

Bitterroot AUDUBON



SEPTEMBER 2022

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 37, NO. 1

Noxious Weeds in Ravalli County

By Betsy Ballard

Kelly Ann Morris, coordinator of the Ravalli County Weed District will be speaking about noxious weeds. Noxious weeds are non-native plants that have been introduced to Ravalli County through human actions both purposely and accidentally. Due to their aggressive growth and lack of natural enemies, these species can be highly destructive, competitive, and difficult to control.



Courtesy Irene Shonle

Oxeye daisy monoculture; Gilpin County Extension

Noxious weeds pose a growing threat to our general ecosystem. These non-native plants have a competitive advantage over our native plants because of the lack of insects and diseases that control them in their native countries, and they are spreading rapidly on both private and public lands. Many times noxious weeds form large patches that do not allow other plants to grow resulting in less species and less individual plants.

The reason this is such a problem is that these new invaders do not have an evolutionary history with all of the rest of the plants, insects, birds, and other wildlife that depend on our ecosystem. The introduction and establishment of invasive plants into new habitats in which they have not co-evolved with the native organisms have been identified as a

major threat to biodiversity and ecosystem structure and function (Bezemer et al. Annual Review of Entomology 2013).

Plants are the bottom of the food chain, with insects and a variety of mammals eating the plants directly, and then other species such as birds and mountain lions eating the insects and mammals. Non-native plants such as noxious weeds don't provide that bottom rung of the food chain. This is because 90% of herbivorous (plant-eating) insects are fairly host-specific and may not recognize unfamiliar exotic plants as food. Many mammals also may hesitate at eating new plants. When weeds crowd out the familiar native plants, the entire food chain is weakened.

Many times when a noxious weed takes over, the wildlife that need native plants to survive will leave an area. Noxious weeds reduce crop yields, edge out native plant communities that wildlife and fish depend on and degrade wildlife habitat. The damages from noxious weeds can cost landowners, ranchers and farmers millions of dollars in loss of production and control efforts. These costs can be transferred to consumers through higher food costs. Noxious weeds also damage recreational sites, clog waterways, lower land values, and can poison livestock.

An invasive species can become a noxious weed when it has shown to have serious effects on natural resources, ecosystem health and our economy. If you have any questions about potential noxious weeds on your property The Ravalli County Weed District can assist you with identifying noxious weeds and give you advice on their control.

Please join Bitterroot Audubon on Monday, September 19th at 7 pm, IN PERSON, at the Ravalli Weed District Office, 121 S. Tudor Street, Victor, MT 59875. The public is invited.

Letter from the President

By Micki Long, BAS President

Since I've last written, I've enjoyed a birding trip to Arizona and many birding hikes close to home. And while I loved those trips and the birds I saw, some of the best birding of my summer was in my yard and on the property where I live. I had new birds, as in new species, in my yard, a Bullock's Oriole pair and a juvenile Williamson's Sapsucker. And I had so many new birds here (babies), that it often felt like a nursery. It's the end of August, and there are still fledglings out there, squawking and looking disheveled, but cute.



Courtesy Micki Long

Bullock's Oriole

The nursery included the following species: Great Horned Owl; Cedar Waxwing; Screech Owl; Rufous, Calliope, and Black-chinned Hummingbirds; Pileated, Hairy, and Downy Woodpeckers; Steller's Jay; American Dipper; California Quail; Wild Turkey; House Wren; Mourning Dove; Northern Flicker; Evening and Black-headed Grosbeaks; and my favorite species, Clark's Nutcracker. Soon, the juveniles of species that migrate will begin their migration for the first time. Safe travels! Soon, Townsend's Solitaires, with their beautiful songs, will return to the woods around me. More Mountain Chickadees will join the Black-capped Chickadees in my yard. I'll pass Rough-legged Hawks perched on telephone poles as I head into Stevensville. And who knows what migrants I'll see as they pass through on their way to warmer lands.

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!

