

Bitterroot AUDUBON



OCTOBER 2022

NEWSLETTER

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Nature Journaling with Valerie Bayer

By Micki Long

Valerie Bayer is joining us this month to talk about exploring and studying nature, including birds, through pictures, numbers, and words in a nature journal. To record our observations of trees, plants, birds, and other elements of nature, in a sit spot or on a hike, we must slow down and more carefully look, listen, smell, touch, and maybe even taste our surroundings. A nature journal can deepen our experience of and relationship to nature.

Valerie spent her Ohio childhood outdoors, exploring, playing in the creeks, and trying to avoid school. Currently, she is a Montana Master Naturalist and has been nature journaling since 2009. Valerie volunteered at Montana Natural History Center for over eight years with an emphasis on the Master Naturalist Program and was also involved as a Visiting Naturalist in the schools. Her history as a volunteer extends to Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks and Mineral County Conservation District. Clearly, she loves the outdoors and has had a long relationship with nature. Valerie has taught nature journaling at Bitterroot College, local libraries, and high schools. In addition, she organizes nature journaling conferences and workshops. Valerie's mission is to coach others in getting their relationship with nature onto paper through nature journaling.

Our meeting and Valerie's presentation will be held at 7 P.M. in the gymnasium of the Bitterroot Valley Church of the Nazarene's Neely Center, at 5th Ave and A St. in Victor, MT. We thank the Church for their generosity in allowing us to meet in their gym. We should be able to spread out and reduce the chances for spread of colds, flu, and Covid. While Valerie is not using a PowerPoint that could be shared with a Zoom audience, we are still going to attempt a very basic, low-tech hybrid meeting. I will

simply aim my computer, logged into Zoom, at Valerie and her easel. We hope members who need or want to stay home can learn from Valerie through this simple Zoom approach.

You are invited to a Zoom meeting:

When: Oct 17, 2022 07:00 PM Mountain Time

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwrdO2qpzgsEtPZeVlcQcKcIyHD15WiezUh>

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

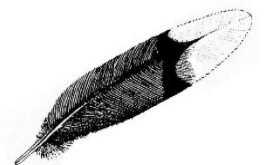


Courtesy Valerie Bayer

Letter from the President

By Micki Long, BAS President

Happy Autumn! Fall has always been my favorite season, and while we don't have the brilliant oranges and reds of deciduous forests in other parts of the country (except in landscaped yards), we have



Oregon grape, aspen, chokecherry, mountain maple, alpine knotweed, and, most glorious of all, larch! It's wonderful to see the larch along the Bitterroot Front start to change and paint the dark forest with lines of bright gold.



Courtesy Micki Long

Fall has also brought clearer and cooler air, thank goodness. I love to bake, and now I can do so without heating up my house. The aromas of ginger, nutmeg, and cinnamon have already filled my house. Can pumpkin be far behind? I confess that I have never felt tempted by a pumpkin latte, but I love pumpkin pie cookies, and pumpkin bread.



Courtesy Micki Long

October also brings Halloween, second only to Christmas in my list of favorite holidays. As I have a sweet-tooth, it's no surprise that I fondly remember filling a pillowcase with candy and then trading with my siblings, trying to get all the Reese's Peanut Butter Cups. I've always thought that Great Horned Owls look far more menacing than Ravens, which are sometimes used in Halloween displays and frightening literature, most

AWESOME HIGHWAY CLEANUP

By Skip Horner

Our semi-annual highway cleanup will take place on Tuesday, October 11, 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 stout plastic bags. Questions? Call Skip at 406-369-5367. Thanks!



notably "The Raven," by Edgar Allan Poe. I enjoy both species any time of year, but I especially like seeing and hearing them in the weeks before Halloween.

Halloween also means scarecrows, and Bitterroot Audubon will have some owl scarecrows in the Stevensville Scarecrow Festival. Our scarecrows are based on the children's book *Owl Babies*, written by Martin Waddell and illustrated by Patrick Benson. Chapter One bookstore, in Hamilton, will have plenty of copies—the book would make a great holiday gift! Here are some photos of volunteers working on the labor-intensive scarecrows. Thank you to all who have lent us their considerable skills: Kate Stone, Max Stoppel, Betsy Ballard, Estelle Shuttleworth, and Deb Goslin (see photos below). I'm sure we'll have help from others as we finish the owlets and then put up and take down the display. To see the finished project, visit the Festival, on Cutoff Rd. near the Forest Service

building in Stevensville. Scarecrows will also be displayed by downtown Stevensville businesses. Voting for the best scarecrow will take place on Friday, Oct. 7 from 4-9PM and Saturday Oct. 8 from 9AM-9PM. But the displays will be up until 5PM on Saturday, October 15th, so try to make the Stevensville Scarecrow Festival part of your autumn fun! I hope to see you in Victor, on Oct. 17!

