

Bitterroot AUDUBON



SEPTEMBER 2017

NEWSLETTER

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WOLVERINE WATCHERS: A Wildlife Monitoring Project in the Bitterroot National Forest

By Kylie Paul and Russ Talmo

Wolverine Watchers is a citizen-science monitoring project that collects data using wildlife cameras and baited hair snare stations. The project specifically aims to document wolverines and fishers on the northern half of the Bitterroot National Forest in the Sapphire and Bitterroot mountain ranges. Since they are such elusive animals and live in high, remote areas, there is not much information about their numbers, survival rates, or overall health. In 2015 Defenders of Wildlife teamed up with the Bitterroot National Forest to launch this project, which now enlists about 150 Missoula and Bitterroot Valley volunteers each winter season who monitor over 20 data-collection stations. They have documented up to 10 individual wolverines and 1 fisher and numerous other species (including multiple bird species!).



*Courtesy Kylie Paul and Russ Talmo
Wolverine visits a monitoring station.*



*Courtesy Kylie Paul and Russ Talmo
Pine Marten at a monitoring station in the Bitterroot.*

Many of their most intrepid and inspiring volunteers are members of Bitterroot Audubon, some of whom will share their stories of trekking into the forests, over and through snow and ice monthly January to April to check on equipment and wildlife activity.



*Courtesy Kylie Paul and Russ Talmo
Raptor at Monitoring Station #3.*

Kylie Paul started Wolverine Watchers while working for Defenders of Wildlife, where she led the organization on wolverine, fisher, and lynx issues in the Rockies. She now works as a

conservation biologist for MPG Ranch and will continue to co-run the project under that group. Russ Talmo has worked at Defenders of Wildlife in Missoula for over 5 years where he runs the grizzly bear electric fence incentive program and co-leads the Wolverine Watchers program.

Come join Bitterroot Audubon for this fascinating program, Monday, September 18th 7:00 P.M. at the Lee Metcalf Wildlife Refuge, located north of Stevensville on Wildfowl Lane. Kylie promises to regale us with natural history information, ongoing project results and humorous stories. Contact Kay Fulton at 360-8664 for more information.

Letter from the President

By Becky Peters, BAS President

Welcome to the new year of 2017 – 2018 with Bitterroot Audubon! We always have so much to look forward to each year: wonderful programs, wonderful people, wonderful field trips, wonderful birds AND a 2018 BAS Calendar!

“I’ve Seen Fire and I’ve seen Rain” James Taylor must have known about August 2017 in Montana and Texas. Fire’s smoke and Hurricane’s rain-How have the birds weathered these storms? With what I have read it’s a matter of pros and cons and they’ll be okay in the long run.

Fire and Smoke: Yes, we may lose some smaller birds to smoke and exhaustion simply because they tend to fly at lower altitudes. Thankfully they have wings that take them to safety. Fire destroys their habitat, their homes for this year, but at the same time suppressing fire has also harmed their habitats. For example, the Kirtland’s Warbler needs to nest in jack pine forests and the jack pines need fire in order to release their seeds. No fire, no nesting, no Kirtland’s. We need to take into consideration that when it comes to wildlife a burned forest simply means a changed forest.

The forests regenerate, the soil is enriched, there is greater diversity and the forest is healthier in the long run. Wildlife biologist Patricia Kennedy has noted “A wildfire can serve as a sort of reset button, letting an old forest be born again.” A 100-year-old forest has different plants and animals in it than a one-year-old forest. A lot of species require a reset. Dr. Roger Lederer points out that ecosystems are always evolving and when a forest burns it recycles and renews those ecosystems. We’ve witnessed



here in the Bitterroot how woodpeckers thrive on the beetles that come into the dead and dying trees. Forest fires are a natural phenomenon that birds have to confront. In reality, it isn’t the fires our birds have to be afraid of, it’s permanent habitat loss due to mankind’s constant encroachment.

Hurricanes and Rain: As with fire we will lose some birds in a hurricane. There will be winners and losers. They might end up weakened from being without food. And just as they have wings to take them to safety, they have a great sense of navigation to get them back to shore. And yes, they lose their habitat just as with a fire, but that hurricane will also open second growth and new spaces to breeding birds that hadn’t been there before. A change of habitat equals a change in the bird life.

Here, as with a fire storm, a wind and rain storm is not the main destructive force to our birds. It’s the human beings that permanently destroy their original habitats. Fewer habitats mean that each hurricane, each fire, is a greater threat to our bird populations. Habitat loss = bird loss. With climate change our fire season is longer, our forests are drier, our hurricanes are stronger, and our rainstorms last longer. Again – human beings cause changes to happen at a quicker pace and with more severity. Let’s work on what we can do, each one of us, to lessen the speed of harm to our birds’ habitats. Our earth deserves our careful stewardship.

HIGHWAY CLEAN-UP! OCTOBER 26. 4PM. BELL CROSSING! NEW LOCATION!

By Skip Horner

Join us for our semi-annual highway clean-up. A busy summer on the highway means plenty of trash out there, so please come out to help our valley stay attractive.

Meet on Bell Crossing Road, on the west side off Hwy. 93, at 4PM on Thursday October 26.

