

Bitterroot AUDUBON



NOVEMBER 2017

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 32, NO. 3

SEA TURTLES: THEIR PLIGHT AND CONSERVATION

By Kathleen Sheard, Wildlife Glass Artist & Sea Turtle Advocate



Courtesy Bill From

Basking Green Sea Turtle on Black and Tan sand. Kona January 2015.

The November Bitterroot Audubon program melds together the crisis facing Sea Turtles in the oceans around the world and one woman's unique effort to aid in their conservation. Kathleen Sheard, a Bitterroot resident who is a nationally recognized wildlife glass artist, describes herself as "a mountain woman and wildlife advocate with an ocean soul."

She became interested in Sea Turtles in the early 2000s. She discovered that all seven species of Sea Turtles are threatened or endangered, with one species, the Kemp's Ridley, being critically endangered. Sea turtle habitat has been quickly deteriorating due to oil spills, plastics, toxins, shrimp boats without sea turtle excluder nets, third world countries harvesting sea turtle eggs and killing sea turtles, humans running four wheelers over marked sea turtle nests, beach lights left on during nesting season, beach furniture left on beaches, and other man made obstacles contributing to the death of sea turtles and other marine wildlife. Sea turtle hospitals, refuges and conservation organizations have been established around the world to aid in their rescue, rehabilitation and conservation. Kathleen started volunteering on the "Alligator Point Sea Turtle Patrol" in Florida in

2008. Her first experiences included drowned sea turtle nest eggs due to tropical storms in 2009. Then came the BP Gulf Oil Spill in 2010. Her focus went from doing "pretty" cast glass sea turtles to the environmental degradation of the sea turtle species.

Kathleen began to create an educational project which grew into a multi-medium conservation sculpture entitled, Cycle of Life: Sea Turtle Glass Sculpture – Environmental Art Education Project. It incorporates over 60 multiple glass cast and fused components on a custom built 5'x6'x21" wooden base. Three years in the making, the cast glass sculpture includes a life-sized mother Loggerhead Sea Turtle, a fused and slumped sea turtle nest with cast eggs and hatchlings of all seven sea turtle species, fused glass oil sludge sections, plastic and other debris. She assembled a team of artists from around the U.S, to assist her in creating the sculpture, which was finalized in 2017. The goal is to house the sculpture in a non-profit sea turtle facility whose objective is to teach about marine conservation.



Courtesy Bill Wargo

Kathleen with a rescued Kemp's Ridley sea turtle.



Courtesy Kathleen Sheard

“The Cycle of Life” sculpture.

Kathleen’s program will focus on the plight of Sea Turtles and the process of creating the “Cycle of Life” sculpture. She will bring some “parts” of the sculpture, which were used in studies and tests. In addition, a new conservation cast glass sea turtle and other turtle artwork will be on display. Kathleen will have glass sea turtles for sale to support conservation efforts, and will happily accept donations.

COME JOIN BITTERROOT AUDUBON, MONDAY, NOVEMBER 20TH, 7:00 P.M. AT THE LEE METCALF NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE, LOCATED NORTH OF STEVENSVILLE ON WILDFOWL LANE FOR THIS PROGRAM. THE PUBLIC IS INVITED. Contact Kay Fulton (360-8664) for more information.

Letter from the President

By Becky Peters, BAS President

I have gotten in the habit of saying silent “thank you’s” every day to something beautiful I notice. And now during this month of gratitude awareness I like to start thinking of the major life gifts I appreciate. Those are the ones that haven’t been given to me but are ones I thoroughly enjoy. Since this is a Bitterroot Audubon newsletter I would like to note that a huge gift I savor is the Bitterroot Audubon Society. Our members are varied and involved, which is so important for an organization and I thank you all. And our BAS Board members are exceptional in their backgrounds, careers and expertise and I treasure you all! The reason I am thankful to Bitterroot Audubon is that this organization also introduced



me to Montana Audubon, bird festivals, bird tours, and fellow birding friends. But most of all BAS introduced me to a love of birds and of the importance of their habitats. So I looked up reasons for us to be thankful back to birds.

