

Bitterroot AUDUBON



SEPTEMBER 2021

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 36, NO. 1

Pisces and Passerines, Fish and Fowl

By Christine Brissette, of Trout Unlimited



Courtesy Christine Brissette

Ninemile floodplain.

Trout Unlimited has worked in the Bitterroot for decades restoring fish habitat, but their projects often benefit more than just fish. Efforts to improve riparian and wetland communities have also been shown to impact a wide range of riparian-dependent birds, amphibians, and mammals. In fact, riparian systems support a higher abundance and diversity of bird species than any other habitat in the western U.S. and are the preferred breeding habitat for at least 30 Montana species of concern. As it turns out, what's good for the fish is often good for the broader ecosystem.

On Monday, September 20th, Christine Brissette, Trout Unlimited's Bitterroot project manager, will present on several recent projects that have vastly improved habitat for wildlife above and below water. These projects range from fencing riparian areas on cattle ground, to dam removal and large-scale mine reclamation efforts. Through partnerships with the Montana Bird Ecology lab, the Montana Natural Heritage Program and others, Trout Unlimited staff are learning how to best incorporate features like snags and wetland swales that can extend the value of the work we do for fish, to non-fish species.

Christine will also discuss an upcoming project on Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge to remove a fish passage barrier, reconnecting 3.5 miles of stream habitat to the Bitterroot River. Input from birders and wildlife advocates will be central to the design of this exciting project, and we hope that you'll participate in future opportunities to provide feedback and comment.

Christine has worked in stream restoration for 15 years. She has an M.S. in Watershed Hydrology and spends much of her free time on Montana rivers. As Trout Unlimited's Bitterroot Project Manager, she works with local partners to develop projects that improve aquatic habitat and water quality throughout the valley. This includes installing fish screens to eliminate fish entrainment in irrigation ditches, identifying and removing fish passage barriers, riparian revegetation and monitoring.



Courtesy Christine Brissette

ZOOM Program by Christine Brissette for Bitterroot Audubon, Monday, September 20th at 7:00 P.M. Come join BAS to learn about riparian habitat restoration in the Bitterroot Valley. **The Public is invited.**

Registration is required for access to the program (to minimize the chance of another Zoom Bombing). Register here:

You are invited to a Zoom meeting.

When: Sep 20, 2021 07:00 PM Mountain Time (US and Canada)

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwvdO6rqj5vE9RLj9sVxgP5vRzz6k81mPhW>

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

Letter from the President

By Micki Long, BAS President

One of my priorities this summer was to find a larger meeting place, as I don't ever want to be as crowded as we have been during some of our meetings. Mike Daniels, Vice-President of BAS, and I found a great spot, in Victor, a central location. The space is large, with nice bathrooms and a kitchen. However, conditions have changed in the valley. Our September and November presenters no longer want to present in person, and our October presenter does not live in the area, so it looks like a Zoom autumn. Let's hope we can see each in person in December, in a new space!

I am writing this as I sit at my kitchen table, looking out the picture window at birds—and at the Bitterroot Mountains slowly disappearing behind a curtain of smoke. I'm very grateful that we've had many beautiful days in late August and early September, days with the AQI in the "Good" range. But looking back at this summer, I try to resist the temptation to focus on the smoke and unusual heat that marked too many days and forced me to cancel plans to hike, bike, bird, or just sit on the deck. After all, we have been far luckier than many in the West this summer.

Instead, I think about a wonderful way this summer was special: baby birds around my house! I did see more courtship behavior than in other years, but there must have been much courting I missed, judging by the number and diversity of fledglings teetering, wobbling, and begging their parents for food. The "nursery" in and around the yard included a fledgling Great Horned Owl, several broods of California Quail, two families of Wild Turkeys, and babies of many other species, including Clark's Nutcracker; Steller's Jay; Black-capped Chickadee; Pileated Woodpecker; Rufous, Black-chinned and Calliope Hummingbirds; American Robin; American Dipper; Warbling Vireo; Eastern

Kingbird; Mourning Dove; and Cedar Waxwing. I spent many happy hours just watching and listening to them. What a variety of begging calls! I am not sure why more birds chose to breed near my house this year; I just hope they nest here again next year!

