

Bitterroot AUDUBON



NOVEMBER 2019

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 34, NO. 3



RESCUE, REHABILITATION, RELEASE & EDUCATION

By Brooke Tanner

Imagine that you find a Red Tailed Hawk injured at the side of a road or that a Great Gray Owl slams into your car and is not moving! What should you do? Who can you call?



Courtesy Kelsey Burns

Jesse Varnado with a Golden Eagle.

Bitterroot Audubon invites you to their November 18th meeting to get answers and to hear real life stories from experts, Brooke and Jesse, of the Wild Skies Raptor Center.

Few people have the dedication it takes to commit their lives to wildlife rehabilitation. These are the people who provide rescue, veterinary care and rehabilitation, or humane death when wildlife are injured, often by the actions of people. Most of the reported injured raptors in the Bitterroot make their way to Wild Skies Raptor Center. Just in the past couple of years, Wild Skies has admitted over 60 injured raptors from the Bitterroot Valley, including the famous Great Gray Owl "Gracie". Many of the birds they rehabilitate have suffered from vehicle, fence, or window collision, entanglement in fishing line, lead poisoning from ammunition fragments, injury from domestic cats or intentional shootings. Many of these injuries are preventable, so part of the Wild Skies mission is to educate the public about ways they can reduce or eliminate wildlife injury.



Courtesy Jesse Varnado

Golden Eagle release.

Brooke and Jesse will give a presentation on their work with injured raptors in western Montana. Brooke has been rescuing and rehabilitating injured raptors for over 13

years. She'll give a brief history of Wild Skies, current educational programs, and plans for the future. There is a lot more work that goes into the rescue and care of these injured, federally protected species than most people realize. How do you capture an injured raptor? What do you feed them? How much does it cost to care for an injured bird? What if they have broken bones? How can I help? Brooke and Jesse will answer these questions and more. They'll also bring along a few non-releasable raptors to share their stories.



Courtesy Jesse Varnado

Great Horned Owls.

Brooke Tanner, originally from Toledo, OH, moved to Montana in 2002 after graduating from Veterinary Technician school in Colorado. She got her start rehabilitating raptors at the Ground Eagle Foundation in Condon, MT from 2006-2009. Brooke founded Wild Skies Raptor Center in March of 2010 after Grounded Eagle closed. While developing Wild Skies Brooke was sub-permitted under Judy Hoy of Stevensville from 2010-2015.



Courtesy Kelsey Burns

Brooke Tanner with Great Horned Owl.

Brooke met Jesse Varnado in 2011 while volunteering at the wildlife center in Helena. Jesse was born and raised in Helena, MT. He is an avid outdoorsman and talented wildlife photographer. While volunteering at the wildlife center in Helena from 2008-2012 he gained experience in wildlife rehabilitation and raptor handling skills. Since 2012, Brooke and Jesse have been the dedicated team behind Wild Skies. In 2014 they started renovating existing buildings on a 12½-acre piece of property in Potomac, MT. Wild Skies Raptor Center received 501(c) 3 nonprofit status in 2010 and has all necessary permits through US Fish & Wildlife Migratory Bird Office and MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Brooke has also been sub-permitted under Raptor View Research Institute's USGS Banding Permit and has banded around 200 rehabilitated raptors, including 20 Eagles, since 2011.



Courtesy Jesse Varnado

Golden Eagle release.

COME JOIN BITTERROOT AUDUBON, MONDAY, NOVEMBER 18TH 7:00 P.M. AT THE LEE METCALF NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT RAPTOR REHABILITATION AND WAYS YOU CAN HELP! The meeting will be held in the Visitors' Center of the Refuge located north of Stevensville just off the Eastside Highway. Turn west onto Wildfowl Lane. The Public is invited. Contact Kay for more information, 360-8664.

