

Bitterroot AUDUBON



JANUARY 2018

NEWSLETTER

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The Successful Restoration of Trumpeter Swans on the Flathead Indian Reservation

By Dale M. Becker, Tribal Wildlife Management Program



Courtesy John Jarvis

Trumpeter Swan on nest.

In an effort to restore extirpated native wildlife to the Flathead Indian Reservation (FIR) and aboriginal lands in western Montana, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) commenced reintroduction and restoration efforts for Trumpeter Swans in 1996 with a trial reintroduction. Since then, 268 captive propagated Trumpeter Swans were released on the FIR from 2002 through 2017. By 2004, breeding pairs had formed and the first production of wild cygnets in possibly 100 years or more fledged from local wetlands. During the intervening years, approximately 143 nesting pairs have produced at

least 343 fledgling cygnets. Swans from this project have colonized into wetland habitats throughout northwestern Montana and may soon do the same in southeastern British Columbia. The primary cause of mortality of released swans has been power line collisions. Currently lines are regularly marked with flight diverter installations to minimize potential future collisions. This apparent success story will be monitored for years but an analysis of a recent study of the project indicates that the likelihood of the population persisting was high (approximately 95 - 96%) over both the short-term (30 years) and the long-term (100 years).



Courtesy Dale Becker

Trumpeter Swans.

Dale Becker has been employed since 1989 as the Wildlife Program Manager for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Nation in western Montana. He is responsible for program oversight and administration, policy development, environmental impact analysis, personnel supervision and development and overall wildlife program management. He is responsible for the development of the Tribes' Trumpeter Swan Reintroduction Project. Dale has long been involved

in conservation organizations including Audubon. He received his undergraduate and graduate degrees in Wildlife Biology from the University of Montana and has worked as a Wildlife Biologist on wildlife and habitat inventory and research projects for the U.S. Forest Service, the University of Montana, and the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs and as a private consultant.

To learn the history of and detailed description of strategies and techniques employed to implement this reintroduction project from Dale Becker, JOIN BITTERROOT AUDUBON MONDAY, JANUARY 15TH, 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 Kay Fulton for additional information (360-8664).

Letter from the President

By Becky Peters, BAS President

The time is now for speaking up!



Apologies to anyone I offend with this President's Letter, but I'm not known for being subtle anyway. I know I've pushed this before but the need for your action for our environment's sake is even more imperative now. How are you personally going to help? How will you influence our country's decision makers? I present here some depressing information and end with some empowering actions you can take when you feel compelled.

First, if you think you influence your elected officials, you don't, especially with this current administration: A Princeton study from Sept. 2014 titled "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens" indicates that "economic elites and organized groups representing business interests have substantial independent impacts on U.S. government policy, while average citizens and mass-based interest groups have little or no independent influence. Policy making in the US is determined by economic elites and the top 10%, and that ordinary citizens have essentially no influence on legislation and other governmental action"

Ouch! Now add to this the realization that many horrendous changes to our environmental

protections have recently occurred. You can keep track of how the current administration is tearing apart our environmental safeguards using National Geographic's site <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/>

Here are just a few of the most recent environmental actions our current elected representatives have enacted: disregarding climate change as a threat, downsizing national monuments, allowing oil and gas auctions in environmentally sensitive areas, scrapping the Clean Power Plan, suspending Mining Health Study, revoking flood standards, ensuring that EPA enforcement becomes toothless, scrubbing the EPA website, not banning the pesticide chlorpyrifos on farms, undermining collaborative conservation efforts, pulling out of Paris Climate agreement, cutting environmental programs, dismissing science advisors, expanding offshore drilling, etc., etc. You get the idea. We are living in a dangerous time.

So next, what personally can you do? What really works to influence our elected officials so that we can save our environment for our children and our avian friends when the corporations run the country?

Congressional staffers say the most efficient actions are: Make in-person visits to our representative's local and DC offices; Establish relationships with the representative's staffers; Write individual emails - your snail mail letters are even more powerful! Make comments on their social media sites; Write Letters To the Editors. And the least impactful ways are sending form emails and attending town hall meetings.

