy Troy's will go directly to help protect open, working lands in the Bitterroot Valley. JOIN US!

"Sparrow Identification" Workshop

By Micki Long

You hear rustling in the bushes. You finally locate the little bird in your binoculars. But it's a sparrow, and you can only guess at what kind. So join us at Bitterroot Audubon's Sparrow ID Workshop, consisting of an evening class and a morning field trip. Debbie Leick will teach us to identify, by sight and sound, sparrows that breed in the Bitterroot Valley, such as Brewer's, Chipping, Clay-colored, Grasshopper, Lark, Savannah, Song, and Vesper. If time permits, she will also cover migrants, winter residents, and other sparrows sometimes seen in the area. The next morning, Debbie will guide us as we practice our new skills.

The evening workshop will take place on Friday, June 2, from 7:00-8:30 p.m. at Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge's Visitor Center (4567 Wildfowl Ln, Stevensville). The field trip will take place on Saturday, June 3, from 7:00-11:00 a.m. in the Florence area.

While there is no limit to the number who can attend the evening workshop, the field trip is limited to 11 participants, so register early! To register, please contact Micki Long at mickilong@gmail.com.

"Birding by Ear" Workshop

By Micki Long

Many of us cannot identify a bird that we hear but don't see. To help, Bitterroot Audubon Society is offering a Birding-by-Ear Workshop, consisting of an evening class and one of three morning field trips. The evening workshop will take place on Friday, June 16, from 7:00-8:30 p.m. at Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge's Visitor Center (4567 Wildfowl Ln, Stevensville). Two field trips, one led by Sherry Ritter and one by Deb Goslin, will take place on Saturday, June 17, from 7:00-9:30 a.m. in the Stevensville area. An additional field trip will be offered by Sherry, on Monday, June 19, from 7:00-9:30 a.m. in the Hamilton area.

Birders of all skill levels are welcome at the evening workshop, but the field trips are best suited for those who can identify common birds of the

area, such as red-winged blackbirds, common ravens, northern flickers, black-capped chickadees, nuthatches, tree swallows, and downy woodpeckers.

While there is no limit to the number who can attend the evening workshop, the field trips are limited to 8 participants each, so register early! Please register for only one field trip so that as many people as possible can go out with our experienced leaders. To register, please contact Micki Long at mickilong@gmail.com.

2017 Welcome Back Waterfowl Day Recap

By Judy Hoy, Welcome Back Waterfowl Day Coordinator

At Welcome Back Waterfowl Day on April 1, 2017, at the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge, people and birds enjoyed a beautiful spring day. Participants reported observing a total of 29 bird species, somewhat fewer than usual, white-tailed deer, a muskrat and one Common Garter Snake. Birds seen include Ring-necked Pheasant, Trumpeter Swan, Bald Eagle, Turkey Vulture, Red-tailed Hawk, Northern Harrier, Great Horned Owl, Sandhill Crane, Killdeer, Great Blue Heron, Canada Goose, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Wood Duck, Ring-necked duck Common Golden Eye, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser and American Coot. Other birds we saw included Red-winged Blackbirds, Western Meadowlark, American Robin, Tree Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, European Starling, Northern Flicker, Common Raven and Black-billed Magpie.

We very much thank the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge, with a special thank you to Bob Danley for doing publicity, Kay Fulton, who furnished her table and Audubon members who brought treats and provided expertise with finding and identifying the birds. Most of all, thank you to all who came to view and learn about Montana's wonderful wild birds and welcome the migrating birds back to the Bitterroot Valley. If anyone has a photo to enter in the photo contest, send them to Micki Long <mickilong@gmail.com>.

Thank you so very much to this year's sponsors for Audubon Adventures!

By Jodi Prout

We now have 14 classes sponsored and that provides over 300 students lessons about birds, habitat, and environmental issues facing their survival. We greatly appreciate the generosity and support of our members. It would be great to see

you out at the Bitterroot Audubon booth at the Teller Wildlife Refuge Youth Expo. on Saturday May, 13th from 10am-3pm. If you might be interested in joining us at the education booth for a fun filled day, please let me know at jodiprout@gmail.com.

What's the story, Story?

By Jim Story

Question: How do birds incubate their eggs?

Answer: Because birds are warm-blooded, the eggs must be warmed for development to occur. With a few exceptions, birds warm the eggs by transferring heat from their bodies to the eggs. But, because feathers on adult birds are very efficient at preventing heat loss, the feather must be removed from their belly to enable heat transfer. Most birds automatically lose the feathers on their belly during the egg-laying period, while geese and ducks pluck the feathers from their belly. This bare area, called a brood patch, develops extra blood vessels that bring warm blood close to the skin surface. Songbirds have one brood patch in the middle of the belly, while shorebirds have one on each side, and gulls and game birds have three brood patches.

Local birding expert Jim Story answers your questions about birds and their habits. Jim welcomes your questions at jstory4689@gmail.com.