Letter from the President

By Becky Peters, BAS President



The 'Importance of YOU Counting Our Birds'

My President's letter last

month was about one of the Seven Simple Actions to Help Birds

(<https://www.birds.cornell.edu/home/seven-simple-actions-tohelp-birds>) and there we touched upon reducing your lawn size and planting native wildflowers for our pollinators, which anyone can do! A BAS committee will be working with some of our Bitterroot members who volunteered to set up Pollinator Gardens. If you would like information about that project, you can still contact me.

Our next Action step to help the birds is starting this month and will be about counting the birds we see, tracking them and reporting our data with Cornell Lab. I'm going to name it The "Colleen Powell Bird Feeder Watch Project." At last month's meeting we applauded John Ormiston for heading up the Christmas Bird Count for the Hamilton area and Collen Powell for heading up the CBC Bird Feeder Count for 33 years! They have passed their torches to others as of this year! And we thank them for their dedication to these extremely necessary projects. If our scientists didn't have accurate information then they would not know how the birds were doing, if they were declining, which species were declining, and where they were.

So I would like to share information with you about Project Feeder Watch and encourage you to join today! That's where the "Colleen Powell Bird Feeder Watch Project" comes in. Cornell Lab of Ornithology has a regular bird count project they do every November to April. Some of you may already have your packets. Great! But I want even more of us to sign up and count birds because you saw how incredibly important this information is to the world. You can join online for \$18 by visiting feederwatch@cornell.edu or feederwatch.org. You get all sorts of helpful stuff in the packet: Quick Guide, Handbook and Instructions, a calendar for the recording period of November 9th to April 3rd, Posters of Common Feeder Birds of Western North America and Backyard Hawks and Falcons. You can go to their website and look up all sorts of data-past year's data, trends of specific species, summaries for various states, etc. It will take several weeks for your packet to arrive so be patient but you can still get started while you wait. Let's

sign up and swamp the map of the Bitterroot with lots of red dots for the 2019-2020 year!!(<https://feederwatch.org/PFWMaps/participant>) You'll be helping the birds! And don't forget eBird and our CBC's!

Calendar of Events

- Nov 14:** "North America's Prairie Dog Ecosystem," presentation by Kristy Bly, sponsored by the Montana Native Plant Society at the North Valley Library, Stevensville, MT, 7PM.
- Nov 18:** Audubon Meeting/Program "Raptor Rehab/Wild Skies Raptor Center" by Brooke Tanner, Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT, 7PM, Board Mtg. 5PM.
- Dec 14:** Hamilton Christmas Bird Count, Teller Wildlife Refuge, 7:30AM.
- Dec 28:** Stevensville Christmas Bird Count, Stevensville Ranger Station, time TBA.
- Jan 20:** Program TBA, Forest Service/DNRC Building, Hamilton, MT, 7PM, Board Mtg. 5PM.
- Jan 2020:** Big Hole Christmas Bird Count, details TBA.
- Feb 17:** Audubon Meeting/Program "Fossil Hunting" by Jill Davies, Forest Service/DNRC Building, Hamilton, MT, 7PM, Board Mtg. 5PM.
- Mar 16:** Audubon Meeting/Program "Harlequin Ducks & Climate Change" by Chris Hammond, Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT, 7PM, Board Mtg. 5PM.
- Apr 20:** Audubon Meeting/Program "Grassland Birds, Wildlife & Ecology" by Kristy Blye, Forest Service/DNRC Building, Hamilton, MT, 7PM, Board Mtg. 5PM.
- May 18:** Audubon Meeting/Program "MPG Ranch: History & Research" by Kate Stone, Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT, 7PM, Board Mtg. 5PM.
- Summer 2020:**
Wings Across the Big Sky Birding Festival, TBA

Audubon Adventures in the Classroom

By Betsy Ballard

Bitterroot Audubon Society is contacting teachers for grades 3 through 5 this fall to see if they are interested in a gift of Audubon Adventures printed environmental education curriculum. If you know of any homeschoolers, or other educators that may be interested, please let them know about this opportunity.