If there is more that unites us than divides us then what else can we do? Don't listen to corporate run media that promote only the "shiny objects" but listen to independent, publicly funded media for real news. Organize to get the money out of politics. Fiscally support the environmental groups that can effectively protect the world's air, water and land. Fiscally support those candidates who want to reinstate our democracy and who will work to change our current oligarchical system of government. Volunteer and serve your community. March. Run for local office. Write letters to the editors (LTE's). Hand out Voter Registration cards. Drive voters to the polls. Speak out on issues even if your friends and relatives disagree. Stand up for your beliefs because being silent and patient have

not helped one iota. And last but not least, - you already know the importance of this – VOTE!

Here's to a productive, proactive year for us!

Zooniverse and Winter Eagle Pint Night

By Kate Stone

Please join us on Wednesday, January 10 from 5:30-7:30 at the Stevi Café, 202 Main Street in Stevensville. You'll meet members of Bitterroot Audubon and local raptor experts to learn how to process the wildlife imagery collected from the Bitterroot Valley Winter Eagle Project. Volunteers will be on hand to help you learn about Zooniverse- the web-based, crowd-sourced platform that allows citizen scientists to help with a myriad of research projects from wildlife to galaxies to hieroglyphics. We'll also have raptor biologists available to help you learn how to identify all ages of Bald and Golden Eagles.

The Stevi Cafe will be running a pint night special, with \$1 of special beer sales donated to the Bitterroot Valley Winter Eagle Project.

Come meet your neighbors, grab a snack and beer, and join the 4,000 volunteers already helping us with our project on Zooniverse. We have volunteers from as far away as Japan, Belgium, Portugal, Australia, and the UK!



Courtesy Kate Stone

Zooniverse interface for Western Montana Wildlife. Users help us identify the eagles and other wildlife appearing in our pictures.

Eagle re-sighting

One of the goals of the Bitterroot Valley Winter Eagle Project is to re-sight some of the 100+ Golden and Bald Eagles that Raptor View Research Institute has captured here over the past 6 winters. To our surprise, one of our cameras near Sula detected a

Bald Eagle with orange wing tags- definitely not from our project!! Upon investigation, we found that it was banded as a nestling in 2016 on Catalina Island, off the coast of California near Los Angeles.



Courtesy Kate Stone

What's the story, Story?

By Jim Story

Question: Why is there such great diversity in bird egg colors?

Answer: The color of most bird eggs has evolved to help with their concealment. But, the color of many bird eggs is probably due to other factors. The eggs of some of the more "primitive" birds like cormorants and pelicans may have retained the pale colors typical of their reptilian ancestors. Cavity nesters, birds that cover their eggs (ducks), and birds that start incubating as soon as the first egg is laid (herons, owls, doves) have white eggs apparently because there is no need for camouflage. Reasons for the blue eggs of robins and catbirds have not been determined. (info from 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.

31st Hamilton Christmas Bird Count 2017 Recap

By John Ormiston

December 16, 2017 was a great day for the 31st annual Hamilton CBC. As 24 intrepid birders gathered at The Teller for the count we remembered the brutal cold of the 30th count, -22°F with a high of -4°F. The weather generally cooperated this year - the morning temperature was almost comfortable at 29°F with no wind. Fog limited visibility in the morning, but partly cloudy skies ruled the afternoon, after the traditional chili and Oreos lunch. We saw 65 species, two below average. Waterfowl were abundant; we saw a total of 10,680 birds, nearly 700 above average and 5,140 of them were waterfowl.

We saw four Trumpeter Swans, only the second time any were seen on our count. A snow goose joined the record high of 3,735 (+230) Canada Geese for only the 3rd sighting on our CBC.

We recorded a record high number of Bald Eagles (71), Red-tailed Hawks (127), Rock Doves (298), and Great Horned Owls (16). Above average numbers of California Quail, Northern Flickers, Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Redpolls, and House Sparrows were observed. We've now seen 20 species only once and 27 every year (we missed seeing Northern Shrike and American Crow this year, for the first time).

We had 25 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 Bald Eagles, a Golden Eagle, a Prairie Falcon, Kestrels, Northern Harriers and all three Accipiters (Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, and Northern Goshawk) for only the ninth time. Of course, there was an abundance of Red-tailed and Rough-legged Hawks.

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 32nd annual Hamilton CBC and another chili and Oreos lunch, December 15, 2018. Special thanks to Colleen Powell for coordinating Feeder Watchers and to Bill Good for the outstanding chili and Oreos lunch, both for the 31st time. The Teller has hosted our gathering each year of the Hamilton CBC. Look for complete results of the 118th Annual National Audubon Christmas Bird Count at <http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count>.

