

# Bitterroot AUDUBON



MAY 2017

NEWSLETTER

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## Pikas in the Bitterroot and the Effects of Climate Change

By Kay Fulton

Well-known wildlife biologist Kerry Foresman will present a program on Pikas, those cute little creatures one hears up in the high country but seldom sees, on May 15th at the Bitterroot Audubon May meeting. Although Kerry has done extensive research on mammals of Montana for over 40 years, he will focus his talk on the Pikas specifically in the Bitterroot Mountains.



Courtesy Kerry Foresman

*Pika in Talus.*

“The Pika (or Cony) is a small rabbit which inhabits talus slopes of mountainous regions throughout western North America from New Mexico and California to British Columbia. It is most commonly found at higher elevations where temperatures are cooler and prefers alpine and subalpine habitats. It has evolved in these regions over the past 500,000 years, and over this time, as temperatures rose after the last glacial period, this species became isolated in montane habitats and thoroughly adapted to this environment. So much so, that it is now easily stressed by warmer temperatures; 75° F can be life threatening and at these temperatures animals will

quickly retreat to the cooler environment under the talus. Their small size, which limits their dispersal capabilities, their preference for higher elevation rock slopes which are patchily distributed, and their heat-sensitive physiological constraints have not only isolated their populations but have made them particularly sensitive to climate changes which are now occurring across the world. In order to determine what effect predicted climate changes may have on Pika populations in Montana accurate baseline population distributions need to be obtained.



Courtesy Shannon Hilty

*Pika habitat.*

The Bitterroot Mountains have historically supported Pikas, with the first observation documented in the Montana Natural Heritage Database recorded on June 7, 1910. Additional records were recorded in Bass Creek this same year and over the following years this database has increased. In the 1940's Dr. Philip L. Wright, the mammologist at the University of Montana, often traveled throughout this mountain range and added many records, as have other individuals up to the present. Unfortunately, before the availability of

GPS devices, descriptions of earlier sightings were often very sparse so that it has been difficult to identify their exact locations. Also, no standardized assessments of these populations were made so no true baselines are available.

Because no firm overview of these populations in the Bitterroot were available Dr. Foresman decided to initiate studies to create such a baseline so that subsequent monitoring over the next 50-100 years can provide meaningful information on population trends and effects of future climate changes. To this end, he worked with an honors undergraduate student at UM, Shannon Hilty. Their efforts will support more recent attempts being made to pull together all distributional information on this species across the inter-mountain region, these being led by Dr. Erik Beever of the USGS Northern Rocky Mountain Science Center in Bozeman.”

Kerry R. Foresman is an Emeritus Professor of Biology and Wildlife Biology at The University of Montana (UM). He retired in 2013 after 35 years, the past 30 of which have been at UM. His research primarily focuses on the ecology of small mammal species (shrews, bats, Pikas, rodents) as well as mid-level carnivores (e.g., American Marten, Fisher, River Otters, and Swift Fox). He has worked extensively in Southeast Asia, particularly in the Tibetan Plateau of China, the mountains of Taiwan, and Bhutan. He is the author of *Mammals of Montana*, the first comprehensive, illustrated account of ecology, behavior, distribution and reproduction of all Montana mammals, published by Mountain Press Publishing Company in Missoula.

**Join the Bitterroot Audubon Society Monday, May 15<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 P.M. at the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge Visitors' Center to hear this amazing speaker and his fascinating topic. The Refuge is located north of Stevensville on Wildfowl Lane, just off of the Eastside Highway. The public is invited. For additional information contact Becky Peters (369-5210).**

### **Letter from the President**

*By Becky Peters, BAS President*

I don't mean to "bug" you but last spring I wrote about the importance of planting the right type of bushes and trees that birds like for their nuts and berries, but now consider the importance of what creeps and crawls in those trees. Our birds are really needing insects for protein right



now, during their breeding season. You know that native plants and shrubs have the fruits but did you know that 96% of our land birds rely on insects to feed their young? And as birds are migrating earlier they are not finding the insects they need. Those fancy non-native plants in some nurseries won't help our birds so please don't plant them. Plant the ones that will bring the insects.

Our state's bird, the Western Meadowlark, scratches in the soil for beetles, cutworms, caterpillars, grasshoppers and spiders.

The same goes for other ground foragers like the Dark-eyed Junco. So don't rid your garden of the plant debris. Let the downed branches and leaves and cuttings rot into the soil.

For those birds high up in the trees like the Western Tanager their main source of food is insects. You'll find them needing Pine and Douglas Fir. The Orioles love their Cottonwoods; the Grosbeaks love their Oaks. The oak trees, willows, poplars and spruces are ripe homes for caterpillars, ants, bees, beetles and aphids. Can't you just see the birds thriving because you planted native foliage that will be sources of nourishment for years? Juicy caterpillars, yum, yum!

