

Bitterroot AUDUBON



MAY 2022

NEWSLETTER

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Partnerships and Wildlife Shepherding (PAWS) for Bears in the Bitterroot Valley- A Collaborative Effort

By Kate Stone

We're all increasingly familiar with the sign: trash cans tipped over, orchards raided, chicken feed scattered, bird feeders pulled down. Humans play a key role in whether or not bears can move across the landscape and avoid conflict. Many bear mortalities stem directly from attractants provided by humans.



Courtesy MT Fish, Wildlife, and Parks

Jamie Jonkel spends a lot of time educating the public about ways to reduce human/bear conflict. Let's help make his job easier!

Bitterroot Audubon is excited to host two pioneers in the world of reducing human-bear conflicts: Jamie Jonkel of MT Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, and Carrie Hunt of Wind River Karelian Bear Dog Partners. We will learn about the status of grizzly and black bears in the Bitterroot Valley and how we all play a role in reducing conflicts between humans and bears. How does bear research and management overlap with how people value and interact with birds? Might our Audubon Chapter join a collaborative effort by management agencies, other conservation organizations, and private groups to

prevent and reduce human-bear conflicts by adding language relating to bears to the Audubon Code of Ethics?



Courtesy Wind River Bear Institute

Grizzly bear Star and her cubs getting close to human habitation in the North Fork area of northwestern Montana.

We'll hear about Wind River's collaborative work in Montana and the Bitterroot and see a presentation with live Karelian Bear Dogs that demonstrates how bears learn to look for human food resources, how feeding birds exacerbates the problem, and what our Audubon Chapter can do to teach both bears and people correct behaviors. We'll close with information on some resources available to reduce the potential for human-bear conflicts.

Jamie is a Wildlife Management Specialist, with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and brings over 50 years of experience with wildlife management and conflict reduction to his position. He has worked in Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Alaska, New Mexico, Canada and Russia with various private and public entities including: National Geographic, Hornocker Wildlife Research Institute, Glacier Institute, Interagency Grizzly Bear Study, Glacier National Park Wolf Ecology Project, Idaho Fish and Game, Maine Fish and Wildlife, Border Grizzly Bear Project, and several privately-owned ranches. He

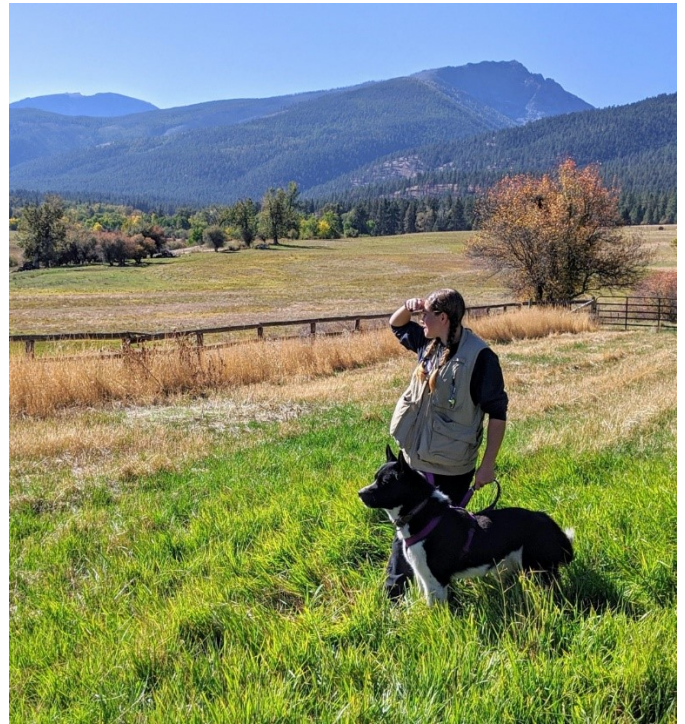
has been with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks since 1996. Jamie received his Bachelors in Wildlife Biology and a minor in Journalism from the University of Montana in Missoula.