Audubon Adventures Classroom Programs need Sponsors

By Betsy Ballard

We are asking for support for the Audubon Adventures Classroom program. Audubon Adventures is an environmental education curriculum product created by the National Audubon Society for grades 3 - 5. Developed by professional environmental educators, Audubon Adventures presents standards-based science content about birds, wildlife, and their habitats. We are contacting the teachers from last year to see what kits they would like and also outreaching for additional teachers or home school parents who might be interested in participating. If you wish to

participate this year, we and the teachers greatly appreciate your support. Below is a link to Audubon adventures if you wish to see what curriculums are available.

<http://www.audubonadventures.org/>

The Classroom kits are \$45.95, which includes shipping. If you would like to sponsor a classroom kit, you can mail your donation to: Bitterroot Audubon, P.O. Box 326, Hamilton, MT 59840, or bring it to a monthly meeting. If you have questions please call or text Betsy Ballard (cell phone, 239-5105) or email at: diamondback@cybernet1.com

Calendar of Events

- Jan 10:** Winter Eagle Pint Night, Stevi Café, Stevensville, MT, 5:30-7:30PM.
- Jan 15:** Audubon Meeting, Forest Service/DNRC Building, Hamilton, MT, 7PM, Board Mtg. 5PM.
- Jan 20:** Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT, 10AM-12PM.
- Jan 31:** Chapter-only membership renewal due, \$15.
- Feb 16-19:** Great Backyard Bird Count.
- Feb 17:** Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT, 10AM-12PM.
- Feb 19:** Audubon Meeting, Forest Service/DNRC Building, Hamilton, MT, 7PM, Board Mtg. 5PM.
- 2018:** Wings Across the Big Sky Festival. More details to be announced.

Sam Sperry Remembered

By Sue Jackson with Janet Ellis

Montana Audubon recently learned of the passing of Sam Sperry. Sam was first and foremost involved with the Helena Audubon Chapter, Last Chance Audubon (LCAS). He joined LCAS in February 1974 and became involved in a hurry. He was elected secretary in May of that year, then president in 1975 and again in 1979. He worked hard to help the nascent chapter develop, strengthening its bylaws and creating a formal budget process. Sam also played an important role with Montana Audubon: our organization held its first meeting at Sam's home in Helena in September 1976—and Sam was elected our first president. Montana Audubon was formed to "further the Audubon cause in Montana," and "to speak with a single message

and to develop a legislative presence.” When Montana Audubon was formed, there were only three chapters present at the meeting: Helena, Bozeman, and Yellowstone Valley (Billings); the Missoula and Flathead chapters were not at the first meeting.

In a May 1976 article, Sam described himself as a “militant and emotional environmentalist.” He wrote: “There is no doubt in my mind that I am the least likely person in town to have been president of an Audubon chapter... I am not a birder, but I am a devoted member of the Audubon Society. This year has convinced me that the goals, objectives and methods of the National Audubon Society offer some hope for future generations of life.” He spoke of his vision for LCAS: “I have not tried to make Audubon entertaining. I contend that unless the LCAS devotes a major share of its effort to conservation, land use planning, habitat protection and other non-entertaining activities, our society as we know it is going to wither and die.”



Courtesy Naomi Smith

Sam Sperry receives recognition from Janice Miller, 1991.

In another article he wrote: “This beleaguered earth cannot stand much more of our objectivity. If, in order to permit all species on this planet to live, we humans must accept a different (and perhaps lower) standard of living, then so be it! If we cannot live as we are trying to do and still allow other living things to exist, then we have a moral obligation to abandon our present path.” Militant and emotional, to be sure. Thank you, Sam. After leaving the board, the Sperry family continued to be part of the LCAS family. Sam and his wife, Joyce Beckes, created the chapter’s monthly newsletter from 1985 to 1998, and then Joyce continued serving as editor until 2013. That’s a lot of newsletters! Sam and Joyce

recently moved to New Mexico, and Sam passed away on July 16 in Albuquerque.

News and Notes

Chapter Members Renewal Deadline

If you are a BAS chapter-only member, your membership fee (\$15) is due by January 31st. 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 this fall on January 20^h, 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 Mike Daniels

Common Redpoll.