For more help on the right plantings for specific birds go to [audubon.org/native-plants](http://audubon.org/native-plants). Click on their Native Plant Database. Put in your zip code and then start making your choices of native plants for your area, the resources they offer to birds and the type of birds you would like to attract. Then go forth and plant! Enjoy how you are helping the birds.

**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 that there is 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. We will supply high-visibility vests and trash-bags for everyone. Bring your own gloves. Please contact Skip Horner at 642-6840 with any questions.

### **BAS Potluck!**

*By Becky Peters, BAS President*

Everyone join us on May 15th for a Bitterroot Audubon potluck before the regular program. Bring a dish to share with everyone and bring a friend too! "Bitterrooters" have the best potlucks! BAS will

supply the plates, utensils, beverages and cups. Arrive at Lee Metcalf Refuge covered pavilion behind the visitor's center at 5:45. We'll eat and socialize from 6 to 6:45 then go in by 7:00 for our program. You can even come early and do some birding. We'd like to hear about the birds you see. Come hungry!

### **"Big Hole Birding Trip" on May 29, 2017**

*By Sherry Ritter*

Sherry Ritter will lead a birding trip to the Big Hole Valley on Memorial Day. This fun trip gets into diverse habitats such as forest, riparian, sagebrush, meadows, and ponds. To get to the Big Hole, we need to leave early, 6 AM from Stevensville, and we'll pick up other people as we head south. We'll return to the Bitterroot by mid-afternoon. If you want to come or have questions, please contact Sherry at [sherryritternature@gmail.com](mailto:sherryritternature@gmail.com) or 370-4778. This trip is limited to the number of people who will fit into three cars.

### **"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](mailto: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](mailto:mickilong@gmail.com).

### **Exhibit: "A Walk Through Time"**

*By Micki Long*



Imagine talking a walk in which every step takes you back in time a million years to when planet Earth was formed. The "Walk Through Time" is a set of 95 illustrative panels set up outside on a 1 mile walkway. The 3' x 4' panels, each on a weather proof stand, depict the evolution of life on earth from 4.6 billion years ago to the present day. It was originally set up as a one mile walk where one foot = 1 million years. The first 40 panels are 100 feet apart, then, starting with the Cambrian explosion of

life at around 600 million years ago, they get a lot closer together as we approach the present. The experience of walking the time line is important for people to realize what we are a part of - this awesome, miraculous explosion of life on planet Earth.

The Walk Through Time exhibit was imagined by physicist Sidney Liebes who wanted to inspire us with the magnificent story of life on earth and provide a cautionary tale of how human actions today threaten earth's diversity and stability. Liebes completed the project for Earth Day 1997 after retiring from Hewlett-Packard Labs, and the exhibit was funded by Hewlett-Packard and has been passed on to various communities since then. In addition, the Walk is beautifully illustrated in a book by Liebes and two co-authors. You can also see the Walk Through Time online at

[http://www.globalcommunity.org/wtt/walk\\_menu/](http://www.globalcommunity.org/wtt/walk_menu/)

The exhibit is one of only 3 in the world. Jill Davies of Sustainable Living Systems heard about the exhibit and that it might be available to be moved to a new home. She connected with Vicki Watson, professor of Environmental Studies at the University of Montana, and arranged for the exhibit to be gifted to UM. Then Jill did a fund raising effort and with the help of many donations, including a hefty one from the BAS, was able to bring the exhibit, housed in an enclosed trailer to Montana. It was first set up around the Oval at UM for Earth Week 2017, and during the first few weeks of May, it will be set up at the Council on Aging property on Old Corvallis Rd., about a half mile north of the Hamilton fairgrounds. There is a wide mowed walk and parking area behind the CoA building. The weekend of May 20 is when the 7 state Rock and Mineral Society Federation show will be at the fairgrounds. Jill is hoping to reach teachers who would take students to the exhibit.

Here is a link to the computer version of the walk [http://www.globalcommunity.org/wtt/walk\\_photos/print\\_pages/index.htm](http://www.globalcommunity.org/wtt/walk_photos/print_pages/index.htm)

### **Help us with our Winter Eagle Project!!**

*By Kate Stone*

If you've enjoyed following the status of the Bitterroot Valley Winter Eagle Project, you can now help us with processing all of the thousands of



*Courtesy Kate Stone*

images we've collected. All of the images are posted on the public website [Zooniverse](https://www.zooniverse.org/), a platform for crowd-sourced information processing. On this site you'll find all sorts of projects- from counting penguins, to mapping galaxies, to transcribing war diaries. To help with our project, you will first need to register as a user on the site. Then search for [Western Montana Wildlife](#). Our project already has 2,500 people from all over the world helping- please join us!! We will be having Zooniverse training sessions throughout the summer. Please check our [calendar](#) and [Facebook page](#) for dates. Look for the Western Montana Icon on Zooniverse!