While the hundreds of geese are migrating overhead I would like us all to thank the birds for what they do for this world of ours. According to National Audubon we are to be thankful to birds for 10 basic reasons: controlling pests (less pesticides=better coffee and wine!); bringing tourists and environmental jobs to migratory areas; cleaning up road kill (yay! Winter Raptor Project!); spreading seeds (the Whitebark Pine thanks you, Clark’s Nutcracker!); they are our “canaries in the coal mine” (sorry to say); they pollinate our fruit trees; they help the farmers by foraging leftover grains; they poop better fertilizer than we can ever make; they saved lives during times of war (look for the next super hero movie – “Carrier Pigeon to The Rescue”); and finally we thank them for simply being the majestic beings they are! May you have a thankful season! But are you really going to eat a BIRD???

Wolverine Watchers—Winter is coming!

By Kylie Paul

It’s time for another season of wildlife monitoring in the Bitterroot National Forest, with Defenders of Wildlife and this year, MPG Ranch.

The Wolverine Watchers Bitterroot kickoff meeting/party will be Thursday, November 16, 2017 at the Bitterroot Public Library (306 State St., Hamilton, MT) in the downstairs meeting room, from 6:30-8pm.

Become a Station Leader, Assistant, or Visitor to establish a monitoring station in the Bitterroot or Sapphire Mountains: Set up early/mid-December or early January, with subsequent site visits by teammates every 3-4 weeks from Jan-April. Expect each visit to be a full day in winter conditions on ski, snowshoe, or Yaktrax. We’re super excited for another season and we hope you are, too. We have some fun adjustments this year that you’ll learn about.

Attend the kickoff meeting: Most of you have attended our kickoff parties in previous years, so you know what to expect, and that’s

Calendar of Events

- Nov 16:** Wolverine Watchers kickoff meeting, Bitterroot Public Library, 630-8PM
- Nov 18:** Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT, 10AM-12PM.
- Nov 20:** “*Sea Turtle Conservation Project*” by Kathleen Sheard, Audubon Meeting, Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT, 7PM, Board Mtg. 5PM.
- Dec 4:** CBC Tune-up Workshops, North Valley Public Library, Stevensville, MT, 7-8PM.
- Dec 7:** CBC Tune-up Workshops, Bitterroot Public Library, Hamilton, MT, 7-8PM.

rolling for this year. We’ll have snacks and beverages and a slideshow containing some of last year’s results, changes to this year’s program, and to fill you in on any other pertinent details. Please get there on time as we’ll try to plug away quickly. We’ll see you at the Bitterroot Public Library in Hamilton on Thursday, November 16 from 6:30-8 pm.

Christmas Bird Count Tune-up Workshops

By Micki 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.

The Stevensville workshop will be held on Monday, December 4th, from 7-8 p.m. in the Community Room of the North Valley Public Library, in Stevensville. The Hamilton workshop will be held on Thursday, December 7th, from 7-8 p.m. in the Community Room of the Bitterroot Public Library in Hamilton.

Please RSVP to mickilong@gmail.com by 12/2 for the Stevensville workshop and by 12/5 for the Hamilton workshop.

Montana Raptors Really Are Snow Birds!

By Kay Fulton

I know this because I just returned from Veracruz, Mexico, where I went with two other Bitterroot Audubon members, Rosan Stover and Christine Coffin, on the “River of Raptors” Tour with Steve Hoffman, former Executive Director of Montana Audubon. While we were there we had a few occasions to watch thousands of raptors fly right past us headed for South America where they will

enjoy warm weather while we stay here in the cold northwestern United States. One day we saw close to 20,000 migrating raptors, and our necks got so tired that several of us had to lie down on the grass to continue watching.



Courtesy Kay Fulton

Migrating American White Pelicans.

On another day, in a two-hour span, we sat in chairs at the Pro Natura Bird Observatory at Chichicaxtla, and saw over 70,000 raptors and aquatic birds, such as pelicans, “stream” toward us, “kettle up” and then “stream” on south. I’m sure many of our Montana raptors were among them: Turkey Vultures, Black Vultures, Swainson’s Hawks, Sharp-shinned Hawks, Cooper’s Hawks, Merlins, Peregrine Falcons, Northern Harriers, etc. Yes, there were official counters on the platform above



Courtesy Kay Fulton

Migrating raptors in Veracruz, Mexico.

us who did the real counting & identifying! It was the second largest day in the history of the “River of Raptors” Project and it happened on their annual Festival Day. Sadly, we missed it because we moved on to other fascinating areas in Veracruz but I truly believe that we witnessed one of the wonders of the world with the 70,000! Some of you may remember Becky and Bill Peters giving a program on their trip to Veracruz a couple of years ago, or Steve Hoffman’s presentation last January, but seeing is believing and I encourage you to consider putting this trip on your bucket list. Feel free to get information from any of us.