This is the same place we cleaned up this Spring, but not the same as previous years.

We have a new section of highway this year.

We supply high-visibility vests and trash-bags for everyone. Bring your own gloves.

"Sparrow Identification" Workshop

By Micki Long



Courtesy Micki Long

Vesper Sparrow.

We had two successful workshops and three associated field trips in June. On June 2, Debbie Leick presented a Sparrow Identification workshop to 9 enthusiastic birders. The following morning, most of the workshop participants joined Debbie on a hike at MPG Ranch, to sharpen our new skills. The vesper sparrows gave us plenty of practice!



Courtesy Micki Long

Field trip participants.

On June 16, Sherry Ritter presented a Birding-by-Ear Workshop to a crowd of 19. The meeting room at Lee Metcalf was filled with song, both from Sherry's videos and human imitators. Sherry and Deb Goslin led three workshops in the following days. The highlight of Deb's field trip, for me at least, was listening to the buzz of a couple of clay-colored sparrows.

A big thanks to Debbie Leick, Sherry Ritter, and Deb Goslin for entertaining and informative experiences. We are hoping to have a series of workshops next spring that focus on permanent residents, then migrants as they arrive each month. Watch for info next winter.



Courtesy Micki Long

Savannah Sparrow.

What's the story, Story?

By Jim Story

Question: Are all birds vulnerable to Brown-headed Cowbird parasitism?

Answer: The Brown-headed Cowbird has been reported to successfully parasitize the nests of 144 bird species. But, not all bird species are vulnerable to cowbird parasitism, either due to their rejection of the cowbird eggs or from simply being inadequate as foster parents. One report listed Blue-winged Teal, Ferruginous Hawk, Virginia Rail, Killdeer, Spotted Sandpiper, Wilson's Phalarope, California Gull, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, and Red-headed Woodpecker as some of the species that fail as host parents. Reasons why these birds fail as host parents haven't been determined, but the size difference between cowbird eggs and the eggs of some birds (e.g., raptors, hummingbirds, etc.) is probably a contributing factor. (info source: *The Birder's Handbook* by Ehrlich et al.).

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

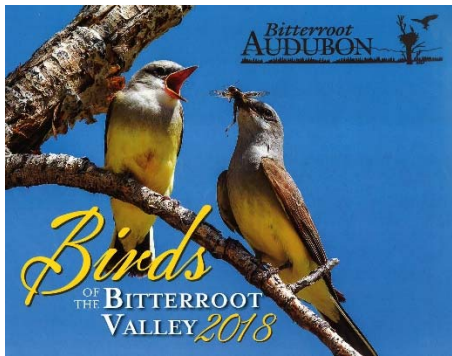
2018 Bitterroot Audubon Calendar

By Becky Peters

It is with great pleasure that Bitterroot Audubon presents - tah dah! - our 4th calendar! Our 2018 edition of the world-renowned Bitterroot Audubon calendars is equally as breathtaking as our 2013, 2014 and 2015 editions! Once again we have a totally unique calendar complete with over 42 stunning photos of birds of the Bitterroot, taken by 17 very talented Bitterroot photographers, with 17 adorable drawings by Stevensville 4th graders. Be sure to purchase a calendar for your home and for

others. BAS uses the proceeds from the calendar sales to support and promote education and conservation activities for all inhabitants of the Bitterroot and to provide scholarship funds for a qualified environmental studies university student in Montana. So be sure to support your local Audubon so that they can support the Birds of the Bitterroot. Only **\$15!!** The calendars can be purchased at the Hamilton Farmer's Market, 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. You can purchase them (for a bit more) online as well:

bitterrootaudubon.org/support-us Thank you!



HELP WANTED AT THE BAS CALENDAR BOOTH HAMILTON FARMERS' MARKET!!!!

By Kay Fulton

Please help us out these last few weeks. We have had great volunteers throughout the summer and are now down to just 4 Saturdays that are not completely filled. See the list of times needed below and call or email Kay Fulton with a time you are willing to cover. (360-8664 or

kayinmt@cybernet1.com) Thanks so much.

- 9/23** 7:45 to 10:30 TWO People
- 9/30** 7:45 to 10:30 TWO People
- 10:30 to 1:00 TWO People
- 10/7 [APPLE DAYS]**
- 7:45 to 10:30 TWO People
- 10:30 to 1:00 TWO People
- 1:00 to 4:00 TWO People
- 10/14** 7:45 to 10:30 ONE Person
- 10:30 to 1:00 ONE Person

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!

Calendar of Events

- Sep 16:** Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT, 10AM-12PM.
- Sep 18:** "Wolverine Watchers" by Kylie Paul and Russ Talmo, Audubon Meeting, Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT, 7PM, Board Mtg. 5PM.
- Oct 16:** "Eagle Project" by Kate Stone, Audubon Meeting, Forest Service/DNRC Building, Hamilton, MT, 7PM, Board Mtg. 5PM.
- Oct 21:** Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT, 10AM-12PM.
- Oct 26:** Hwy. 93 Clean-up, 4PM, Bell Crossing Rd.
- 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.

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 September 16th, October 21st, and 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



Male Rufous Hummingbird in flight.

Courtesy Mike Daniels

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* Board Member

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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
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NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION



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