

Bitterroot AUDUBON



APRIL 2021

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 35, NO. 8



Courtesy Maggie Hirschauer

Magnificent Vultures of Africa (VulPro book cover); Steve Andre Roos & Cape Vulture release 2021; Louise Gubb

Magnificent Vultures of Africa

By Kay Fulton

Vultures deserve our gratitude. They curtail the spread of disease through rapidly ridding the environment of decaying carcasses. Their demise may have catastrophic results for humans and the environment. Of the nine vulture species on the African continent, seven have declined by 80% in recent years. Conservation of these long-lived and often wide-ranging species is complicated as they face numerous threats that vary by species and location. VulPro is a non-profit conservation organization in South Africa dedicated to saving Africa's vultures. The VulPro vulture center, which currently houses over 250 non-releasable birds, is leading the way with captive breeding for reintroductions, rehabilitation, research, and



Courtesy Dewald Kleynhans

Hooded Vulture Chick with external fixator

education. This program will highlight the issues African vultures face today, VulPro's work to

advocate for these misunderstood creatures, and some insights learned after working with VulPro over several years.



Courtesy Kerri Wolter

Captive Breeding Cape Vultures and chick.

Maggie's Biography: Maggie always dreamed of life in Africa. While studying for her undergraduate degree in animal behavior at Indiana University, she jumped at the opportunity to manage a chimpanzee research project in a remote part of Uganda wilderness. Later she moved to Kenya to study blue monkey social dynamics in a forest facing increasing human encroachment. For three years she lived at VulPro vulture facility while undertaking her Zoology MS research with the Cape Vulture captive breeding program. Her thesis through Rhodes University (South Africa) followed several captive-bred chicks, starting with their parent's copulations and ending with the chick's social integration into the wild. She helped develop soft release protocols for the endangered species reintroduction program which now includes a release enclosure on top of a wild colony cliff in the Magaliesberg Mountains. She currently lives in Florence, Montana, where she works for MPG Ranch conducting monarch butterfly research in summer and mountain lion tracking in winter. She remains involved with VulPro by contributing to research publications and acting as a representative.

ZOOM Program by Maggie for Bitterroot Audubon, Monday, April 19th at 7:00 P.M. Come join BAS to learn about these fascinating birds of Africa and the efforts being made to save their species. Maggie will share her own personal experiences in these efforts. **The Public is invited.**

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMpf-iprD0rG9GnrpAY5COHzJU-56SftXQ>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.



Courtesy VulPro Staff

Cliff Work Marking Cape nestlings at Skeerport Colony.

Letter from the President

By Micki Long, BAS President

Happy Spring! We've enjoyed some warm and sunny days already, and migrating birds are arriving. It's a good time to be a birder—and a volunteer. On a beautiful day in early April, Dave Lockman and I looked for courting Peregrine Falcons in Kootenai Canyon. Since 2019, several Bitterroot Audubon members have volunteered for the Raptor Guardians/Peregrine Watch program, explained by Dave in the March newsletter. I won't repeat the same information, except to emphasize how important it is for the Forest Service to know the location of active Peregrine and Golden Eagle nests in order to protect them.



After leaving the Kootenai Creek trail, Dave and I scrambled up loose talus and around two cliff bands to a spot where we could watch the highest cliffs, looking for Peregrines. We each found a flat rock and settled in for the next three hours. The songs of Red-breasted Nuthatches and Northern Flickers and the scent of sun-warmed pine needles filled air. Turkey Vultures flew below and above, checking us out (and maybe disappointed to see our movements).



Courtesy Micki Long

Dave Lockman watching the cliffs for Peregrine Falcons.

Within 15 minutes of our arrival, Dave spotted a Peregrine perched at the top of the highest point in the cliffs. I was surprised at how small she looked against the huge rock face and had to adjust my sense of the scale. She stayed there for at least 30 minutes and then flew to a narrow cliff ledge, where she was well camouflaged, visible only when she moved, until the sun lit up her white breast. From time to time, she flew in a large circle and then returned to her ledge. On one of her flights, the Peregrine encountered a Common Raven who had the nerve to fly near the cliff; she attacked it twice, which, aside from any pain to the Raven, was exciting to see. Dave, the veteran watcher, wasn't sure he had ever seen a Peregrine attack a Raven. And the attack, in defense of territory, was evidence of occupancy! And then, as we got ready to leave, we saw a second, smaller (presumably male) Peregrine Falcon—more evidence of occupancy. A pair of Peregrines! Over the next few months, I'm really hoping to see chicks and then fledglings on a nest ledge—which would be a great reward for that hazardous climb. Thanks to Jay Sumner and Dave Lockman for helping us learn to be Peregrine watchers!

