

# Bitterroot AUDUBON



JANUARY 2017

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 31, NO. 5

## The Veracruz River of Raptors Project

*By Steve Hoffman*

**Bitterroot Audubon is honored to host a special program on Raptors by Steve Hoffman, whose entire 38-year career has been dedicated to the conservation of wildlife and the study of raptors.**

Steve will present an overview of the Veracruz River of Raptors Project (VRR) near the Gulf Coast in eastern Mexico. This project is designed to monitor the largest raptor migration on Earth (4-6 million raptors of 20+ species observed each autumn). As co-founder of the project, Steve will describe how VRR was launched, as well as key findings of this 25-year raptor population monitoring effort. Finally, Steve will highlight his upcoming fall 2017 birding tour to Veracruz, focusing on opportunities to enjoy this stunning migration spectacle, as well as many other exciting birding experiences in central and southern Veracruz (300+ bird species possible on this trip!).



*Broad-winged Hawk.*

*Courtesy Steve Hoffman*

Steve recently retired as Executive Director of Montana Audubon, where he served in this capacity from 2006 to 2016. Along with all of his responsibilities, he also managed to share his knowledge, love and enthusiasm for raptors through workshops and field trips for many of the local Audubon Chapters. Anyone who has been with Steve at any of these events will attest to the joy he brings to this field.



*Courtesy Steve Hoffman*

*Laughing Falcon.*

After 10 years of government service (mostly as an Endangered Species Biologist for the US Fish & Wildlife Service in the American Southwest), Steve founded HawkWatch International, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to monitoring and conserving hawks, eagles and other raptors in the West. Steve moved from his birth state of Pennsylvania to Bozeman in 2004. He has authored more than 35 scientific papers on raptor migration ecology & conservation and endangered species management. Steve has given dozens of presentations on the identification, migration and conservation of raptors to diverse audiences throughout the US. He earned his M.S. degree in Wildlife Ecology from Utah State University.



*Migrating Swainson's Hawks.*

**Join Bitterroot Audubon to hear Steve and to learn about this fascinating project Monday, January 16<sup>th</sup> 7:00P.M. at the Forest Service/Natural Resources building, 1801 North 1<sup>st</sup> (north end of Hamilton), west side of HWY 93. Enter the building on the west side. The Public is invited. Contact Kay Fulton for more information (642-3794).**

**Letter from the President**

*By Becky Peters, BAS President*



Welcome to 2017!

My hope for all of us is that we live in peace, now and in the future. Here are some New Year's quotes I particularly enjoy:

“Let our New Year's resolution be this: we will be there for one another as fellow members of humanity, in the finest sense of the word.” Goran Persson (Swedish politician)

“I hope that in this year to come, you make mistakes. Because if you are making mistakes, then you are making new things, trying new things, learning, living, pushing yourself, changing yourself, changing your world. You're doing things you've never done before, and more importantly, you're doing something.” Neil Gaiman (British author) “Write it on your heart that every day is the best day in the year.” Ralph Waldo Emerson

As to the New Year for BAS we will have a “beginning” but it won't be something entirely new for us. We will be starting the process for another stunning calendar, our 2018 BAS calendar! That means we begin asking local photographers for high

quality photographs of our local birds. Since we have now had three successful calendars we are looking for birds that we have not had in our calendars as of yet. Please check out our Bitterroot Audubon webpage <http://www.bitterrootaudubon.org/> for the list of birds we are prioritizing. Be aware the requirements are that photographers be Bitterroot Valley photographers and the pictures are to have been taken in the Bitterroot. The photos submitted to us become our property - so thank you very much for your donation! We need the submissions to be full resolution jpeg files.

We will need the photos to be sent to us this February, March and April. Keep your eye open for more detailed information about where to send them in our notices in the Ravalli Republic, Bitterroot Star and our BAS website. Our calendars are not only stunning but they are educational. One of our priorities is that adults and children learn about the birds in their valley. With the generosity of local photographers we have been extremely successful in years past. So get your camera and get out there! Thank you so much!

