

Bitterroot AUDUBON



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NEWSLETTER

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The Rhythms of the Natural World

By Paul Belanger

The Bitterroot Phenological Society (BPS) is an informal collaborative effort developed by Paul Belanger and Samantha O'Byrne. As stated on their Facebook page, the BPS "facilitates positive outdoor experiences, led by local naturalists, in the city parks and throughout the Bitterroot Valley to build our collective knowledge, understanding and connection to the rhythms of the natural world - its Phenology."

Phenology is the study of the seasonal timing of life cycle events of organisms in the natural world. These phenological indicators, such as the first flowering Buttercup or the arrival of the first bluebird, "can be thought of as biological timepieces that respond to seasonal variation between years." These indicators have become an important tool for better assessing the impact of climate change on species, populations, and ecological communities. This is not a new addition to the scientists' toolbox. Farmers, ranchers, gardeners, birders, nature lovers, hunters, and indigenous peoples have used the timing of events in the natural world as indicators of when to harvest foods, plant, hunt, fish, and more.

In this presentation, Paul will lead us in exploring how phenology has been applied in the sciences and in particular the study of climate change. We will also explore the various tools we have at our disposal to contribute our observations to the phenological database. And finally, how an organized phenological network in the Bitterroot Valley holds the potential to build a deeper collective sense of place around our shared interest in observing and playing in the outdoors.

About our Presenter, Paul Belanger:

Paul Belanger came to the Bitterroot Valley in 2002 to work for the Montana Audubon Society as a

conservation educator. His initial work was focused on engaging the local community in studying the impacts of logging post-fire landscapes on cavity-nesting birds. After ten of the most rewarding years with Montana Audubon, Paul moved on to be the Director of Science, Outdoor, and Adventure programs for Global Travel Alliance, a Montana-based international education travel company. Paul first came to understand the exciting opportunities of phenological studies while studying sense of place education at the Teton Science School and then later through his work alongside ranchers and conservationists in Teton County, MT. Paul and his wife Dulcie raised two wonderful boys in Hamilton. He is an active outdoor enthusiast, international guide, gardener, hunter, and an aspiring birder.

You are invited to a Zoom meeting.

When: Jan 17, 2022 07:00 PM Mountain Time (US and Canada)

Register in advance for this meeting:

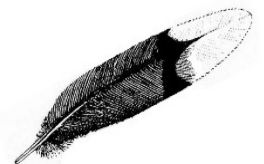
https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0oduurrTMiE9x1DJX4_YUNmQvnrAdW_Ly

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

Letter from the President

By Micki Long, BAS President

Happy New Year, everyone! I hope you enjoyed the holidays. My small house was bursting at the seams with family and their dogs. As a snow lover, I was very happy to have a white Christmas. I hope to use my cross-country skis and snowshoes more often this year than last—sounds a bit like a resolution, doesn't it? And I suppose I am resolved to take media breaks and to spend as much time as possible outside, observing and experiencing the



natural world around me. I find inspiration for quiet contemplation of nature in our own Deb Goslin, Montana's first Certified Forest Therapy Guide. In case you missed the Ravalli Republic article, here it is: https://ravallirepublic.com/news/local/forest-bathing-expert-offers-refreshment-healing-in-the-woods/article_98fe5083-95b3-5d0e-9f31-8418ecf330f2.html

Like many of you, I participated in a Christmas Bird Count this year. The Stevensville count was December 26th; I look forward to reading or hearing about both the Hamilton and Stevensville counts. I have heard from many that they are seeing fewer birds lately. Will the numbers show fewer species and/or fewer individuals? A friend and I did the same route, more or less, as we did last year (only this year, as we both have been vaccinated and boosted, we drove in the same car). We found close to the same number of species but perhaps not as many individuals. Willoughby 40 turned out to be one of the highlights for us that day; there we saw a Northern Shrike and the Trifecta of Nuthatches. Four Bald Eagles in the same tree, right in Stevensville, was another highlight. We also saw many Rough-legged Hawks and a few Northern Harriers. The five hours we spent birding flew by (sorry for that sorry pun).