I usually recommend an article or two from national Audubon's website. The recommendation this month comes from Becky Peters, our illustrious former President! It is an article called "Creating Bird-Friendly Communities: Lights Out."

https://www.audubon.org/conservation/project/light-s-out?ms=digital-eng-social-facebook-x-20210300-nas_eng&utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=20210300_nas_eng

I hope to see some of you out birding, at Lee Metcalf, Skalkaho Bend Park, or any Important Bird Area in our valley. Remember that you can find a

list of IBAs on our website:

<https://www.bitterrootaudubon.org/important-bird-areas>

Happy Birding!

Welcome Back Waterfowl Day

By Judy Hoy

Bitterroot Audubon Society will not be having a formal Welcome Back Waterfowl Day at the Lee Metcalf Refuge in April 2021. The Covid-19 virus, and especially its variants, is still a concern for gatherings and for multiple people using the same spotting scopes. However, we strongly encourage bird lovers and families to go to the Lee Metcalf Refuge to view and welcome the waterfowl and other migrating birds back to the Bitterroot. Some of the waterfowl we have seen in previous years include: Trumpeter Swan, Tundra Swan, Canada Goose, Snow Goose, Ross's Goose, Pied-billed Grebe, Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal, Cinnamon Teal, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Eurasian Wigeon, Canvasback, Ring-necked Duck, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Common Goldeneye, Barrow's Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Lesser Scaup, Redhead, and American Coot. Also look for birds that live near water sources, such as Virginia Rail, Sora, Killdeer, and Sandhill Crane. Be sure not to miss the Great Blue Herons in their nesting area in the pine trees north of the western end of the county road along the dike. Hopefully, by next year, everyone will be vaccinated, and we will again be able to have a normal Welcome Back Waterfowl Day.

Odds and Ends

By Becky Peters

Pollinator Gardeners: It may be Spring on the calendar but it is snowing as I write this. Soon our weather will be more consistent. First, sorry for any miscommunication for volunteers wanting to help BAS with tilling and raking down at the Skalkaho Bend restoration project. It is the Bitter Root Water Forum's lead and they knew when they wanted to spread the grass and flower seeds. I hope that many of you have volunteered directly with BRWF on this momentous project. Don't forget Earth Day down there on April 22nd.

Lastly, if anyone else wants some information, any information, that I can pass along to you about the need for pollinator gardens and getting one started—please email me, rpeters@montana.com. Subject

line—Pollinators. If I have forgotten to get you the information, please email me again! The need for native pollinator gardens gets more important every year! We at all the Audubon Societies across the nation thank you for planting with purpose!

Bitterroot Audubon 2022 Calendar:

Photographers, please don't forget to send us your submissions. Our calendar committee will be looking them over and making decisions April 15th. Remember to send in your extremely sharp, uncropped color photographs of the birds that showcase the birds' distinguishing parts for ID purposes. We print the calendar pictures in portrait format. Send your submissions to bitterrootcalendar@gmail.com Thank you, and our scholarship, education, and conservation funds thank you as well!

Farmer's Market: Along with the Calendar for 2022 we will need someone, or two "someones," to coordinate the volunteers for the Farmer's Market this summer. Interested? This is a major part of selling our calendar, BAS's only fundraiser. We will teach you the ropes. From there you wrangle our volunteers – who are stupendous I might add! That leads me to all the volunteers we need. Would you like to take a 3 ½ hour shift at the Farmer's Market some Saturday and talk to kids and families and tourists? You do not need to know anything about birds, just mainly sell the calendar, which sells itself really. We sell from July to October. Please email me at rpeters@montana.com with subject line – Farmer's Market.

Peregrine/Raptor Watchers: Volunteers have started to hike up our canyons and sit and wait for any courting activity that we might observe. The first weeks of April are a crucial time for observations. A few in our group of Citizen Scientists have been lucky enough to watch some great flying between a Peregrine couple and a Bald Eagle. There are some canyons that still do not have any volunteers: Sweeney Creek, Fred Burr, Tin Cup Creek, Trapper Creek, Boulder Creek, and others. If you are interested in more information on this project, we have detailed descriptions of what the hikes would potentially involve in each of these canyons. Let Micki Long know- mickilong@gmail.com or let me know rpeters@montana.com subject line – Peregrines.