More later,  
Becky Peters

**Bitterroot Valley Winter Eagle Project- Pint Night January 26**

*By Kate Stone*

The Bitterroot Valley Winter Eagle Project is in full swing, with carcasses and cameras set at more than 10 locations throughout the valley. During the month of January, we are focusing on setting up more camera stations, raising additional funds, and getting people involved in image processing. We'd like to invite you to join us for an information and fund-raising Pint Night at the Stevi Cafe, on Thursday, January 26<sup>th</sup>, from 5:30 to 8:00. The event is free and open to the public. The Cafe will have food and beverages available for purchase, with a portion of the proceeds going towards our project. We'll have information stations on Bitterroot Valley eagle research, volunteer opportunities, and our fund-raising effort. You'll learn firsthand how YOU can help us process the thousands of images we're capturing. We'll also have t-shirts available for purchase. Meet some scientists!! Learn how to identify young Eagles!! Enjoy the 12 local brews on tap!! Hope to see you there! For more information, check the Bitterroot

Audubon website, Facebook page, or contact Kate Stone (381-1115).



Courtesy Kate Stone

Web-cam photo capture. Bald Eagles and Common Ravens.

So far this project has earned financial support from Bitterroot Audubon, Montana Audubon, National Audubon Society, and the Rapp Family Foundation. THANK YOU!! We are generating literally THOUSANDS of amazing scavenger pictures. Want to learn more? Join us at our January 26<sup>th</sup> Pint Night.

### 30th Hamilton Christmas Bird Count 2016

#### Recap

By John Ormiston

December 17, 2017: A day to remember for the 30<sup>th</sup> annual Hamilton CBC. Brutally cold, the record cold day for the count, and still 17 hardy birders gathered at the Teller to count birds on an absolutely gorgeous, sunny, cold day. The high for the day was -4°F, somewhat after most of us had gone home or were counting birds from the relative comfort of automobiles. We saw 66 species, including the Rusty Blackbird, a new bird for the count and our 131<sup>th</sup> species. We saw 7,843 birds, about 400 above average, in spite of waterfowl numbers being down by about 1,200 birds. We recorded a record high number of Eurasian-collared Doves, 546, and Red-tailed Hawks, 98, and above average numbers of California Quail, Bald Eagles, Bohemian Waxwings, Dark-eyed Juncos and House Sparrows. We've now seen 21 species only once and 28 every year (we missed Green-winged Teal for the first time).

We had 17 feeder watchers contribute their "through the window" watching skills to add about 5 species to the count.

It was a great day for raptors, we saw all of the species (except Golden Eagles) that normally winter here, including Prairie Falcon, Merlin, and Kestrel, and the Accipiters for only the eighth time. We saw 7,843 birds, 34% of them waterfowl (below the average of 49%).

All in all, it was a great day, thanks to those who spent their day helping add to the database. Time to look forward to the 31st annual Hamilton CBC and another chili and Oreos lunch, December 16, 2017. Special thanks to Colleen Powell for coordinating Feeder Watchers and to Bill Good for the outstanding chili and Oreos lunch, both for the 30<sup>th</sup> time. The Teller has hosted our gathering each year of the Hamilton CBC. Look for complete results of the 117<sup>th</sup> Annual National Audubon Christmas Bird Count at <http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count>.

## Calendar of Events

**Jan 16-** Audubon Meeting, Forest Service/DNRC Building, Hamilton, MT, 7PM, Board Mtg. 5PM

**Jan 21-** Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT, 10AM-12PM.

**Jan 26-** Winter Eagle Project Pint Night, Stevi Cafe, 5:30-8:00PM.

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

**Feb 17-20-** Great Backyard Bird Count

**Feb 20-** Audubon Meeting, Forest Service/DNRC Building, Hamilton, MT, 7PM, Board Mtg. 5PM

**Jun 9-11, 2017-** Wings Across the Big Sky Festival, Great Falls, MT. More details to be announced.

### What's the story, Story?

By Jim Story

**Question:** *How intelligent are birds?*

**Answer:** Watching a male robin continually attack its reflection on a car hubcap or a reflective window leads one to believe that birds are not very intelligent. Much of bird behavior is instinctive, but increasing evidence suggests birds are smarter than previously thought. Birds do learn, often by experience. For example, older birds are generally better foragers than young, less-experienced birds. Another example is how Blue Jays learn to avoid distasteful Monarch Butterflies and similarly colored (but palatable) butterfly species after sampling a Monarch. Crows, parrots, pigeons and other birds have shown impressive problem-solving