What’s the story, Story?

By Jim Story

Question: Can birds survive hurricanes?

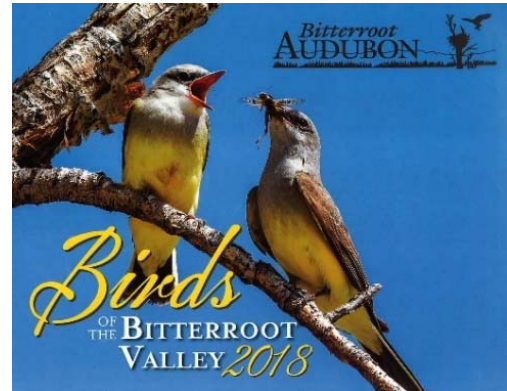
Answer: Although there isn’t a preponderance of information yet, data are being collected about the effects of hurricanes on birds. Articles by Kenn Kaufman of Audubon and a contributor to Forbes provided some insights. Some birds probably travel in advance of the storm due to their ability to sense air pressure changes. Larger birds can fly through the storm, but are vulnerable to flying debris when the storm is over land. Other birds fly into the calm “eye” of the storm where they travel until the storm diminishes, resulting in the birds being relocated many hundreds or thousands of miles away from their original site. Radar images of Hurricane Matthew in 2016 showed it had a huge flock of birds trapped in its eye. Small birds in the eye of the storm are virtually trapped and, depending on the duration of the storm, can die due to lack of food. Some non-migratory birds probably seek shelter in dense bushes and on the leeward side of trees. Regardless of the birds’ strategy, mortality is likely very high, especially for small songbirds. And, for the survivors, habitat loss caused by the storm has a significant impact.

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

Support a local non-profit which supports our birds and their habitats!

By Susie Duff

Bitterroot Audubon has been an established organization in the valley for more than 30 years. We offer educational programs and field trips,



promote the conservation of wildlife and their habitats and support local conservation-oriented projects. Our major fund raiser is the sales of our one-of-a-kind calendar. We showcase our birds and tell you where to find them each month. Plus, you can make notes on the calendar about the birds you see each month. This exquisite 2018 calendar was created by 17 Bitterroot photographers with art work by local 4th graders. All the proceeds stay here in the Bitterroot for BAS education, scholarship and conservation funds. You can find our calendar at stores in Stevensville, Victor and Hamilton for \$15 (Robbins, Bitterroot Drug, Hamilton Gifts, Art Focus, Wine Cave, Chapter One, and O'Hara Commons; also at the Stevensville Farmer's Market and Valley Drug, and at Bitterroot Audubon meetings). Visit our website to see pages of the calendar and the complete listings of the stores. You can purchase them online for \$20 by going to:

<http://www.bitterrootaudubon.org/support-us>.

A GREAT BIG THANK YOU TO ALL OF THE VOLUNTEERS WHO HELPED WITH THE CALENDAR BOOTH AT THE HAMILTON FARMER’S MARKET!!!

By Kay Fulton

There may not be enough room in the newsletter for All of Your Names but I’m going to try. I can’t even begin to tell you how much I appreciate everyone who took a shift, or two or three as Crew Members and many who were both Crew Leaders and Crew Members. From July 1st to Apple Days, October 7th, we needed five people for 15 Saturdays for 6.5 hrs. That’s approximately 488 volunteer hours!! (Jim Story will check my math). In addition, Alex Shaffer and Becky Homan loaned us their garage for storage (& let us pick a few raspberries from their bushes). Jim is also our Money Man and has kept an account of expenditures and profits (I think we’ve cleared close to \$3500 so far!!). Of course, I also

want to thank and applaud the photographers for such fantastic photos, the 4th graders from Stevensville for their amazing drawings, Allegra Print Shop for the layout & printing, the BAS calendar committee, and last but not least, our BAS president and creator of this successful fundraiser—Becky Peters.