Bitterroot Audubon Spring Potluck

By Becky Peters

We will have a potluck before our May 15th meeting! You don't have to be a member to join us. Bring a friend! This meeting will be at the Lee Metcalf Refuge so we can even do some birding beforehand. Look for more details in our May newsletter.

Highway Clean-Up, May 18, at 4pm. New Location: Bell Crossing!

By Skip Horner

Join us for our semi-annual highway clean-up. A busy Winter on the highway means plenty of trash out there, so please come out to help our valley stay attractive. Meet at Bell Crossing on the west side of Highway 93 at 4PM on May 18. This is not the same place we've cleaned up before. We have a new section of highway.

News and Notes

Calling all Bitterroot Photographers!

By Becky Peters

We are proud to announce that Bitterroot Audubon is organizing another calendar, a 2018 calendar! We are delighted to be doing this again as people have been requesting our one of a kind calendar... The generosity of our local photographers has helped increase our Education, Scholarship and Conservation Funds with the sales of our very successful 2013, 2014 and 2015 BAS Calendars. If you would like to be part of this wonderful process, please contribute any photo(s) you have taken in the Bitterroot of our migrating and resident birds. Be sure to go to our website for more information: bitterrootaudubon.org. The website has a list of birds BAS would like to have in next year's calendar. You can submit the photographs from now on up to April 15th. They need to be extremely sharp photos, a minimum of 300-600 dpi, with dimensions in an 8 1/2" W by 9 1/2" H format. Send your photos and any questions to bitterrootcalendar@gmail.com. As before, this is only for Bitterroot residents, showing our Bitterroot birds and made in the Bitterroot by Bitterroot Audubon!! Our Bitterroot birds thank you!

Chapter Members Renewal Deadline

If you are a BAS chapter member, your membership fee (\$15) was due on 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.

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 April 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

- Apr 15:** Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT, 10AM-12PM.
- Apr 17:** "Bitterroot River IBA Update," Audubon Meeting, Forest Service/DNRC Building, Hamilton, MT, 7PM, Board Mtg. 5PM.
- Apr 22:** The Bitter Root Land Trust film-fest— "Big Sky on the Big Screen," Hosted by The Bitter Root Land Trust, Victor PAC, 5:30-7:30PM
- May 15:** "Pikas in Montana: 45 Years of Research," Audubon Meeting, Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT, 7PM, Board Mtg., 5PM.
- May 20:** Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT, 10AM-12PM.
- June 2-3:** "Sparrow ID" Workshop and Field Trip, Stevensville/ Florence. To register, please contact Micki Long at mickilong@gmail.com.
- Jun 9-11:** "Wings Across the Big Sky Festival," Great Falls, MT. More details to be announced.
- Jun 16, 17, & 19:** "Birding by Ear" Workshop and Field Trips, Various locations in the Bitterroot Valley. To register, please contact Micki Long at mickilong@gmail.com.

Bird Shots



Red-breasted Nuthatch.

Courtesy Sara Ashline

BITTERROOT AUDUBON
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At large	Thomas Arminio*	
At large	Susan Nelson*	

* Board Member

EMAIL: contactus@bitterrootaudubon.org

WEBSITE: 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



Audubon

Renew or Sign up
for your
National Audubon Membership at
Audubon.org



MARCH FOR SCIENCE — EARTH DAY 2017 —

Bitterroot Marchers meet at American Legion Park

(across the street from Hamilton City Hall)
9:30am to 12:00 (or thereabouts)

On April 22, 2017, join marchers in cities across the world for an unprecedented gathering of people standing together to acknowledge and voice the critical role that science plays in each of our lives.

For more information email montanaks@gmail.com or charly.hillery@gmail.com



wings
across the big sky

June 9-11, 2017 Great Falls, Montana

The annual Bird Festival is fast approaching. You should have received your registration brochure by now, so please register early by mailing the registration page or go online at www.mtaudubon.org. Field trips are already filling up—while still plenty of options available, but you may not get your first choice. If you're registering online, you only choose one field trip per day as the system will not allow you to register for a trip that is full; if you are registering by mail, be sure to include 1st, 2nd and 3rd choices.

Rooms have been blocked at the Best Western Plus Heritage Inn. Call 1-406-761-1900 or 1-800-548-8256 and mention you're with Montana Audubon to get the discounted rate.

Each year Montana Audubon recognizes outstanding individuals who work for the conservation and protection of birds and other wildlife by presenting **Awards** at the Saturday evening banquet. We are currently seeking nominations in the following categories: Lifetime Achievement Award, Educator of the Year, Conservationist of the Year, Citizen Scientist of the Year, and Special Achievement Award. To make a nomination, download a nomination form at www.mtaudubon.org/about/awards.html. Nominations are due at the office by May 19, 2017. Mail completed forms to *Montana Audubon, PO Box 595, Helena MT 59624*.

Register soon and join us in Great Falls in June. Check out your brochure for Upper Missouri Breaks pre- and post-trips, email the chapter at umbaudubon@gmail.com, or call either of the following for more information: Candace Beery 907-306-6320 or Kay Silk 406-453-0545.