**WESTERN MONTANA  
WILDLIFE**

## What's the story, Story?

By Jim Story

### **Question:** What is meant by bird piracy?

**Answer:** Birds engage in a lot of thievery. They steal mates, nesting cavities, nesting material, eggs, and food. But, piracy among birds generally refers to the act of one bird harassing another bird for the sole purpose of procuring the latter bird's food. Jaegers, Skuas, and Frigatebirds are effective pirates, gaining most of their food by attacking other birds in mid-air, making them surrender their food. Piracy is common among some raptors, and some dabbling ducks will steal food from coots. But, most bird species don't engage in piracy. Apparently, procurement of their own food is more efficient than risking the dangers of attacking other birds.

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

### 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](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 May 20<sup>th</sup>, June 17<sup>th</sup>, July 15<sup>th</sup>, August 19<sup>th</sup>, and September 16<sup>th</sup>, 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



Courtesy Michelle Long  
Great Horned Owl, Stevensville, MT. September 2016.

## Calendar of Events

- 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.
- May 29:** Big Hole Birding Trip with Sherry Ritter. Contact Sherry at [sherryritternature@gmail.com](mailto:sherryritternature@gmail.com) or 370-4778.
- Jun 2-3:** "Sparrow ID" Workshop and Field Trip, Stevensville/ Florence. To register, please contact Micki Long at [mickilong@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:mickilong@gmail.com).
- Jun 17:** Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT, 10AM-12PM.
- Jul 15:** Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT, 10AM-12PM.
- Aug 19:** Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT, 10AM-12PM.
- Sep 16:** Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT, 10AM-12PM.
- Sep 18:** Audubon Meeting, Location and Program TBA.

*The Beautiful  
Bitterroot Audubon Calendar  
IS BACK!*



**NOW WE NEED TO SELL, SELL, SELL!! WE NEED VOLUNTEERS TO HELP AT THE FARMER'S MARKET IN JULY, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER AND TWO DAYS IN OCTOBER. THAT MEANS 16 DAYS X 2 SHIFTS EACH X 2 PEOPLE PER SHIFT = 64 PEOPLE. PLEASE CONTACT KAY FULTON IF YOU CAN HELP ONE SHIFT, SEVERAL SHIFTS, OR A REGULAR SHIFT THROUGHOUT THE SUMMER AT 360-8664 OR [kayinmt@cybernet1.com](mailto:kayinmt@cybernet1.com)**

**THANKS!**



wings  
across the big sky

June 9-11, 2017 Great Falls, Montana

Montana Audubon will conclude the marking of its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year with a “birthday celebration” at the June Bird Festival. Join us and learn how Montana Audubon began as a fledgling organization and hear highlights from four decades of conservation successes! David Ringer, Chief Network Officer with National Audubon, will share insights on bird protection and how he engages people with practical conservation solutions in his keynote address, “Protecting Birds and the Places they Need: Today and Tomorrow.”

Upper Missouri Breaks Audubon (UMBA) has worked steadfastly to bring extra fun to this year’s festival with a Bird Calling contest, local vendors and great custom field trips. There will be many beautiful and creative desserts to choose from for our Dessert Auction, so come prepared to bid on one to enjoy at the banquet.

UMBA has also put together a diverse roster of field trips – but they are filling up fast, so please register as soon as possible. You can do so by mail, or online at [www.mtaudubon.org](http://www.mtaudubon.org). Also—if staying overnight, be sure to reserve your rooms at the Best Western Plus Heritage Inn by calling 1-406-761-1900 or 1-800-548-8256. (Please mention that you are part of the Montana Audubon Bird Festival to get the group rate.)

Contact Montana Audubon at (406) 443-3949 if you have any questions about the festival or registration.

#### Recognize Your Peers!

Each year Montana Audubon recognizes individuals who work for the conservation and protection of birds and other wildlife by presenting **Awards** at the Saturday evening Bird Festival 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 from [www.mtaudubon.org/about/awards/](http://www.mtaudubon.org/about/awards/). Nominations are due by May 19, 2017. Mail completed forms to *Montana Audubon, PO Box 595, Helena MT 59624*.

BITTERROOT AUDUBON  
PO BOX 326  
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*	
Website	Kate Stone*	381-1115
Education	Jodi Prout*	509-592-0269

jodipprout@gmail.com

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*	
Field Trips	Michelle Long*	
At large	Judy Hoy*	777-2487
At large	Thomas Arminio*	
At large	Susan Nelson*	

\* 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



# Audubon

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