

Bitterroot AUDUBON



MAY 2020

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 34, NO. 9

**NO MAY MEETING, BAS SPRING
PROGRAMS POSTPONED TO
LATER DATES!**

What's The Weirdest Bird in the World?

By Judy Hoy

My Nominee: The Cassowary

Meet the Cassowaries - Dangerous Birding.

Cassowaries live in rainforest habitat in New Guinea, northeastern Australia, Queensland and nearby islands. The three species of Cassowary are Southern Cassowary (*Casuarius casuarius*), Northern Cassowary (*Casuarius unappendiculatus*) and Dwarf Cassowary (*Casuarius bennetti*), which as the name suggests, is the smallest, but still a large bird. Cassowaries are ratites, flightless birds without a keel closely related to Kiwis, with Ostrich, Emus and Rheas being some other related species.

Cassowaries differ from most birds and are interesting in appearance because they have a casque, a bony skin covered helmet, on the top of their head. Read more about the function of the casque for regulating body temperature here:

<https://www.audubon.org/news/did-scientists-just-settle-200-year-old-debate-about-cassowaries>

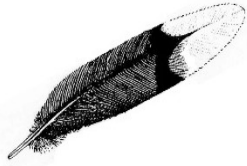
Their bodies are covered in dark feathers with colorful bright blue, purple, red and/or yellow-orange featherless skin on the face and neck, with color combinations depending on the species. They have three toes, with a sharp pointed straight dagger-like claw on the inside toe of each foot, which they use as weapons. Cassowaries are likely not a bird you would want to meet in a dark forest. They actually are known as dangerous because the larger cassowaries have been reported to have attacked and killed people. Finally, they closely resemble Corythoraptor (meaning crested raptor) an oviraptorid theropod dinosaur.



Southern Cassowary. Photo: Jurgen Freund/Minden Pictures/ Audubon.org

Letter from the President

By Becky Peters, BAS President



Well It is time for me to reminisce. My term as Bitterroot Audubon president has come to a close and I find myself looking back at all that I have learned. I have valued Bitterroot Audubon – its Board and its members, and as President these last few years I found myself becoming so dependent on everyone’s skills and expertise so much that 4 years later I value you all even more! And happily, I have learned more about birds as well, from taking so many of the workshops that BAS offered and of course the birding festivals of Montana Audubon and the many birding activities at MPG Ranch. I can hike up a trail now and listen to the many calls – because 80% of birding is hearing, not seeing – and know that is a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and that’s a Townsend’s Solitaire. I have gained from all our mind-expanding programs with our treasure trove of local experts. And there’s our wonderful Board Meetings complete with agreements and ideas with the members always thinking of the health of the wildlife and habitat of the valley. We have our glorious calendars that showcase our local birds (no calendar though this year, sad to say.) There’s our Scholarship Program (thanks to the calendar sales), the Winter Eagle Project that made it into the National Audubon Magazine! And it seemed like every time I turned around there was a BAS Board Member or a BAS Member in the newspaper about every other month doing some fantastic project. Now we have the Peregrine Watchers Citizen Science Project that has me looking at rock cliffs for hours at end and I love the peaceful quietness of that. eBird lessons have taught me the need for data recording, which dog-gone it, I still should get better at. The Pollinator Gardeners Project has taught me about what I can do for the bees and bugs, and now the project has expanded to involve experts and agencies throughout the valley. Of course, there have been the many field trips that have opened up the beauty of places in the Bitterroot to me, not just the birds.

When I look back I know that BAS has asked a great deal of me and yet has given back to me tenfold. It has enlarged my life in ways I never saw coming. I am excited to be remaining on the Board, supporting the new president, and working on many new projects with Bitterroot Audubon.

Calendar of Events

- May 18:** Highway clean-up, 5PM, meet on the west side of Bell Crossing. Call Skip for details (642-6840).
- May 18:** ~~Audubon Meeting/Program “MPG Ranch: History & Research” by Kate Stone, Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT, 7PM, Board Mtg. 5PM.~~
CANCELLED DUE TO COVID-19.
- Jun 5-7:** ~~Wings Across the Big Sky Birding Festival, Lewistown, MT.~~ **CANCELLED DUE TO COVID-19.**

In closing, this is not the way I wanted to end the year. I always like to have a potluck at the Metcalf at our May meeting, count the birds we have seen, and have fun socializing. But times decree that we stay safe, so no May meeting. Here’s hoping you have a fantastic summer staying 6’ apart as you hike the trails or sit and watch the birds. See you (?) next September.

Bird Together, Virtually!

By Micki Long

Because we will miss meetings, field trips, and special events like Welcome Back Waterfowl Day, we have devised a way for members to bird together, at least virtually. You should have received an email on March 28th about birding challenges we are posting on Bitterroot Audubon’s Facebook page. There have been some changes to the plan; instead of responses coming to me, they are simply posted under the Weekly Challenges, specifically, under the Discussion portion of each Weekly Challenge. You can quickly find the current and past challenges under Events in the menu on the left of the home page.

We plan to add a challenge a week for the foreseeable future. You are welcome to continue posting to past challenges as the weeks progress. I believe we are very lucky in loving to bird; we do not have to give up an activity that gives us much joy and solace. Please share your birding experiences with others in our Audubon community and learn what others are seeing and hearing. And stay safe!