*Courtesy Wind River Karelain Bear Dog Partners
Carrie Hunt's efforts to educate the public extend to placing "Know Your Bear" and "Food Storage suggestions" signs in public recreation areas.*

Carrie Hunt founded and directed the Wind River Bear Institute (WRBI) and Wind River Karelain Bear Dogs (KBDs) from 1996 through 2019. The Institute's groundbreaking mission has been to teach bears and people the correct behaviors to reduce conflicts. In 2019, Hunt turned directorship of the Institute over to Nils Pedersen, while continuing to direct Wind River Karelain Bear Dog Partners, based out of Florence, MT, with the goal of focusing most of her time on the KBD Program and getting more KBDs trained and out working where they are needed, with trained private and agency handlers. Hunt has worked with bears and human-bear conflict on private and public lands for over 40 years, throughout the Rocky Mountain West, from Canada to Montana and Wyoming, to New Mexico, and Japan. The initial techniques and work were piloted in Montana on problem grizzly and black bears. Hunt identified and developed the use of the red pepper bear spray system to repel bears, conducted the first investigations of the use of rubber bullets for conditioning and hard releases on free-ranging grizzly and black bears with problem behaviors, and developed the process of "Bear Shepherding" using specialized Karelain Bear Dogs as Wildlife K-9s to support the public and wildlife agencies in reducing bear conflicts, reducing property destruction and increasing safety in bear country.

Please join Bitterroot Audubon on Monday, May 16th at 7 pm IN PERSON on the lawn of the Visitor's Center at the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge, 4567 Wildfowl Lane, Stevensville. Please bring a camping chair or blanket to sit on. There are areas of sidewalk and pavement suitable for wheelchairs or walkers. The Visitor's Center will be closed, but there is a portable toilet on site. The public is invited.

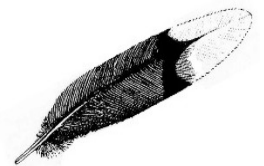


*Courtesy Wind River Karelain Bear Dog Partners
Jessica Reyes, a Wind River Program Biologist, works with Wildlife K-9 Joni doing tracking work related to a sheep depredation near Bass Creek.*

Letter from the President

By Micki Long, BAS President

By the time you read this, the Great-horned Owlets at Lee Metcalf, the most photographed birds in the valley, will have left the nest but may be walking along branches or flying from the nest tree to nearby trees. And there are still babies to be found all around us; we just need to work a little harder to see them than we did with the Metcalf owlets. I already have Clark's Nutcracker babies flying around, following their parents, begging and begging. Shooting stars, yellow bells, trillium, pasqueflowers, and other spring flowers are adding color to our hikes. Lupine and arrowleaf balsamroot are emerging. Many of us have been working in our yards and gardens—but put off mowing for as long as you can, for the sake of the bees and other pollinators who need "yard flowers," like



dandelions, for food before many other sources are available. You may have heard about “No Mow May,” a movement started in the UK and spreading in the United States

(<https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/are-you-ready-observe-no-mow-may>). I may have to mow a few small areas for my little old dogs to use, but I’m leaving the major mowing until June if possible.



Courtesy Micki Long

Clark's Nutcracker Fledgling.

As no one stepped forward to coordinate a BAS booth at the Hamilton Farmer’s Market, we will not participate this year. Instead, we will have a booth from 4-6 P.M. every other Wednesday, starting June 1st, at the O’Hara Commons Market. We hope that a shorter time commitment might encourage more members to volunteer to staff our booth one or more times this summer. Watch for announcements on our Facebook page and website or email me to volunteer (mickilong@gmail.com).



Courtesy Micki Long

Dandelions.

You may have noticed that there is not a Zoom link for our May program. We are meeting in person, for the first time since March of 2020. As you’ll see elsewhere in this newsletter, we are meeting at Lee Metcalf, by the Visitor’s Center. It will be so nice to see whole people, with legs and feet, not just heads and shoulders! I do think that in the dead of winter, when the weather and roads are bad, we should have more Zoom meetings. But right now, I want to enjoy spring hiking and birding and not think of next winter! Remember that we hold elections yearly, at our May meeting. Please come and vote!

See you on May 16!