Take someone under your wing this World Migratory Bird Day-October 8th

BirdLife International

[{Link to full article}](#)

We are all in agreement that spending time in nature is enjoyable, and there is increasing evidence that it can benefit our mental wellbeing.

That is why this [World Migratory Bird Day](#) Saturday October 8, Birdlife International is encouraging everyone to take a friend birding and experience the joys of birdwatching together.

How what you can see can contribute to bird conservation

Recordings of bird sightings help scientists keep track of how bird numbers are changing around the globe and can identify which species are under threat, allowing conservation action to be effectively targeted. Sightings can be submitted to

[eBird](#)

eBird is the largest citizen science platform in the world where over 100 million bird sightings are contributed each year by birders. Will you join Birdlife International and head out on October 8 for World Migratory Bird Day to observe the wonders of birds and migration?

Calendar of Events

- Oct 8:** World Migratory Bird Day. See article for details.
- Oct 11:** Highway Clean-up, 4PM, see announcement in this newsletter.
- Oct 17:** Audubon Meeting/Program: Nature Journaling with Valerie Bayer, Audubon Meeting, Bitterroot Valley Church of the Nazarene's Neely Center, 803 5th Ave, Victor, MT 59875 and Zoom; 7PM, Board Mtg. 5PM.
- Monthly:** Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, 3rd Saturday of each month, Stevensville, MT 10AM-12PM.

2022 MAPS Bird Banding Summary

By Dave Lockman

The Bitterroot National Forest and Bitterroot Audubon have operated two long-term bird banding stations near Lake Como since the early 1990s as part of the nation-wide Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) program coordinated by the Institute for Bird Populations. We run each station a total of seven days between the beginning of June and the first week of August, which MAPS defines as the breeding season for our area.

2022 was a little slower than average, but certainly better than some years. We handled a total of 349 birds, 217 at the Rock Creek Big Ditch site, and 132 at the Lick Creek site. Of the total, 202 were new captures, 133 were recaptures of previously banded birds, and 14 were un-banded birds (most of which are hummingbirds that we release without banding). 62 of the total captured birds were juveniles, indicating that at least some species had a fairly decent year in terms of reproductive success.

We handled a total of 29 species at Rock Creek, which is dominated by moist and wet habitats. The most captured species were Swainson's Thrush and Common Yellowthroat, followed by Yellow Aarbler, American Redstart, Black-capped Chickadee and Cedar Waxwing. We handled a total of 18 species at Lick Creek, which is mostly dry conifer habitat bisected by a small, shrubby stream. The most captured species there were Swainson's Thrush, followed by MacGillivray's Warbler, Townsend's Warbler, Golden-crowned Kinglet and Black-capped Chickadee. We didn't see any unusual surges in the numbers of any particular species like we often do in a year, but a couple of unusual highlights were a juvenile Wilson's Snipe at Rock Creek and two juvenile Chestnut-backed Chickadees at Lick Creek.

Special thanks to the Bitterroot National Forest for making Wildlife Tech Katie Tiller available to be my enthusiastic assistant every banding day, and to those Bitterroot Audubon members who dropped by to watch (and sometimes got enlisted as data recorders when things got busy).



*Courtesy Micki Long, Kate Stone, and Bill Goslin
Bitterroot Audubon's owl scarecrow team for the the Stevensville Scarecrow Festival. Top Row: Kate Stone, Micki Long, Kate Stone and Max Stroppel; Middle Row: Betsy Ballard, Sophie Osborn, Kate Stone; Bottom Row: Estelle Shuttleworth, Deb Goslin, Micki Long and Kate Stone.*

Get out the vote in support of our Open Lands Bond Program

By Kate Stone

At our September meeting, the Bitterroot Audubon board voted unanimously to donate \$1000 to support “[Yes to Ravalli County Open Lands](#)”, a non-profit formed to promote the renewal of Ravalli County’s Open Lands Bond Program. The program will be on the ballot this November.

The majority of Ravalli County voters approved the original \$10 million bond in 2006. The bond’s purpose was to protect agricultural land, wildlife habitat and water resources, and scenic open space. Landowners participate voluntarily, the program is overseen by a citizen’s advisory board, and all expenditures are approved by Ravalli County Commissioners. Since its inception, the program has completed 38 projects and permanently conserved over 10,000 acres, including 9,000 acres of working farms/ranches, 1,000 acres of publicly accessible private land, and almost 200 acres of public parks and recreation spots. Have you walked your dog at Skalkaho Bend Park? Launched a boat onto the West Fork of the Bitterroot River at the Ben C. White Memorial FAS? Enjoyed local beef from cattle ranchers in the Burnt Fork? Marveled at the patchwork of agricultural lands near Corvallis? If so, you’ve enjoyed, seen, and even tasted some of the community benefits of this program. And the folks implementing the program have stretched every dollar by finding matching funds; for every dollar of the program spent, organizations like the Bitter Root Land Trust found \$3 in additional funding.