On a less happy note, work continued this summer on a Bitterroot National Forest (BNF) Climbing Management Plan (CMP). Progress is slow, and when it comes to protecting nesting raptors in Bitterroot canyons, progress is, in my opinion, nonexistent. Many of us are concerned about disturbance, both visual and auditory, of active raptor nests by those using nearby climbing routes. We advocate the kind of buffers recommended by many experts and adopted by many land managers across the country. However, the BNF's proposal on protecting raptor nests is, according to BNF staff at the August public Zoom meeting, virtually the status quo. There are still opportunities for public input, both now (at SM.FS.BRFClimbing@usda.gov) and when a completed CMP proposal undergoes the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) process. You can find information about the CMP process to date on the BNF site; in addition, feel free to contact me for materials I (and others) have compiled in support of stronger protections. The protections we ask for are common across the U.S.

I'll see you soon, via Zoom!



Courtesy Micki Long

Fledgling Cedar Waxwing.

At the Farmer's Market It's All About Our Birds!

By Becky Peters



Courtesy Becky Peters

BAS Farmer's Market Booth; Kay Fulton, Dee Winter, Carol Hamacher.

If you are ever near the Hamilton Farmer's Market on Saturdays, be sure to stop by the Bitterroot Audubon Booth on Bedford Street. We have lots of handouts and fun things to talk about – not just the beautiful 2022 Calendar to sell.

For the kids (but adults love them as well) we have “Guess the Bird,” where you have to squeeze the mystery bird inside the bag and listen to its call to figure out what bird it is. We also have “What Bird Am I?” – pictures of birds; the challenge is to see if you can name them. Don't worry, we give you lots of help.

The team at the booth loves to talk about birds. You may have a bird question and we'll do our verrrry best to answer it. Or maybe you have a bird sighting you'd like to share; we want to hear about it. WE TALK BIRDS!

We have many handouts for you, and we appreciate you taking them and sharing them with your friends:

- Wild Skies Raptor Center's handout has information about all the important rehab they do for our raptors.
- 7 Things You Can Do to Help Birds
<https://www.birds.cornell.edu/home/seven-simple-actions-to-help-birds/>
- Volunteer to Grow a Pollinator Garden

- Invite Birds, Bats, and Butterflies to Your Country Home
- Invite Birds, Bats, and Butterflies to Your Yard
- Protect Our Birds
- Speak Up Against Bird-Killing Pesticides
- For Our Birds' Sake Grow a Pollinator Garden
- Winter Raptors of the Bitterroot Valley
- Monarchs and Milkweeds
- Pollinator and Native Plant Gardening Tips
- Alternatives to Lead Bullets
- Birding in the Missoula and Bitterroot Valleys, our bird species checklist
- Our Birds Call This Home, Living with birds along the Bitterroot Watershed

Be sure to come by and say Hi!

AWESOME HIGHWAY CLEANUP

By Skip Horner

Our semi-annual highway cleanup will take place on Wednesday, October 13th, at 4PM.

We'll meet and park on the west side of Bell Crossing and clean miles 60 to 62 north and south from there. Bitterroot Audubon's name is on those big highway signs, so come out and help us look good.

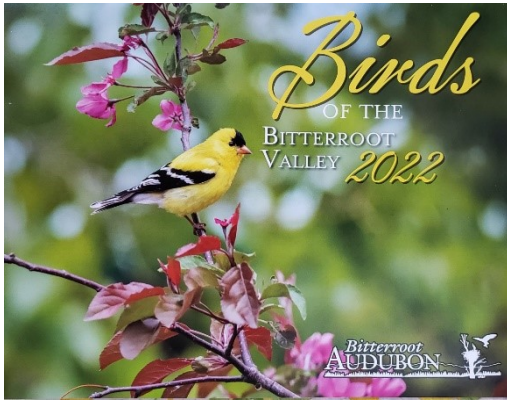
Bring your own gloves. We'll supply hi-viz vests and large plastic bags.

Questions? Call Skip at 369-5367

Bitterroot Audubon's Calendar is back and it's a beauty!

By Becky Peters

A very committed Calendar Committee of seven sturdy souls started meeting in March via Zoom, and meeting and meeting and then eventually meeting in person. We began looking at over 400 photographs submitted by Bitterroot Valley citizens in April. Then we had the painful task of winnowing some stunning photos down to 100, then 50, then eventually 25. Each committee member had to say goodbye to favorite photos that touched



their heart. The very specific standards we went by were that the bird had to be in its natural habitat, the photo had to be extremely sharp with a catch light in the eye, the main identification parts of the bird were plain to see, and the bird had not been one of our previous monthly birds. Sometimes a decision came down to things like the tilt of this bird's head vs. the sheen on that bird's neck. This took time and a lot of hard work for the dedicated committee. Thank you so much to (left to right) Becky Peters, Mike Daniels, Sara Ashline, Marg Johnson, Pam Murphy, Mel Holloway, and Christine Coffin (not pictured). What a creative team!