## 2016 Hamilton Christmas Bird Count Results

SPECIES NAME	COUNT	SPECIES NAME	COUNT
GREAT BLUE HERON	8	BELTED KINGFISHER	5
CANADA GOOSE	1942	DOWNY WOODPECKER	22
WOOD DUCK	2	HAIRY WOODPECKER	8
MALLARD	409	NORTHERN FLICKER	87
NORTHERN PINTAIL	1	HORNED LARK	30
AMERICAN WIGEON	3	STELLER'S JAY	1
CANVASBACK	3	BLUE JAY	3
RING-NECKED DUCK	5	BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE	293
LESSER SCAUP	10	AMERICAN CROW	55
COMMON GOLDENEYE	20	COMMON RAVEN	127
HOODED MERGANSER	1	BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE	149
COMMON MERGANSER	15	RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH	10
BALD EAGLE	48	WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH	7
NORTHERN HARRIER	11	PYGMY NUTHATCH	2
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK	6	PACIFIC WREN	3
COOPER'S HAWK	2	AMERICAN DIPPER	4
NORTHERN GOSHAWK	2	TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE	6
RED-TAILED HAWK	98	AMERICAN ROBIN	4
ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK	56	BOHEMIAN WAXWING	975
AMERICAN KESTREL	13	CEDAR WAXWING	26
MERLIN	1	NORTHERN SHRIKE	5
PRAIRIE FALCON	1	EUROPEAN STARLING	311
CALIFORNIA QUAIL	382	AMERICAN TREE SPARROW	35
RING-NECKED PHEASANT	30	SONG SPARROW	26
WILD TURKEY	65	DARK-EYED JUNCO TOTAL	232
AMERICAN COOT	20	RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD	163
KILLDEER	1	RUSTY BLACKBIRD	1
WILSON'S SNIPE	1	HOUSE FINCH	417
ROCK PIGEON	98	RED CROSSBILL	15
MOURNING DOVE	155	COMMON REDPOLL	1
EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE	546	PINE SISKIN	11
GREAT-HORNED OWL	5	AMERICAN GOLDFINCH	77
LONG-EARED OWL	4	HOUSE SPARROW	780
		<b>Total birds</b>	<b>7843</b>
		<b>TOTAL SPECIES</b>	<b>66</b>



capabilities. But, the extent to which bird intelligence replaces instinct needs further study.

*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).*

## News and Notes

### Winter Raptor Survey Routes

This year we are trying a new type of survey for people interesting in documenting winter raptors. We will be continuing our surveys on a 60-mile route at the north end of the valley- from Lolo south to Stevensville, on both the west and east sides. The route will be broken up into short sections, and people can survey any section(s) they want, any time they want, and as many or as few times as they want. All we ask is that you feel reasonably confident in identifying winter raptors, and that you are willing to record and report your birds using eBird. To participate, please contact Eric Rasmussen ([erasmussen@mpgranch.com](mailto:erasmussen@mpgranch.com)).

### 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 January 21st 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.

## Bird Shots



*Bald Eagles and Black-billed Magpies scavenge an Elk carcass, Hamilton, MT, December 2016.*

*Courtesy Barbara Garten*

BITTERROOT AUDUBON  
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### 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>	
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Audubon	Becky Peters*	
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Aud. Adv.	Betsy Ballard*	
At large	Judy Hoy*	777-2487
At large	Thomas Arminio*	
At large	Susan Nelson*	
At large	Michelle Long*	

\* Board Member

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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)