Courtesy Micki Long

Immature Bald Eagle.

In some good news for birds, the Biden Administration's revocation of changes made to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act by the previous administration went into effect on December 3rd. Once again, companies will have to take reasonable measures to avoid "incidental take," the harming or killing of birds. For more info, see this Audubon

article: <https://www.audubon.org/news/bird-protections-restored-and-key-process-advances-strengthen-rules>

Work on the Bitterroot National Forest's Climbing Management Plan (CMP), which, we hope, will help protect nesting raptors, continues. The CMP will put measures in place to protect Forest wildlife and habitat as well as historical and cultural resources. At the last Zoom meeting, in December, we heard from representatives of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) Katie McDonald and Tony Incashola, a Tribal Elder, spoke about the importance of the Bitterroot to the Salish people. Their presentation was moving and reminded me and other listeners to honor and respect the heritage of those who thrived in the Bitterroot area before they were removed to the Flathead reservation. The Forest will work with CSKT to include protections for cultural sites in the CMP. The next CMP Zoom meeting will be January 19th. I don't believe Zoom invites have gone out yet, but if you are interested in attending, contact BNF's Caleb George: caleb.george@fs.fed.us

Take care and stay safe, everyone!

Local Chapter Member Renewal

By Heather Miller

BAS membership renewal for 2022 is due by January 31st. It is only \$15. Renew online through the BAS website to support Bitterroot Audubon: <http://www.bitterrootaudubon.org/membership> and click on the "Join Now" button to pay with credit card. You can also renew through mail by sending your name, address, email, and check (made out to the Bitterroot Audubon Society) to:

Bitterroot Audubon Supporting Member
P.O. Box 326, Hamilton, MT 59840

Hamilton's 35th Annual CBC

By John Ormiston

The 35th Annual Hamilton Christmas Bird Count is in the books, along with 2021. It's good to have them both over and done with. We had decent weather on 12/18 starting with 9 degrees at dawn with clear skies and no wind and ending at dusk with 37 degrees and wind from the south. We had 26 observers in the field in 12 parties, some walking and some walking and driving. The 17 feeder watchers added two species for a total of 68 seen, just one above average. There are now 26 species seen all 35 years of the count, 7 seen all but once

and 21 species seen only one year, including the new to the count species Lincoln Sparrows. There are now 134 species on the total species seen in the Hamilton CBC circle.

Bill Good lead the Teller contingent of observers for the 35th time. I believe he's the only person who has been present for all 35 years of the Hamilton count. Not only has he been in the field, but he has supplied our traditional lunch of delicious home-made chili accompanied by Oreos for dessert. He had a unique experience this year; his group included an enthusiastic young middle schooler who was hard to keep up with. Glad to have young folks coming around to start filling in the gaps caused by time running out on some of us old-timers.

Thanks to all the group leaders, field observers and feeder watchers for their efforts to make the 2021 CBC successful. Special thanks to Susan Nelson for compiling information from the 17 feeder watchers. Thanks also to The Teller for allowing us to use the Slack Barn facility to gather in the early morning and at noon for lunch.

An Update on Fledgling Red Crossbills

By Judy Hoy

In 2021, I wrote an article updating information on how and when young crossbills make their bill tips cross after fledging. The article with many photographs is on my website (www.judyhoy.com). Scroll down till you find PDFs to Download, click on it, and scroll down to near the bottom of the page. The crossbill article is clearly labeled.

After fledgling at about 4 weeks of age, young crossbills fly around with their parents while still being fed by them. The fledglings' bills are still pointed straight forward and are cone shaped like House Finch bills, but with a bit of a curve downward on the tip of the upper bill. About 1½ week after fledgling, the upper and lower bill tips begin a fast growth period. When the fast growth period begins, the young crossbills find projections on branches like knots, raised bark or small broken off branches grab it with their bill tips and twist. For about a week, the young crossbill twists its bill tips the same direction over and over many times a day until the bill tips' fast growth period is finished. By then, the continuous twisting motion during their fast growth period has caused the tips to cross and remain crossed. About half of Red Crossbill youngsters twist the upper bill to the left and half twist it to the right.