Montana Audubon’s ‘Wings Across the Big Sky’ Festival postponed until 2021.

Field Notes

On a bit of a rain filled day at the Metcalf Refuge, I got to watch a Bald Eagle try to take a fish away from an osprey for about 3 minutes. All of a sudden a second Eagle dove at the first one. It must have presented a better offer as they both flew off in tandem. ~Mike Daniels



Courtesy Mike Daniels

My pandemic experience is entering a new phase, not because businesses will be opening but because my daughter and granddaughter have returned to their home. Keeping a four-year-old busy was fairly easy because we have so many natural wonders right outside our door and nearby, at places such as Lee Metcalf and Willoughby 40. At home, Stella and I watched the antics of Clark's Nutcrackers and laughed at their noisy conversations. We saw the dipper doing squats and swimming in the creek and the Yellow-rumped Warblers flitting around in the cottonwoods. We celebrated the explosion of shooting stars and buttercups and encouraged the emerging lupine. We tracked butterflies, like mourning cloaks and California tortoiseshells. At the Lee Metcalf ponds, we saw Virginia Rails, a Sora, and Stella's favorites, the coots. We saw the Great-horned Owls and one of the two owlets in the nest at the viewing areas of Lee Metcalf. And in addition to adventures with my granddaughter, I made time to work with Kate Stone to develop weekly challenges, posted on the BAS Facebook page, designed to get us all outside, searching for nuthatches (I met that challenge) and birds using cavities (I failed on that one), among other activities.

Now that Jane and Stella are gone, I will have more time to bird. But I intend to maintain social distancing and not stray too far from home for a bit longer—but not just out of concern for my safety. I want to continue to explore my yard and the surrounding woods, the creek next to my house, the pastures and cliffs a short walk down the road, and the special public lands minutes away. Yes, I will venture farther when this virus allows. But for now, I am quite content. That being said, I miss my birding friends and our monthly Audubon programs! Stay safe, everyone! ~Micki Long



House Finch.

Courtesy Robin Dewey

Annual Meeting Announcement

By Becky Peters

Dear members,

Every May we have the members present at that BAS meeting vote on the officers and Board members for the next year. It is our official annual meeting. Since there is not a meeting this May our voting will be done via "Survey Monkey." It will be coming to your email by this weekend so please keep an eye ready for it and check your spam. We will need your response of a simple YES or NO to the list of candidates in the Survey Monkey by Monday, May 18th. Thank you for your flexibility in this situation.

Highway Clean-up

Greetings Birders,

Our semi-annual highway clean-up will take place on Monday May 18 at 5PM. This will be in lieu of our normal indoor Audubon meeting. We'll meet and park on the west side of Bell Crossing to clean the highway a mile north and south from there, miles 60 to 62. Our name is on the big highway signs there, so come out and help make us look good. Bring gloves, and be prepared to practice proper social distancing. We'll supply bright vests and plastic bags. Please come! Many hands make light work! Questions? Call Skip at 642-6840.

News and Notes

BAS Members in the News

We are always proud of our members when they help our avian friends. Perry Backus of Ravalli Republic had a recent article (May 3rd) about our BAS Board member Kate Stone and BAS members Estelle Shuttleworth and Barb Garten. We are so impressed with their Citizen Science project about Lewis's Woodpeckers. Check out the article in case you missed it:

https://ravallirepublic.com/news/local/article_101c5dfc-d08b-584e-add6-5e9edd76a36c.html Thank you Kate and Estelle and Barb! Meriwether Lewis would be so pleased with what you're doing!

What's the story, Story?

By Jim Story

Question: What do birds hear?

Answer: As a group, birds are most sensitive to sounds in the frequency range of 1,000 to 5,000 Hertz (Hz) with an upper limit (except for owls) of about 10,000 Hz, depending on the species. The range of human hearing is 20 to 20,000 Hz. The range differs among bird species: the Horned Lark hears between 350 and 7600 Hz, the Canary from 1100 to 10,000, the House Sparrow from 675 to 11,500 Hz and the Long-eared Owl from 100 to 18,000 Hz. Even though the frequencies at which birds and humans hear best are similar, birds are more sensitive to the tone and rhythm of sound so they can more easily discern sounds even in a noisy environment. Studies suggest that the avian ear is capable of separating sounds that are as close together as two or three thousandths of a second, which is comparable to or somewhat better than what can be seen on a sonogram (a visual representation of a song). (Ehrlich et al. 1988, Lederer 2018).

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

Bird Walks at Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT

CANCELLED DUE TO COVID-19 UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

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



American Goldfinch.

Courtesy Robin Dewey

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Treasurer	Jim Story*	493-9813

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Instagram	Philip Williams*	
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Hospitality	Karen Griffing	
Membership	Rosan Stover	
Publicity	Heather Miller*	
Rep. to MT	Dave Lockman	777-2929
Audubon	Becky Peters*	
Scholarship	Skip Horner*	642-6840
Aud. Adv.	Betsy Ballard*	
Field Trips	Susan Nelson*	
At large	Judy Hoy*	777-2487
At large	Michele Falivene (Mimi)*	

* Board Member

EMAIL: contactus@bitterrootaudubon.org

WEBSITE: www.BitterrootAudubon.org

INSTAGRAM: @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
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NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION



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