31st Hamilton Christmas Bird Count 2017 Results

By John Ormiston

COMMON NAME	2017 Count	COMMON NAME	2017 Count
GREAT BLUE HERON	7	LONG-EARED OWL	1
TRUMPETER SWAN	4	BELTED KINGFISHER TOTAL	7
SNOW GOOSE	1	DOWNY WOODPECKER	26
CANADA GOOSE	3735	HAIRY WOODPECKER	14
GREEN-WINGED TEAL	14	NORTHERN FLICKER	115
MALLARD	1348	PILEATED WOODPECKER	3
RING-NECKED DUCK	15	STELLER'S JAY	37
LESSER SCAUP	2	BLUE JAY	1
COMMON GOLDENEYE	17	CLARK'S NUTCRACKER	17
HOODED MERGANSER	2	BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE	318
COMMON MERGANSER	2	COMMON RAVEN	139
BALD EAGLE ADULT	46	BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE	194
BALD EAGLE IMM	18	MOUNTAIN CHICKADEE	12
BALD EAGLE UNK	7	CHESTNUT-BACKED CHICKADEE	7
BALD EAGLE TOTAL	71	RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH	68
NORTHERN HARRIER TOTAL	15	WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH	20
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK	5	PYGMY NUTHATCH	22
COOPER'S HAWK	1	BROWN CREEPER	7
NORTHERN GOSHAWK	1	MARSH WREN	6
RED-TAILED HAWK	127	AMERICAN DIPPER	3
ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK	59	GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET	1
GOLDEN EAGLE	1	TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE	1
AMERICAN KESTREL	19	BOHEMIAN WAXWING	60
PRAIRIE FALCON	5	EUROPEAN STARLING	352
GRAY PARTRIDGE	10	AMERICAN TREE SPARROW	17
CALIFORNIA QUAIL	337	SONG SPARROW	30
RING-NECKED PHEASANT	40	DARK-EYED JUNCO TOTAL	105
WILD TURKEY	98	RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD	1003
AMERICAN COOT	30	HOUSE FINCH	213
WILSON'S SNIPE	3	RED CROSSBILL	51
ROCK PIGEON	298	COMMON REDPOLL	139
MOURNING DOVE	87	PINE SISKIN	63
EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE	606	AMERICAN GOLDFINCH	54
GREAT-HORNED OWL	16	HOUSE SPARROW	598

TOTALS	10663
TOTAL SPECIES	63
Observers	24
Feeder watchers	25
Total birds (minus waterfowl)	5540
Waterfowl	5140
Temperature Low	29
Temperature High	34



Owl Research Institute

SHORT-EARED OWL MONITORING - VOLUNTEERS NEEDED



Kurt Lindsay

Dear Short-eared Owl Enthusiasts,

We need your help. The Owl Research Institute is embarking on a 3-year collaborative study to monitor Short-eared Owl populations in the western U.S. The study will rely on volunteers to make it a success.

Project WAfLS (Western Asio flammeus Landscape Study), involves 15 other agencies and organizations across 8 states and is designed to assess the population status, trends, and threats against the Short-eared Owl – an enigmatic, open-country species.

This project, funded by a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is a rare example of cooperation and collaboration on a large scale and is an opportunity to influence and focus conservation and restoration activities for this species. This species-specific monitoring program will provide the most robust population data for Short-eared Owls to date.

The effort aims to complete a number of coordinated surveys across California, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming. The survey design is well-suited to volunteer participation and will rely primarily on volunteer, citizen-scientists to collect data.

Volunteers will be asked to select one of 50 grids in the state and will be responsible for two 1.5 hour visits, each occurring in a separate 3 week window (March/April and April/May). The timing for a given route is dependent upon elevation. It is a road based survey (8 - 11 points along a secondary road, separated by 1/2 mile) that starts 100 minutes before darkness, and finishes 10 minutes after darkness. The survey timing is set to coincide with the Short-eared Owls elaborate courtship displays. Check out this video from partner Neil Paprocki (Hawkwatch International) in Utah: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-YKEmTvEQE>

More information, maps, and sign-up will be coming shortly. In the meantime, if you're interested in learning more about this ambitious project or want to know how to participate, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Matt Larson
Research Director – Owl Research Institute
Cell: (701) 866-5771
Email: owlresearch@outlook.com

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HAMILTON MT 59840-0326

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* 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