As the program announcement and description above in this newsletter indicate, our September meeting will be held at the Ravalli Weed District office (the old Fire Hall) in Victor. In addition, all of our subsequent in-person meetings during the upcoming year will be held in Victor as well. We'll meet in the gymnasium of the Bitterroot Valley Church of the Nazarene's Neely Center, at 5th Ave and A St. We greatly appreciate the generosity of the Church in donating this space for our monthly meetings. The size of the gym will allow us to spread out and, I hope, lessen our chances of catching Covid, the flu, or even just a cold from fellow birders. I am also exploring the possibility of hybrid meetings to meet the needs of our members who may have trouble attending in-person meetings. Watch our website, Facebook, or emails to see when we can make this happen!



Courtesy Micki Long

Steller's Jay Fledgling

I hope many of you visited our table at the O'Hara's Commons Farmers Market every other Wednesday

this summer. We were selling our beautiful Bitterroot Audubon T-shirts at this market and at markets in Stevensville and Lone Rock. If you missed out, there may be a few shirts left by the time this newsletter reaches you. Don't miss out! Contact Susan Nelson, Kate Stone, or me to see if we still have one in your size. And a big thank you to the O'Hara Commons and Sustainability Center for giving us space at the market.



Courtesy Micki Long

Great Horned Owl Fledglings

What's in a Name?

By Micki Long

Some of you may have read or heard about some Audubon chapters dropping "Audubon" from their chapter names or considering doing so. These chapters are concerned about the historical figure John James Audubon. Audubon the man was not a founder of the birding organization but was honored by one of the founders, George Bird Grinnell, for his contributions to natural history and wildlife art. National Audubon, in discussing J.J. Audubon, says the man "did despicable things even by the standards of his day"

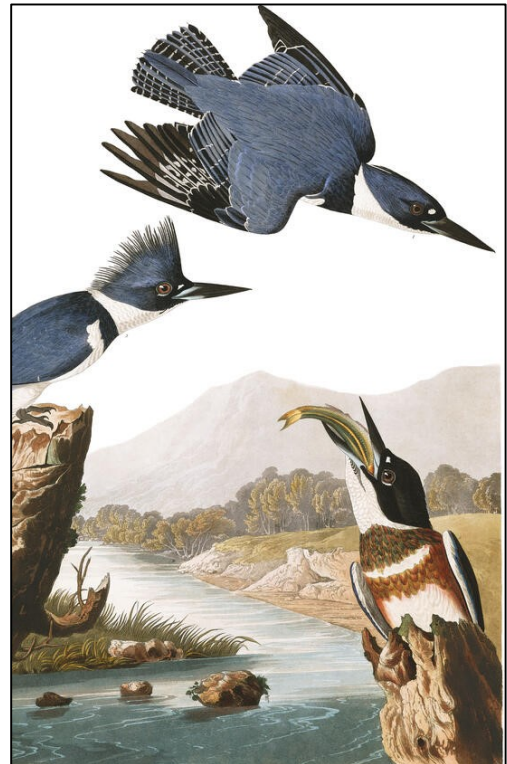
(<https://www.audubon.org/content/john-james-audubon>). The chapter in Seattle has dropped Audubon from its name, and until another name is chosen, use Seattle ~~Audubon~~ as their title. To read about Seattle's decision, see <https://seattleaudubon.org/2022/07/21/moving-from-shameful-legacy-seattle-chapter-to-drop-audubon/>

I recently received an email from the Andres Villalon, the acting Chief National Audubon Society's Chief Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging Officer, about Audubon's Naming Project. Villalon described steps the National office

is taking in response to concerns over John Jay Audubon's legacy:

- A Board Task Force was formed earlier this year and is responsible for making a recommendation about whether or not to change National Audubon Society's name to the entire National Audubon Society Board.
- To make that recommendation, the Task Force is executing a scope of work that will provide 4 key inputs: historical research, engagement data, and legal and financial analyses.
- The historical research explores John James Audubon's biography; the organization's origin story; the legacies of both the individual and the organization; and the frameworks that institutions can leverage to engage with these histories.
- An engagement firm will design and execute a process to listen to where people are, gather feedback, understand the impact of any potential decisions, and provide data and analysis. Key audiences, including staff, donors, members, and volunteers, will be engaged in that process.