But what does this program have to do with birds? The reality is, much of the wildlife habitat in our beautiful valley occurs on private lands, including species-rich places like the floodplain forest of the Bitterroot River, or unique habitats like the sagebrush foothills of the Sapphire Mountains. Iconic and declining species like the Lewis’s Woodpecker, Long-billed Curlew, Bobolink, and Brewer’s Sparrow will only continue to exist here if the habitat they rely on is available. We know the valley is changing and the human population is increasing. We have few tools to guide responsible development. The Open Lands Bond Program is one of the few ways we have to ensure that some parts of the Bitterroot remain undeveloped in perpetuity. And though protection from development doesn’t mean bird habitat is entirely protected on the

ground, many of the landowners participating in the program—including farmers and ranchers—are acutely aware of the wildlife using their property and have taken steps to protect or even enhance wildlife habitat. Many participate in research and monitoring projects, host public field trips and education events, and have strong relationships with local conservation entities to continue stewardship beyond the Open Lands Bond process.



Courtesy Kate Stone

I captured this young nighthawk on the Weber Ranch on 6/21/22. He left the Bitterroot Valley on 8/23/22 and we last detected him on 9/7/22 along the Atlantic Coast of Georgia! Note the nice sagebrush in the background of this photo- a wildlife habitat protected on the Weber Ranch thanks to the Open Lands Bond Program.

I’ve personally conducted bird research and habitat consultation on several private properties protected by the current Open Lands Bond. One of my favorites is the Weber Ranch, at the end of Hamilton Heights Road. Much of this 460-acre property is a swath of rolling sagebrush foothills, home to Brewer’s, Vesper, and Clay-colored Sparrows. And many, many Common Nighthawks. Brien and Gayle Weber have allowed me to capture nighthawks on their property for several years, and now we’ve tracked them all the way down the coast of Florida and towards South America. In addition to nighthawk research, they’ve also hosted an acoustic monitor to record songbirds migrating at night and allowed a camera and carcass on their property in the winter to document eagles and other scavengers. Finally, I worked with the Webers and Kyle Anderson from the Bitter Root Land Trust to obtain a grant from Cornell Lab of Ornithology to fund the restoration of former agricultural fields to functional native plant communities. We are monitoring the bird species before, during, and after restoration

treatments. This engagement and on-going habitat work would not have happened without the Open Lands Bond Program and the relationships developed in the process.

If you want more information about the current program, please visit the [Ravalli County Open Lands Bond Program](#) website. If you want more information on the ballot initiative for this November, or you'd like to donate towards this cause, please check out the [Yes to Ravalli County Open Lands](#) website. And of course, the most important thing to do is VOTE, and make sure your friends and family head to the polls as well!

In Memoriam: Mel Mooers 1935-2022

By John Ormiston

There's a hole in the Fred Burr neighborhood and the outdoor world of the Bitterroot. Mel Mooers passed away on August 29, 2022. His memorial gathering included neighbors and colleagues from many walks of life, all with many stories about how Mel helped them with everything from everyday chores like gathering firewood to mentoring young Washington State Troopers. Mel served in the Army as a military police officer, the beginning of a 25+ year career in law enforcement. He made his retirement home in the Bitterroot, and shortly thereafter joined Bitterroot Audubon to further his interest in all of the outdoors. He helped Dave Lockman and me at our bird banding stations in the Lake Como area for over 10 years. Imagine arising at 4:30 to voluntarily slog through a fen for 5 or 6 hours just to take tweeters (as he called them) out of mist nets so we could band and release them in the name of science. He loved it enough to do it faithfully 20 times a summer.

He loved the outdoors for year-round adventures. He used wood to heat his earth sheltered home and had an impressive stack of firewood. He helped all the neighborhood in gathering their firewood. Mel became an avid cross-country skier and eventually volunteered to help groom the Chief Joseph trails in spite of limited snow mobile experience. He learned quickly (and apparently a little painfully) and soon became the head groomer. When five ladies decided to join the effort of detecting wolverine presence in the Bitterroot mountains, Mel became their driver because he had a big 4-wheel drive rig. Of course, he had to accompany them up Big Creek to the bait station, or wait in the rig. He didn't wait. Mel was also involved in the effort to monitor Peregrine

Falcon presence and productivity in the west side canyons.

One of the stories his sons shared at the memorial included his love for baking, especially fruitcakes to pass out to friends at Christmas. I was the recipient of an annual cake baked in July and infused with generous quantities of rum until the Christmas distribution. They were not used as door-stops! Mel's records included an accounting of over 500 fruitcakes baked for his friends.

In memory of an all-around good guy, a friend and a quiet leader, Mel Mooers will be missed by a legion of mourning friends.



Courtesy Kay Fulton

Mel catching dinner on a backpack into the Wind River Range in Wyoming about 10,000 ft.

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



Great Horned Owl.

Courtesy Micki Long

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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: _____
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Send this application with \$15 to:



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