AWESOME HIGHWAY CLEANUP

By Skip Horner

Our semi-annual highway cleanup will take place on Tuesday, May 24, 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 high-visibility vests and large plastic bags. Questions? Call Skip at 369-5367. Thanks!

Welcome Back Waterfowl!!

By Judy Hoy and Kate Stone

At the 2022 Welcome Back Waterfowl Day at the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge on April 23, 48 bird species were seen, some of them fairly unusual, especially the shore birds. Another unusual sighting was a porcupine sleeping in a tree. The morning was nice but cool, until a wind storm and shower kind of dampened things a bit.

The shorebirds included the more usual Sandhill Crane, Great Blue Heron, Killdeer and Wilson's Snipe and rather unusual ones for WBWD, like White-faced Ibis, Greater Yellowlegs, American Avocet and Black-necked Stilt, most of which were close enough to the viewing area on the dike to be seen without a scope, so a real thrill for all. Waterfowl seen were American White Pelican, Canada Goose, Snow Goose, Cinnamon Teal, Green-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, American

Coot, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, and Common Merganser. There were also several raptors hunting or watching the waterfowl watchers, including Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Osprey, and American Kestrel, along with the always curious corvids, Common Raven, Magpie and American Crow.



Courtesy Kate Stone

Many people enjoyed a flock of White-faced Ibis hanging out close to the dike and Visitor's Center.

Songbirds included a couple of unusual ones, the American Pipit and Red Crossbill, in addition to the more common ones like Belted Kingfisher, American Robin, Tree Swallow, Vaux's Swift, American Goldfinch, Red-winged Blackbird, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Northern Flicker, Song Sparrow and European Starling. Also seen were the usual gamebirds: Wild Turkey, Ring-necked Pheasant, Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon) and Eurasian Collared-Dove.



Courtesy Kate Stone

Judy and Bob Hoy watch a group of American White Pelicans fly south and cross the main refuge road.

We thank the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge, the Audubon members who provided expertise with

finding and identifying the birds and to all who came to view and learn about Montana's birds and welcome the migrating birds back to the Bitterroot Valley.



Courtesy Susan Nelson

Our paper species' list has seen its last Welcome Back Waterfowl Day. A rain squall at the end of the event put it in its grave forever.

Kids' Corner: Bird Nests!

By Ada Bernauer (age 10) and Annie Bernauer

It's the time of year when birds start to make their nests. They collect grass, hair, twigs, mud, and lots more! There are some dangers though. When bits of string and baling twine get left lying around, the birds might collect them for their nests. They could get entangled in them and suffocate. You can help the birds by collecting the bits of baling twine and string in your neighborhood and dispose of them safely, like putting them in a trash can with a tight-fitting lid so they don't blow away.

You can help the birds by putting out things for their nests. What things are safe for birds' nests? according to [this article from Audubon](#), leaves and other yard debris, pieces of straw, grass clippings not treated with pesticide, and pet hair not treated with flea/tick medicine. When I groom my pony, especially during spring when he is shedding, I clean the short bits of pony hair out of the curry comb and throw it on the ground for the birds to pick up and use in their nests.

You can also help the birds by hanging up bird houses. The [Nestwatch website](#) has recommendations for where to hang bird houses.

If you have any back yard domestic birds like chickens, keep them away from wild bird feeders/dropped seeds and shared water sources. The Avian Bird Flu has been found in Montana.

You can help stop the spread by taking down your bird seed feeders. Hummingbirds may be affected by the virus, but are of low risk. It is recommended that in areas with high transmission rates of the virus, consider pausing use of feeders, or at a minimum, clean feeders frequently (recommended daily). Whatever you may be doing to help the birds, thank you!

Bitterroot Peregrine Watch Results Spring 2022

By Dave Lockman

April 2022 was a challenging time for monitoring peregrine falcon occupancy in the Bitterroot. Access to most trailheads was better than in some years due to the low snowpack and relatively warm winter, but the cool, wet, windy weather that prevailed through most of April limited access to some viewing sites up the trails and certainly made for lousy viewing conditions on many days. Nevertheless, Bitterroot Peregrine Watch volunteers persevered, and we were able to monitor more known and potential peregrine territories than we have in years!