Thompson Falls MT - 6pm - 10 May 2021 - © Jim & Lark Greaves

Courtesy Jim and Lark Greaves

Except for one great series of photos of Red Crossbills on Google, put up by a woman in North Carolina, I could not find any photos of fledged crossbills shown with a parent or parents prior to the period of twisting. That series can be seen at this link:

<http://ncmountainwoman.blogspot.com/2009/05/fledgling-is-red-crossbill-one-for.html>

This summer, two extremely observant Montana bird photographers, Jim and Lark Greaves, who live in Thompson Falls, MT took a photo of two recently fledged Red Crossbills with their mother and sent it to me to put in my article. The young crossbills still had their finch-like bills. This is the only photo I know of that shows young Red Crossbills in Montana prior to them making their bills cross.

Wild Skies Raptor Center: Adopt-A-Raptor!

By Kate Stone



Courtesy Wild Skies Raptor Center

Want to support Wild Skies Raptor Center's effort to care for injured birds? For \$50- \$80, you can "adopt" a raptor from Wild Skies Raptor Center. Your donation will help cover food and care costs for a variety of education birds. Donations of any amount are always appreciated!

You can donate by visiting www.wildskies.org or mail a check to:

Wild Skies Raptor Center
P.O. Box 3676,
Missoula, MT 59806

If you'd like to support Wild Skies with material donations, we could also use:

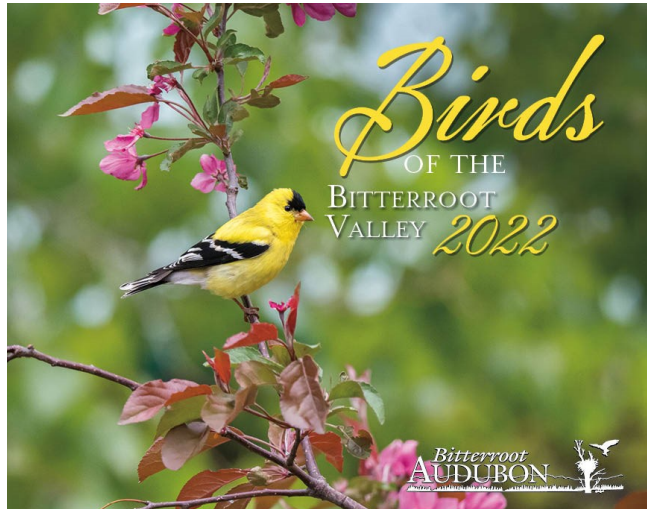
- Old towels, sheets, blankets
- Pet carriers- medium and large dog size
- Lumber- dimensional, full and partial sheets of plywood, tall fence pickets and/or 1x8 reclaimed wood suitable for making a privacy fence
- Postage stamps- standard and postcard
- Gift Cards: Lowe's, Costco

Items like stamps or gift cards could be mailed. Or contact one of our Bitterroot Board Members if you have any questions or to arrange a pick-up of any of the items listed above- Kate (381-1115) or Estelle (381-0474).

Thanks so much!

Last Call for a BAS Calendar!

By Kate Stone



Covid has made selling our beautiful Birds of the Bitterroot 2022 calendars a particular challenge, with many calendars still on hand. Can you help? Maybe you already bought the calendars you need for yourself, family and friends. Maybe you don't use a paper calendar. But you appreciate Bitterroot Audubon's hard work and the need for funds to support our educational and conservation activities. This year we're trying a new idea—we are asking our members and friends to consider sponsoring a calendar for a person in need in the Bitterroot Valley. For just \$20, you can provide a calendar for

someone else to enjoy. Right now we are working with Sapphire Lutheran Homes in Hamilton and hope to make contact with other retirement communities in the valley. You can sponsor a calendar by going to our website- www.bitterrootaudubon.org - and click the option for a calendar purchase that's a donation to a person in need. Or just mail us a check and put "calendar donation" in the subject line.