The Bitterroot Audubon Board has not discussed this issue yet. Please read Seattle ~~Audubon's~~ rationale and consider the steps announced by National Audubon as you form an opinion on this matter.



*Courtesy National Audubon Society
John James Audubon's Belted Kingfisher*

A Good Year for Montana Peregrine Falcons

By Dave Lockman

Peregrine falcon populations in the Bitterroot and across Montana had a productive year, despite the cool, wet spring. Here in the Bitterroot, volunteers with Bitterroot Audubon's Bitterroot Peregrine Watch group documented 11 active territories this spring. Of these, 9 were checked for productivity this summer. We documented successful fledging in 8 territories, and found at least 20 fledged juveniles for an average of 2.5 young fledged per territory with a fledge count. We likely missed some young in some of the territories (it can get kind of wild trying to keep track of them all), and several previously active territories went unchecked, so there were almost certainly more young peregrines produced than what we counted. On a larger scale, the Montana Peregrine Institute website (www.montanaperegrine.org) shows that volunteers found 88 active peregrine territories across the state. Volunteers found fledged young at 37 of these active territories, and found at least 98 fledged juveniles for an average of 2.6 young per territory with a fledge count. According to Jay Sumner, Executive Director of MPI, the long-term average for Montana is 2.4 young per territory with a fledge count, so peregrines in the Bitterroot and across the state did well in 2022.

I'd like to thank all of those Bitterroot Peregrine Watch volunteers who donated their time and effort to monitor peregrine territories this year. To the best of my knowledge we had 14 folks who monitored at least one territory at least once. There were some frustrating times when we couldn't find any peregrines, but several volunteers had more than one amazing peregrine experience. One team found the active nest ledge and was able to watch the young as they grew. We also documented one instance where the female that was present in the territory in the spring had been replaced by a different female in the summer, but the territory was still successful. We saw lots of courtship activity including several copulation bouts and prey exchanges, and later saw juveniles flying together and harassing each other and their parents in that typical annoying teenage manner. And we all increased our peregrine observation skills. Can't wait for next year, watch for announcements in late winter if you're interested.

Calendar of Events

- Sep 19:** Audubon Meeting/Program "Noxious Weeds in Ravalli County," with Kelly Ann Morris, Audubon Meeting, Ravalli Weed District Office, 121 S. Tudor Street, Victor, MT 59875, 7PM, Board Mtg. 5PM.
- Oct 11:** Highway Clean-up, 4PM, see announcement in this newsletter.
- Oct 17:** Audubon Meeting/Program: TBA, Audubon Meeting, Bitterroot Valley Church of the Nazarene's Neely Center, 803 5th Ave, Victor, MT 59875, 7PM, Board Mtg. 5PM.
- Monthly:** Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, 3rd Saturday of each month, Stevensville, MT 10AM-12PM.

Hunting with Hadza

By Skip Horner

There are only two true hunter-gatherer cultures remaining in Africa. The Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert are well known. Less well-known are the Hadza, who live on a rugged mountaintop in northern Tanzania, well removed from the popular game parks. Hadza women spend a few hours each day gathering the roots and fruits and tubers and berries that bring deep nutrition to the clan. The men spend a few hours a day hunting for whatever they can find. Their hand-made bows and poison-tipped arrows are sufficient to take down almost any critter that wanders past, including Eland, the largest of the antelopes, the size of an elk, but most often they go for smaller easier prey. Their favorite targets are Rock Hyrax, bunny-like creatures that live in colonies among the granite outcrops and tangled forests of Hadza home country. A meal of herb-encrusted hyrax, gutted but not skinned, cooked over an open fire, is a savory delight.