Courtesy Bill Peters



2022 BAS Calendar Committee members; Becky Peters, Mike Daniels, Sara Ashline, Marg Johnson, Pam Murphy, Mel Holloway.

You have got to see the unbelievable photos that our talented photographers took of the birds in our valley and the adorable drawings by last year's Daly Elementary 4th graders! HUGE thank you to those artists!

The purpose of our calendar isn't just to raise money but to educate our citizens about our birds and to encourage the love of birds. So now we need your help for us to do what we do so well. Be sure to support Bitterroot Audubon and buy your copy (or two) for a mere \$20 each. Your money will help

us with all the great work we do to support other local non-profits, bird rehab organizations, summer schools for kids, college scholarships, pollinator gardens, habitat rehabilitation, etc. All your money stays local to help local projects in our valley that benefit our local environment, our local kids, and our local birds (and even the birds that migrate through)!!

You can find the calendars for sale at these great places: Florence Ace, Gary and Leo's Foods, Stevensville Ace, Valley Drug and Variety, Browsing Bison Bookstore, Stevensville Farmer's Market, K & S Nursery, Corvallis Drug, Jo's Studio, Lakeland Feed, Robbin's Hallmark, Bitterroot Drug, Stone Cottage, Chapter One, and Hamilton Farmer's Market! You can also purchase them online for \$25 at our website:

<https://bitterrootaudubon.org/support-us>

Thank you, and our birds in their healthy habitats thank you!

Calendar of Events

- Sep 20:** ZOOM Audubon Meeting/Program, Pisces and Passerines, Fish and Fowl, 7PM.
- Oct 9:** eBird's October Big Day. More info in "Around the Web" article in this newsletter.
- Oct 13:** Highway Clean-up, 4PM, see announcement in this newsletter.
- Oct 18:** ZOOM Audubon Meeting/Program, details to be announced, 7PM,

Bird Flight Patterns and Music

By Betsy Ballard

Bitterroot Audubon Society is excited to present **Bird Flight Patterns and Music**. Your group is now able to access the online concert video and curriculum. The link and password will bring you to the Bird Flight Patterns and Music webpage.

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.

Please contact Betsy Ballard to receive the password at contactus@bitterrootaudubon.org



While adults will enjoy watching the concert video all the way through, we are recommending that teachers show the concert video in segments. For example, the students may watch the segment on the flap and glide flight pattern and listen to this motion imitated in the performance of Strauss' Acceleration Waltz. Following this segment, the teacher can stop the video and lead the children on activities connected to the flap and glide flight pattern on the website.

The Bird Flight Patterns and Music webpage with concert video and online activities will remain active for at least one year. Therefore, you may visit and revisit at any time from now through March 2022!

Around the Web

By Micki Long

There are plenty of sobering and depressing articles about the fate of birds (and humans) in this rapidly warming world. But I found a web page that celebrates birds and should put a smile on your face. It's about the Audubon Mural Project; so far, at the time I write this, there are 93 murals depicting 131 species. You'll see beautiful depictions of birds: <https://www.audubon.org/amp> The article also includes links to each species in the murals, where you can read about the bird and the artist. For example, here is linked page for the Williamson's Sapsucker:

<https://www.audubon.org/news/williamsons-sapsucker-atm>

BirdScapes is a program sponsored by the American Bird Conservancy and partner groups; BirdScapes are "priority habitat areas" that works to "ensure that priority species have the habitat they require at all stages of their life-cycles: breeding, wintering,

and stopover on migration." Learn more about this program: <https://abcbirds.org/birds/birdscapes/>

And last, eBird's October Big Day is coming up, on October 9th. Alone or with friends, go out on October 9th and help set a new global record for birding: <https://ebird.org/news/october-big-day-2021>

Kids' Corner: Pollinators in The Garden

By Ada Bernauer (age 10) and Annie Bernauer



Courtesy Ada Bernauer and Annie Bernauer

Sunflower.