As of this writing, we confirmed peregrine occupancy (both male and female peregrines observed, or other definitive behavior such as territorial defense) in 11 previously known territories. Results were inconclusive in 3 previously known territories and in 2 canyons where we have no previous records of peregrines. One territory seemed inactive, and we weren't able to check 5 previously known territories, either due to lack of

access (snow) or lack of good observing days. As near as I can figure, we totaled about 44 hours of actual observation time, and about 116 hours of total time including driving to the trailheads and hiking into the observation sites. Those totals should actually be higher; I didn't double the hours when there were two observers.



*Courtesy Sophie Osborn
BAS President, Micki Long, searching for Peregrine Falcons
in the Bitterroots.*

Calendar of Events

- May 16:** Audubon Meeting/Program "Partnerships and Wildlife Shepherding (PAWS) for Bears in the Bitterroot Valley- A Collaborative Effort," with Jamie Jonkel and Carrie Hunt, Audubon Meeting, Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT, 7PM, Board Mtg. 5PM.
- May 21:** Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT 10AM-12PM.
- May 24:** Highway Clean-up, 4PM, see announcement in this newsletter.
- June 3-5:** **Save the Date** for the Wings Under the Big Sky Festival, Lewistown, MT. Registration Link: <https://mtaudubon.org/outreach/montana-bird-festival/>
- Jun-Aug:** Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, 3rd Saturday of each month, Stevensville, MT 10AM-12PM.

We observed a total of 22 individual peregrines, with several of those presumably seen more than once in cases of multiple observing days. We saw copulation bouts in 2 territories, prey exchanges in 3 territories, and territorial defense in at least 2 territories, plus lots of perching, circling casually above or in front of the cliffs, and some awe-inspiring stoops (high-velocity dives). We saw 3 peregrines in one territory (the third presumably a non-territorial "floater"), and lots of Red-tailed Hawks, Cooper's Hawks, Turkey Vultures, Common Ravens, a few Golden Eagles and even a couple of Ospreys up in the canyons. And we heard lots of Pacific Wrens and other birds while hiking up the trails or sitting in the talus slopes. Two things that I sometimes see but didn't this spring were mountain goats clambering around in the peregrine cliffs, and flocks of Snow Geese migrating north

way up high above the canyon rims. But I did see a bighorn ram at very close range in one canyon, which was totally unexpected. You never know what you'll see until you go look!

We managed to accomplish all this thanks to 10 volunteer peregrine watchers who each went out looking for peregrines at least once. But we could cover more canyons and probably find more birds and more territories if we had more volunteers. Productivity monitoring (trying to determine the number of young fledged) will occur in late June through July. If you're interested in joining us for some peaceful days of discovery in the canyons, please contact Dave Lockman (dwlockman14@gmail.com, 406-381-7679) or Micki Long (mickilong@gmail.com, 440-221-5256) for more information. You do have to be able to hike a couple of miles up a trail to get to most (but not all) of the observation sites, and it really helps to have a good spotting scope in addition to a good pair of binoculars. But if you're willing to give it a shot, it can be very rewarding, regardless of whether you actually see peregrines. There's just something special about sitting in a canyon watching and listening to what's going on around you rather than rushing to get to a destination.

What's the story, Story?

By Jim Story

Question: *How can I keep birds from striking my windows?*

Answer: Bird mortality from window collisions in the U.S. is huge, estimated at nearly one billion birds per year. In fact, window collision is likely second only to habitat loss as the biggest human-related cause of bird mortality. Birds fly into windows because the invisible (to them) windows reflect the nearby foliage and sky, and the birds can't distinguish between reflections and the real thing.

So, how do you protect against bird collisions? Birds generally don't strike all windows; they mostly strike large reflective windows. So, first identify dangerous windows on your house by standing outside and looking at the windows. If you see foliage reflected in a window, the birds will too. Once the problem window(s) is identified, it's time to consider preventative options.