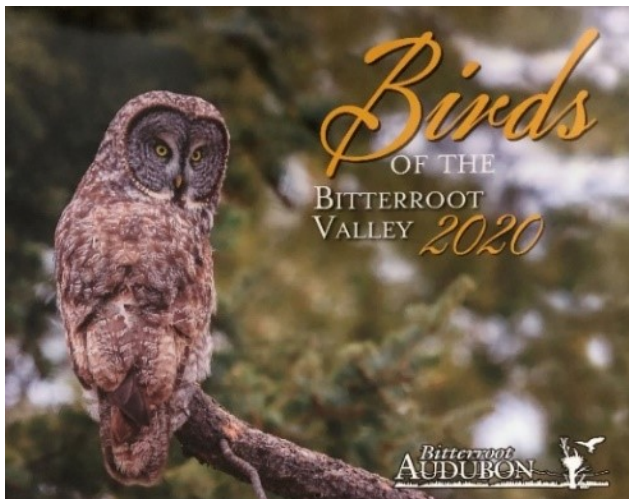
Orders from teachers must be received by December 1, 2019.

These curricula are graciously available through the donations from Bitterroot Audubon Society members. If you would like to donate, the cost of one printed classroom kit is \$45.95. You can bring donations to monthly meetings or mail your donation to Bitterroot Audubon Society at P.O. Box 326, Hamilton MT 59840.

The Bitterroot Audubon 2020 Calendar is here!!

By Becky Peters, BAS President

The Bitterroot Audubon has the perfect calendar for your family and a perfect gift for you to send to loved ones. It is lightweight, packs easily and shows off the beauty of the Bitterroot so well. It is our 2020 Calendar with some photos of our stunning avian friends that live here. Wait till you see the beauty of these birds! The photos were taken by talented Bitterroot photographers, with drawings of birds by Lone Rock 4th graders. These useful and informative calendars are only \$20 and the proceeds from our only fund raiser stay here in the valley for Bitterroot Audubon's work on conservation, education and scholarship projects. You can't find another calendar that does that! Help a local non-profit help the valley's habitat and wildlife! **Make sure to get your calendars at these stores: Florence Ace; Stevensville Ace; Stevensville Valley Drug and Variety; Corvallis Merc; Hamilton Gifts; Chapter One; Bitterroot Drug; and Robbins' Hallmark. Thank you for helping our birds and wildlife!**



What's the story, Story?

By Jim Story

Question: *Why is the small House Sparrow so successful at dominating nest cavities at the expense of native birds?*

Answer: The tremendous success of the very common, non-native House Sparrow can be explained with one word: aggressive. For a small bird, it is a fierce competitor for nest cavities. The sparrow is willing to fly at and strike other birds, including larger birds such as a Mountain Bluebird, to evict or prevent them from occupying a nest cavity. After flushing the prior resident from the cavity, the sparrow will then enter the cavity and block the entrance. Most cavity nesters like Tree Swallows, bluebirds, chickadees etc., are simply too passive to withstand the sparrow's aggressive behavior. A further indication of their extreme aggression occurred when I found dead Tree Swallow nestlings lying on the ground below a nest cavity that had been occupied by a Tree Swallow, but was now occupied by a House Sparrow. It was obvious that the sparrow had physically ejected the nestlings from the nest - pretty aggressive behavior for such a small bird.

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

News and Notes

Presentation sponsored by the Montana Native Plant Society

“North America's Prairie Dog Ecosystem” by Kristy Bly, Wildlife Biologist for the World Wildlife Fund. Prior to European settlement The Northern Great Plains was home to many millions of prairie dogs that altered the grasslands and the animals they supported. **November 14, 7:00 P.M. at the North Valley Library, 208 Main Street, Stevensville, MT.**

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 and Instagram

If you use Facebook or Instagram, please look for Bitterroot Audubon and “Like” us!

Bird Shots



Bald Eagle with prey.

Courtesy Mike Daniels

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WEBSITE: www.BitterrootAudubon.org

INSTAGRAM: [@bitterroot_audubon](https://www.instagram.com/bitterroot_audubon)
and on Facebook!

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
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