*Courtesy Dorinda Troutman
Farmer's Market BAS volunteers Kay Fulton
and Mike Daniels.*

Listed below are the Volunteers (please let me know if I missed anyone):

Mike Daniels, Jeane Lippert, Janis Cooper, Colleen Powell, Becky Peters, Betsy Ballard, Carolyn Larsen, Robin Dewey, Larry Dewey, Judith Fraser, Mel Holloway, Christine Coffin, Colleen Hoeben, Thomas Arminio, Diane Williford, Suzanna McDougal, Sherry Ritter, Shirley Smith, Phil

Difani, Alex Shaffer, Rachel Ingram, Mel Mooers, Michelle Falivene, Skip Horner, Elizabeth Horner, John Ormiston, Deb Goslin, Susie Duff, Patty Laughlin, Phyllis Daniels, Micki Long, Jo Ramundo, Barb Moreland, Ginny Deck, Patti Rosa, Paul Policastro, Max Stroppel, Kathy Stroppel, Jill Davies, Becky Richards, Carol Hamucher, Kathleen Sheard, Sara Ashline, Sheryl Olson & Susan Nelson at the Stevensville Farmers' Market. THANKS!

News and Notes

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 this fall on November 18th, 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 Nathan DeBoer
Chestnut-backed Chickadee*

“Swiftling” Up High and Under Waterfalls: Training the Citizen’s Eye

2017

by Amy Seaman



Since the summer of 2013, Montana Audubon has engaged citizen scientists in searching for one of Montana’s least understood species, the Black Swift. When we started these efforts, just 7 nest sites were known in the state, and it was clear the Black Swift remained among Montana’s Species of Greatest Inventory Need. Building their nests up high, amongst rocky niches, and under waterfalls, the whereabouts of the colonial breeding Black Swift largely remains concealed even to the trained observer’s eye. In our first four years of surveys, efforts by Montana Audubon staff and a dozen volunteers turned up just three new nesting sites. Focused surveys in Glacier National Park confirmed six sites within the heart of the park in 2013, and alongside individual efforts and efforts by Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, we had collectively amassed knowledge of 17 nesting sites state-wide at the start of the 2017 field season. We were making progress, albeit it slow! In an effort to speed up our rate of

(Above) Lunch Creek Falls (foreground) and Reynolds Creek (background). The backdrop to our Glacier National Park Black Swift citizen science training this summer. Photo by Jeff Van Tine



the classroom work behind and headed to the falls. Trainees worked in small groups to score waterfall habitat characteristics such as height, type, flow volume, commanding view over the surrounding terrain, moss availability, shading of nest niches, and falls aspect – all characteristics known to influence the likelihood a waterfall will be used by Black Swifts. Talking through each group’s scores together helps hone the individual observer’s eye and adds an important element of objectivity when moving through a scoring process that relies on the viewers observation point. Standardizing data collection in this way is exactly what the state needs to carry out surveys that are effective at

discovery, we took a different approach in 2017, hosting two in-person field and classroom trainings. 26 individuals ranging from agency personnel to seasonal technicians and volunteers joined us in Glacier National Park and Holland Lake for and intensive overnight introduction to these illusive creatures. Trainees spent over two hours together digesting the dusk survey protocol, learning how to navigate the physical demands of the field, and getting introduced to the unique biology of this extremely fast study species. As dusk approached each night we left

(Above) Technician Jack Toriello leads a group through the exercise of scoring a waterfall. (Below) Understanding and completely filling out data sheets is an essential, though tedious part of the survey. Photos by Jeff Van Tine





determining a species conservation status. We shared as much as possible about developing a good search image,

(Above) Trainees work in groups to score waterfall characteristics before comparing notes. (Left) Lisa Bate, Glacier National Park Biologist (front in teal) leads a group through the waterfall scoring process. (Below) Kristi Dubois from Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks looks at waterfall sketches helpful for recording observation data when there are birds present.