Calendar of Events

- Apr 15:** Deadline for photo submission for Bitterroot Audubon Calendar
- Apr 19:** **ZOOM** Audubon Meeting/Program, Magnificent Vultures of Africa, 7PM, Zoom Board Mtg. 5PM.
- April 20:** Highway Clean-up, 4PM, see announcement in this newsletter.
- May 17:** **ZOOM** Audubon Meeting/Program, details to be announced, 7PM, Zoom Board Mtg. 5PM.

The Word From The Board

By John Ormiston, BAS Secretary

First, I must apologize for misinformation in last month's note. Our Byron Williams Memorial Scholarship awards a **\$1,000** scholarship to a deserving student each semester.

At our March meeting we accepted two resignations from our Board of Directors. Philip Williams applied for and has accepted permanent employment with the Panhandle National Forest in Coeur 'd Alene, Idaho. We came to know Philip as a recipient of 2 (or was it 3?) Byron Williams Memorial Scholarships. He achieved a MS in Forestry from University of Montana and has been a valuable, young, member of our Board while searching for employment. Congratulations Philip, best of luck in your future endeavors.

Kay Fulton decided to move closer to family in Oregon, and will be moving sometime in the near future. Kay served as BAS President for several years. She's coordinated programs for our monthly meeting programs and has been a very active member of our board, especially as a member of the calendar committee. Kay, you will be missed and difficult to replace as Program Committee Chair.

Our youth education efforts continue with 5 classroom teachers and 9 home schoolers using National Audubon Society Audubon Adventures. Thank you to members who sponsored a packet of materials for 5 to 7th graders. We authorized the expenditure of chapter funds to purchase a virtual program called Bird Flight Patterns in Music. The video will be available to anyone on our website for use by classrooms or for members enjoyment. Go to bitterrootaudubon.org to search for the program.

Our 2020 homegrown calendar is taking shape. The committee secured a permanent booth spot at

Hamilton Farmer's Market, they'll be looking for members to staff the booth when we have calendars for sale in early July.

There are opportunities to help Bitterroot Audubon spread our mission in the Bitterroot. We need someone to help with coordinating efforts to secure programs for regular meetings (in person or Zoom?) in 2021-2022. The Scholarship Committee would like to add two members. Contact President Micki or any Board member to lend a hand.

Highway Clean-Up

By Skip Horner

Please come out and help us keep our section of the highway clean, Tuesday, April 20th at 4PM. Meet on Bell Crossing Road, on the west side, off of Highway 93.

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

Thanks!

Bird Flight Patterns and Music

By Betsy Ballard



Bitterroot Audubon Society is excited to present Bird Flight Patterns and Music, an educational experience brought to you by the New Bedford Symphony Orchestra. Bitterroot Audubon has purchased one year of access to this program, through March of 2022. To access this content, please contact Betsy Ballard at Bitterroot Audubon "Contact Us" button on the BAS website to receive the password.

Have a password? Go to the following Bird Flight Patterns and Music Link:

<https://nbsymphony.org/bird-flight-patterns-and-music-curriculum/>

On this page you will find the full concert video and

online curriculum with activities, lessons, extra musical performances, composer interviews and educational games. We hope you enjoy this opportunity!

What's the story, Story?

By Jim Story

Question: How well do birds see color?

Answer: Diurnal birds (active in the daytime) do have color vision, while nocturnal birds are thought to be color blind. The ability of some birds to see color is obvious in hummingbirds which show a distinct preference for red. The degree of color vision in diurnal birds has not been determined, but the makeup of the retinal receptors (cones) suggest that birds' color perception may be far better than ours. There is also evidence that some birds see ultraviolet light. This is shown again in hummingbirds which are attracted to flowers with patterns visible in the ultraviolet spectrum. I'm personally convinced that diurnal birds have visual abilities that we can't fully appreciate. How else can we explain their ability to rapidly detect edible seeds that they've never seen before (i.e., sunflower seed) in a strange-shaped bird feeder which is unlike anything in nature? The ability to see ultraviolet light is probably a key factor, but other visual capabilities may also contribute. (Some info from the Birder's Handbook).

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

News and Notes

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



Pair of Trumpeter Swans.

Courtesy Mel Holloway

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| Secretary | John Ormiston* | 360-9530 |
| Treasurer | Jim Story* | 493-9813 |

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| Website | Kay Fulton* | |
| Instagram | Kate Stone* | |
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| At large | Judy Hoy* | 777-2487 |
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| At large | Becky Peters* | |

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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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NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION



Audubon

Renew or Sign up
for your
National Audubon Membership at
Audubon.org