Fortunately, the problem of birds colliding with windows is well known and numerous

products/methods for reducing the problem are available:

**** Note: Hawk silhouettes and plastic owls do not deter birds.**

Inside

-Partially close blinds or curtains

-Remove houseplants near the window

Outside

“Bird Savers” or “zen curtains”: are string curtains consisting of one-eighth inch-diameter nylon cords that dangle about four inches apart in front of a window's exterior. This device is highly recommended by some bird experts.

<https://www.birdsavers.com>

Netting: small-mesh netting can be placed over the glass on the outside, at least 3 inches from the glass and taut enough to cushion bird impact.

Mosquito screen: normal window screens reduce reflectivity and cushion bird impacts.

One-way transparent film: products such as Collidescape is transparent on the inside of the window but appears opaque and visible to birds on the outside.

UV decals: have a special coating that reflects blue UV light but looks clear to humans; need to be spaced 3” apart across full window

Stickers, sun catchers, mylar strips, masking tape, or other objects (even sticky notes) on the outside surface of the window: are effective when closely spaced.

ABC BirdTape: a long-lasting tape offering an easy way to apply the correct spacing of dots across your window. Designed and tested by American Bird Conservancy.

Soap or tempura paint: patterns can be painted on the outsides of windows with soap or tempera paint that can be wiped off with a sponge but won't be washed away by rain.

UV Liquid: an easy-to-apply liquid that leaves marks visible to birds.

White static clings: are placed on the inside or outside of a window, where they contrast with dark reflections of trees and foliage.

Bird Protection Glass: is laminated with a UV-reflective, patterned coating that is visible to birds

but virtually transparent to humans.

Fritted glass windows: contains closely spaced dots of opaque glass fused on the outer surface that makes them highly visible to birds, but mostly transparent to humans.

Etched or sandblasted windows: reduces reflectivity.

Angled glass: windows pointed downward (20 degrees) won't reflect sky and trees.

External shutters: can be closed when windows aren't in use.

External sunshades or awnings: reduce reflection and transparency.

More detailed Information on products can be seen at the following sites:

<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/why-birds-hit-windows-and-how-you-can-help-prevent-it/>

<https://www.birdwatchingdaily.com/gear/preventing-bird-window-collisions/15-products-prevent-birds-hitting-windows/>

<https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/make-your-windows-bird-safe>

<https://abcbirds.org/glass-collisions/>

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

News and Notes

Bitterroot Audubon Fundraiser

By Kate Stone

After a decades'-long respite, Bitterroot Audubon has our next generation of t-shirts available for purchase! These shirts feature a triptych of artwork by local artist and conservation celebrant Karen Savory. Enjoy a Common Raven, Great Horned Owl, and Black-capped Chickadee nestled on a Midnight Navy-heather background. If you enjoyed the shirts from the Bitterroot Valley Winter Eagle Project, these new shirts are the same style and sizing, printed for us by Garage Tees in Missoula.

We hope to have these shirts available for in-person

purchase at programs and the Farmer's Marker later in 2022. In the meantime, you can order one from our website for \$20 and we will mail it to you.

Please thank Karen for donating her art to this cause and support her by visiting her website:

www.simplysavoryart.com



2022 Long-Billed Curlew Citizen Science Surveys (April 8-May 7; May 8-May 31): Are you ready to hear the 'currleeee' of the Long-billed Curlew? Well, grab your binoculars and get ready, because curlew season is just around the corner! These charismatic shorebirds will be trickling back into the state in less than two months and we need your help finding as many as possible in and around the Mission, Blackfoot, and Helena Valleys!

Since 2013, volunteers have recorded curlew sightings in these three Montana valleys and this data helps inform statewide habitat models as well as highlight important tracts of intact grassland that are in need of conservation. We are hoping to revamp our efforts on this project, so please share this opportunity with anyone you think will be interested! As a species specific survey, this is a great time for aspiring citizen scientists and veteran birders alike to contribute to the conservation of a treasured Montana bird species.

Please email Peter Dudley at peter@mtaudubon.org for more information and to sign up!

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.

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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



Renew or Sign up
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