Calendar of Events

- Jan 15:** Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT 10AM-12PM.
- Jan 17:** **ZOOM** Audubon Meeting/Program: *Bitterroot Phenological Society*, 7PM, Zoom Board Mtg. 5PM.
- Feb 19:** Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT 10AM-12PM.
- Feb 21:** **ZOOM** Audubon Meeting/Program, details to be announced, 7PM, Zoom Board Mtg. 5PM.
- Mar 21:** **ZOOM** Audubon Meeting/Program, details to be announced, 7PM, Zoom Board Mtg. 5PM.
- Apr 18:** **ZOOM** Audubon Meeting/Program, details to be announced, 7PM, Zoom Board Mtg. 5PM.
- May 16:** **ZOOM** Audubon Meeting/Program, details to be announced, 7PM, Zoom Board Mtg. 5PM.

What's the story, Story?

By Jim Story

Question: *Did the plume trade of the late 19th century affect bird populations?*

Answer: During the period between 1870 and 1920, the improving economic conditions in the U.S. allowed people to indulge more in nonessentials. In particular, the use of ornamental feathers on men's fedoras and on women's hats, hair, and clothing became the rage. The feathers of herons were preferred, especially the Snowy Egret and the Great Egret, but the trade reportedly included the feathers of 64 species from 15 genera of native birds in the U.S. During the peak of the plume trade, hunters were receiving between \$30 and \$80 per ounce of feathers, making it a very profitable business for the time. As a result, many millions of birds were killed each year, resulting in the near extinction of many species such as the Snowy Egret. The drastic decline in Snowy Egret numbers caused the plume hunters to change their focus to other birds like White Pelicans and albatrosses.

The concerns and pleas of preservationists were largely ignored in the early years, but eventually their message gained traction, especially when they gave public lectures with titles like "Woman as a bird enemy," etc. Numerous conservation groups, including the Audubon Society, became involved and in 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt issued an Executive Order to create the country's first National Wildlife Refuge to protect Brown Pelicans, herons and egrets. This act slowed the killing and by World War I, the use of plumes as ornaments had ended. Thanks to the conservation efforts, most of the targeted bird species, including the Snowy Egret, have made a good recovery. (Sources: Ehrlich et. al. 1988, Birders Handbook; Friedman, 2016, <http://Wildbirdsonline.com>)

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

Scenes from Christmas Bird Counts!!

By Kate Stone



Courtesy Deb Goslin

Craig and Bucky Ballou are new to the Bitterroot Valley, and helped out on the Stevensville Christmas Bird Count.



Courtesy Micki Long

Elena Ulev helped Micki Long explore the sagebrush at the Willoughby 40.



Courtesy Kate Stone

An unnamed but well-known birder from Missoula shovels his car out 30 seconds after Kate Stone suggested he stop due to snow drifts on the Big Hole CBC. Luckily they spotted over 300 Snow Buntings while freeing their vehicle!



Courtesy Leslie Nyce

Sherry and her son Torrey Ritter took careful notes while surveying along the Bitterroot River- she brought him up well!



Courtesy Kate Stone

Dark clouds and a nasty snow squall didn't stop the intrepid Susan Nelson from hiking for over 6 hours on the Stevensville CBC.



Courtesy Kate Stone

Alan Maki and Susan Nelson survey a flock of Canada Geese while on the Severson's Flying E Ranch during the Stevensville CBC. Thanks to the Severson's and the Schroeders of Sunset Bench Ranch for allowing access again this year!



Selfie courtesy Kate Stone

Kate Stone and Larry Weeks are all smiles despite trudging through 2-3 feet of snow. They turned up an uncommon American Three-toed Woodpecker for the Big Hole CBC.

News and Notes

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



Courtesy Micki Long

Townsend Solitaire.

BITTERROOT AUDUBON
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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



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