Last year, Becky Peters from the Bitterroot Audubon Society did a virtual presentation about pollinators for our Bitterroot Girl Scouts Troop. This summer I also learned about pollinators at a day camp at O'Hara Commons and Sustainability Center in Hamilton. I learned about different kinds of pollinators, the importance of pollinators, and how we can help the pollinators.

We have vegetable gardens that we tend at our house. The last couple of years we also planted fruit trees, native shrubs, and flowers that the pollinators love. We have two bird baths we keep fresh water in for the pollinators. Our family also has a couple of honeybee hives that my five-year-old brother and I are learning to care for.

My mom works at the Victor Community Garden and this spring invited our Girl Scout Troop to help plant vegetables and flowers in a garden plot dedicated to growing food for the local food bank. I helped to care for the plants and observed them throughout the summer. This spring my Girl Scout Troop also built bird houses and hung them up in the Community Garden. They provided homes for several kinds of birds.

Over the summer, we observed a variety of pollinators at home and at the Community Garden. At home we have a big window in our dining room that overlooks one of our flower gardens. When sitting at the table, we observed lots of pollinators in the flowers. We saw hummingbirds, honeybees, bumble bees, native bees, and butterflies like Swallowtails and Mourning Cloaks. Once the flowers went to seed, we saw birds swoop in to eat the seeds.

At the Victor Community Garden, we observed a lot of pollinators in the vegetable gardens and the native plant garden. We saw butterflies, honeybees, native bees, and hummingbirds. One time we heard a hummingbird buzz past our heads! At the Community Garden there are a lot of sunflowers that have been pollinated and go to seed at the end of the summer. When they go to seed, we see the birds fly in and hang on the stalk with their feet and peck at the seeds. It's pretty cool!

I learned a lot about pollinators, and I really enjoyed working in the gardens and observing the pollinators that would come to visit.

What's the story, Story?

By Jim Story

Question: If birds are related to dinosaurs, why did the birds survive while dinosaurs went extinct?

Answer: The first birds appeared about 150 million years ago, evolving from small, feathered dinosaurs. About 66 million years ago, a large meteor struck the Yucatan Peninsula, creating catastrophic conditions worldwide that eliminated 75 percent of species known on the earth at that time. Prior to the catastrophe, there were many types of birds, including birds with teeth and birds with beaks. But beaked birds were the only dinosaur group to survive the catastrophe, while all other bird groups and non-avian dinosaurs perished.

The reasons why beaked birds were able to survive are believed to be due to several factors. The development of beaks was likely an important factor as it allowed the birds to eat a more varied diet, including seeds and other hard items that probably

remained available after the catastrophe. But beaks were obviously not the only factor because some birds with beaks didn't survive. Another important factor may have been the presence of strong gizzards that allowed the birds to feed on the seeds. An additional factor may be related to birds' brain size. Long before the catastrophe, bird body size had been shrinking while brain size remained unchanged, resulting in large brains compared to body size, so bird intelligence was likely greater than that of non-avian dinosaurs. Flight, once thought to be a reason for their survival, was probably not a key factor as many toothed birds were strong fliers but failed to survive. There were probably other factors contributing to the survival of birds, but clues about those factors can only be gleaned from fossils originating immediately following the catastrophe, and those fossils have been very hard to find. (Much of the above information was obtained from an excellent article by Riley Black in Smithsonianmag.com, Sept. 15, 2020).

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



House Finch with grub in its bill. Corvallis, MT.

Courtesy Carol Babel

BITTERROOT AUDUBON
PO BOX 326
HAMILTON MT 59840-0326

Officers

President	Micki Long*	440-221-5256
Vice-Pres.	Mike Daniels*	
Secretary	John Ormiston*	360-9530
Treasurer	Jim Story*	493-9813

Directors & Committee Chairs

IBA Program & Conservation Programs	Micki Long*	
Website	Kate Stone*	
Instagram	Philip Williams	
Education	Betsy Ballard*	
Nwsltr. Ed. & Distribution	Sara Ashline baseditors@gmail.com	
Hospitality	Rosan Stover	
Membership	Becky Miller*	
Publicity	Dave Lockman	777-2929
Rep. to MT Audubon	Micki Long* Mike Daniels	
Scholarship	Skip Horner*	642-6840
Aud. Adv.	Betsy Ballard*	
Field Trips	Susan Nelson*	
At large	Judy Hoy*	777-2487
At large	Michele Falivene (Mimi)*	
At large	Becky Peters*	
At large	Annie Bernauer*	

* 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