Photos by Jeff Van Tine

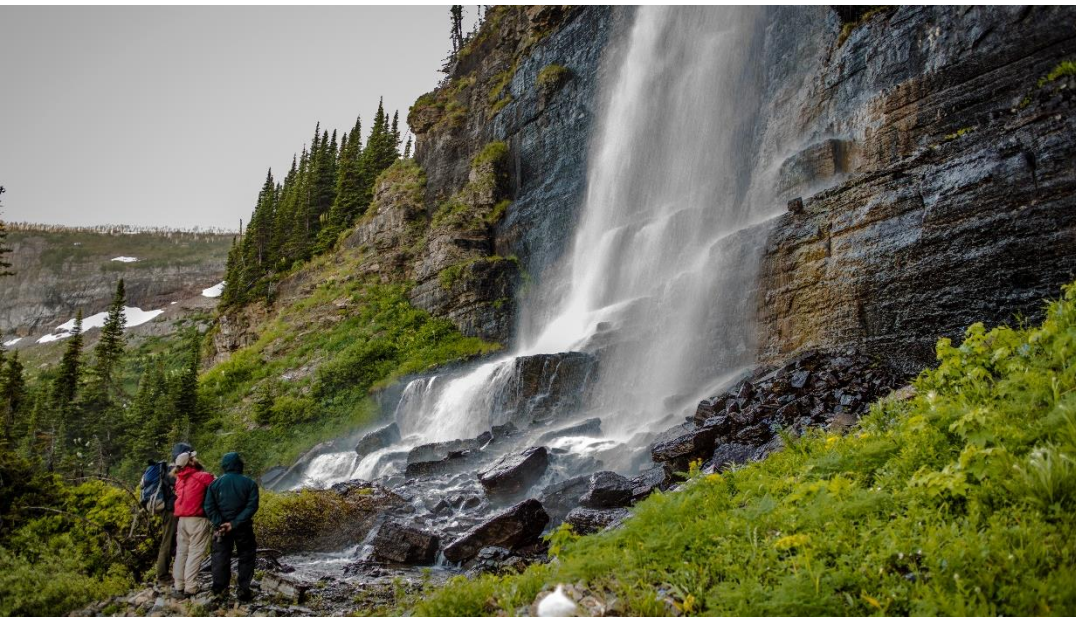




(Above) Holland Falls has had a known nesting colony of Black Swifts and was the site of our second training. (Left) Technician Jack Toriello works with volunteer Austin Rice at Lunch Creek. Photos by Jeff Van Tine

including searching for white-wash, and scouring the waterfall face for “mailbox -sized” nooks and crannies where nests may be hidden. Despite the fact that the Lunch Creek waterfall had been occupied by swifts in 2016, we unfortunately found no swifts during this summer’s training – and none turned up during later surveys this summer. Holland Falls on the other hand provided just the search image the trainees needed, as

birds were observed almost a dozen times streaming out from the waterfall sides, down the creek, and out over Holland Lake. The few fast glimpses allowed trainees to observe the lightning-like speed at which an adult Black Swift enters its nest location, and made clear a point we reiterated often during the training, “just don’t look away”. It is safe to say almost everyone that attended these trainings became hooked on how exciting it is to be in the presence such an amazing and uncommon creature.



(Left) Trainees below Lunch Creek Falls show how tiny a person can be in the nesting habitat of the Black Swift. Photo by Jeff Van Tine

After the trainings we coordinated with volunteers to accomplish 18 waterfall surveys and evening observations, resulting in the location of four new Black Swift colonies. Two of these are located in the park and two are outside, including the first find in the Cabinet Mountains. Volunteers put in over 400 hours of time and drove over 1,400 miles during the search – which luckily doesn’t stop this year! In 2017 we just laid the groundwork, and this cadre of “swifters” is ready to hit the trails again next year. Between funded surveys and citizen science, 2017 was a year of great discovery, and our collective efforts have doubled the known number of sites to near 34. It’s not enough to remove the Black Swift from the greatest inventory need list, but it is enough for us to know we are working in the right direction with the right group.

Funding for these trainings was provided by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, the Glacier National Park Conservancy, the LEAW Family Foundation, the Cadeau Foundation, and individual donors. For that, a BIG THANKS!

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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
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