Before dawn one morning I went hunting with a Hadza named Mkuyu. A Baobab tree was dropping its night-blooming flowers after being pollinated by fruit bats, so we expected a Kudu, or at least a Dik-dik, to sneak in for these succulent treats. We tucked into blinds built in tall grass nearby and waited. The sun rose and the day began. Flies buzzed and sweat dripped, but nothing wandered by for the Baobab flowers. We sat motionless. Suddenly a Verreaux's Eagle landed on a thick branch half-way up the tree. I've always revered the Verreaux's Eagle for its

striking black and white pattern, and for its preference for wilder, more remote and mountainous hunting grounds. It's a massive and uncommon bird, larger in every dimension than our Bald Eagle. Their long broad wings narrow noticeably at their bases, and the large bill and head project well forward, creating a distinctive image in flight. Their main prey is Rock hyrax, making them a direct competitor to the Hadza. I'd never seen one so close, and I was sure Mkuyu felt the same awe I did and wouldn't shoot.

I was wrong.

With a thunk, his first arrow stuck into the branch directly below the eagle. The eagle fluttered, but remained. I glanced at Mkuyu, who now stood in a crouch, taking aim with his second arrow. It whizzed by a few inches from the bird's head, which flinched, then slowly turned back to glare at us, his bright yellow eye-ring clearly visible. As the hunter notched his third arrow, the eagle flew off.

We returned to camp empty handed, but another hunter brought in two hyrax, one still impaled on the arrow, so we all ate a small but healthy breakfast that day.

The Hadza have lived in harmony with their surroundings for millennia. Hunting on foot in Africa with handmade long bows and arrows ensures sustainability. They take only what they need, they express deep respect for their prey and for their own existential precariousness, and they share their bounty with visitors and clan alike.

Mkuyu was disappointed at missing his shots. Such is life, and death, in the bush. Was the need for food for a clan that lived in balance with nature worth more than the life of one glorious bird?

No. It was better to see it fly away.

Method of Safely Cleaning your Binoculars

By Richard C. Nelson

My wife is an avid birder and BAS member and enjoys sharing "her" birds with me. I, on the other hand, am an avid astronomer and enjoy sharing "my" sky with her. But the one thing we have in common is FINE OPTICS. Her binoculars, my telescopes. Both require special handling and careful cleaning procedures so as to keep them in the best condition for that next amazing joy that is viewed through our lenses.

When cleaning optics of any kind, LESS IS BEST.

If you glance at your binoculars and see a thin layer of dust, it will not affect the image at all. Absolutely AVOID the urge to just take that dust or smudge off with your Tshirt! Any kind of "rub" to the lenses can easily result in a scratch on your fine optical glass. Cleaning the glass too often opens the possibility of mistakes.

How to clean optics safely:



The first step is to blow any loose debris off the glass with a large air puffer bulb. I recommend one with a bulb about 4" long as it tends to move more air. Next lightly brush away any remaining debris with a very soft camel hair like brush. Then hit it with the puffer again, just in case you dislodged a spec of debris. Avoid using compressed air, as the propellant product may get onto the glass.

I recommend staying away from lens cleaning tissue. Televue, a high end telescope company, feels that lens cleaning tissue is too abrasive and recommends 100% cotton balls.

The lens cleaning solution I recommend is something that can be made with basic products at home.

2 -parts distilled water

1 -part alcohol, preferably over 90%

1- drop of Dawn liquid soap

Dampen a cotton ball with the above lens cleaning solution. Do not saturate the cotton ball. Then just dab the cotton ball to the lens and do not wipe or rub! You want to *LIFT* the dust or particles off the glass.

Next, take plain Kleenex tissue (NO lotion or other enhancements to the tissue) and gently wipe the glass of residual cleaning solution. Take another dampened 100% cotton ball, and this time gently wipe the glass followed by the Kleenex. Then take your air puffer bulb and blow away any cotton or material left behind. Frequently throw away cotton and Kleenex as these materials are inexpensive but your lenses are not.

And remember, when cleaning optics of any kind, **LESS IS BEST.**

News and Notes



Bitterroot Audubon Fundraiser—Some T-shirts still available for purchase!

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 Market 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

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



Cinnamon Teal.

Courtesy Carol Babel

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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
PO Box 326
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NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION



Renew or Sign up
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