

Bitterroot AUDUBON



SEPTEMBER 2023

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 38, NO. 1

September 18th Meeting

By Micki Long

We have a special meeting planned for September 18th (our regular program meeting for September). We have reserved an accessible group camping site at Larry Creek Campground (in the Bass Creek Recreation Area). At the end of this email, you'll find a link with a map and other info about the site.

Our special meeting will have a special start time: 6 p.m. instead of 7 p.m. Come early to hike and bird if you like. You're also welcome to camp at the site. The gathering will be potluck, so please bring something to share.



You can peruse our selection of bird books while you catch up with friends. These cherished references were donated to us by the families of long-time members Mel Mooers and Wayne Tree. Take a book or two home with you in exchange for a donation to our organization!

You can also buy a Bitterroot Audubon cap or visor, for \$20. The proceeds fund Byron Weber Memorial scholarships for students majoring in a Natural Resource field and support other educational opportunities for younger students. These caps and visors would make great Bitterroot souvenirs and Christmas presents!

Letter from the President

By Micki Long, BAS President

I hope you all had a great summer, with great birding! The weather has been challenging at times, but I've had more species breed in and around my yard than in the last few years (even though the total number of birds, particularly nuthatches, seems down). I've loved seeing fledgling Steller's Jays, Clark's Nutcrackers, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Warbling Vireos, Cedar Waxwings, Western Tanagers, Downy and Pileated Woodpeckers, and Rufous, Calliope, and Black-chinned Hummingbirds. I was lucky enough to have the Black-headed Grosbeaks here all summer, which is quite a treat for me, as I find the female of that species especially beautiful. In addition to my own backyard, Lee Metcalf provided great birding, as usual. Highlights include Virginia Rail parents and chicks and juvenile Northern Harriers. Of course, I eBirded all these species and shared my lists with bas2023. How's that for a segue to an update on our Bitterroot Audubon Big Year Challenge?



Bullock's Oriole.

Courtesy Micki Long



Courtesy Micki Long

Female Black-headed Grosbeak.



Courtesy Micki Long

Virginia Rails.

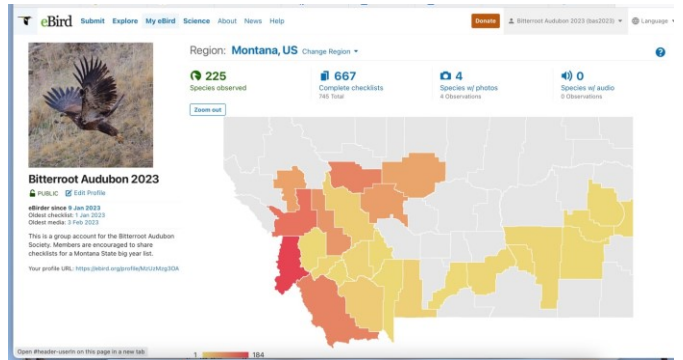


Courtesy Micki Long

Northern Harrier.

I was really hoping that summer travel by Bitterroot Audubon members would mean eBird lists from more Montana counties. But we have until the end of the year to check off more counties. This screen shot is from August 30. If I counted correctly, we

have checklists from 25 of 56 counties. We may not be able to get checklists from all Montana counties, but I'm confident we can get several more than we have now. If you're traveling, try birding at rest stops; I found quite a few species at rest stops this summer. The requirements of this challenge are simple: 1) you must be a Bitterroot Audubon member, 2) you can only submit checklists on birds seen in Montana, and 3) you must eBird and share your checklists with Bitterroot Audubon, using the handle bas2023. For more info or help, contact me at mickilong@gmail.com.



One more special birding experience for me this summer was participating in Bitterroot Audubon's Raptor Guardians/Montana Peregrine Institute's monitoring program. I loved perching on talus slopes or craggy (but safe) outcropping, watching for Peregrines to help establish the health of the species in the Bitterroot National Forest. Thanks to Marrea Matthews for taking over most of the responsibilities for this wonderful program. Consider volunteering next spring; there will be information in the newsletter in late winter/early spring.



Courtesy Micki Long

Female Peregrine Falcon.

I hope you were able to stop by our table at the O'Hara Commons Farmers Market this summer. The O'Hara Commons and Sustainability Center generously gave us space every other week, for the entire season (thanks, Sam). We will be at the market on September 13th and 27th; we'd love to see you there. We are selling Bitterroot Audubon caps and visors; the proceeds support our educational efforts, including Byron Weber Memorial Scholarships.



Courtesy Micki Long

I'm really looking forward to our September meeting, which is going to be a social/potluck at Larry Creek Group Camp. You can meet our impressive new Board member, Caity Johnson, and see friends you've missed this summer. There is more info in the program announcement in the newsletter.

Finally, here are a couple of articles which may be of interest to some of you. The first is about the impact of wildfire on birds (<https://www.nytimes.com/article/wildfire-smoke-birds.html>), and the second is on the Audubon name change (or, more precisely, the lack of a name change) controversy (<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/07/us/audubon-society-birding-racism.html>).

Little Ambrose

By Betsy Ballard

Friday June 16, a young Red-tailed Hawk fell out of its nest in a large cottonwood tree right in front of my home onto Ambrose Creek Road. This tree has

hosted a red-tail family for many years. I was not at home at the time, but luckily it was uninjured and discovered by 2 women driving on Ambrose (separate vehicles) and one of them knew to contact Wild Skies Raptor Center. Brooke Tanner of WSRC contacted Susan Nelson, who sometimes acts as a liaison and transports injured or otherwise compromised raptors to the center and she and her husband went to evaluate its status and was able to scoop him up, transport it home for the evening and then on to meet up with Brooke or Jesse of WSRC the next morning. Healthy little bird, Brooke deemed this little guy to be at approximately 5 weeks old. He was fed, nurtured and was able to hang out with other Red-tailed Hawks while in rehabilitation. He was then dubbed "Little Ambrose".

After 6 weeks at Wild Skies, Little Ambrose had learned to fly in the flight cage and was returned home on July 25. When released, he flew up into the closest tree, (about 40 yards from his "home" tree) and appeared to be confused at the cacophony of chatters and scolding he received from the sparrows and robins in that tree. He eventually left the tree and at the present time appears to be reunited with his parents. Thank you, Brooke and Jesse, for your labor of love with Wild Skies <https://www.wildskies.org/>. Little Ambrose also sends his love.



Courtesy Betsy Ballard

Road rescue and ready for transport.



Courtesy Betsy Ballard

Six weeks later and first tree landing.



Courtesy Betsy Ballard

Release sequence photos.

A New Silent Spring

By Judy Hoy (former BAS Board member)

If you are concerned about birds and the insects they need to survive, click on this article by Judy Hoy on the GMO Science website to find what is causing our current "silent spring." New studies show that invertebrates and vertebrates, especially birds, ungulates and people, are being severely affected.

<https://gmoscience.org/2023/08/11/exposure-to-imidacloprid-and-glyphosate-effects-on-vertebrates/>

Intermountain West Shorebird Surveys at Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge

By Kate Stone

This spring and fall, a handful of Bitterroot Audubon volunteers participated in the Intermountain West Shorebird Surveys (IWSS), an effort spear-headed by National Audubon Society and Point Blue Conservation Science and locally coordinated by the Intermountain Bird Observatory in Boise, ID. Shorebird populations throughout North America are in decline. Though many do not breed in Montana, they rely on a vast network of

wetlands and other habitat for long-distance migration and overwintering. The goals of the IWSS include documenting long-term trends in shorebird abundance and distribution and identifying key environmental and human-related factors which influence these parameters. The effort also hopes to build a network of collaborative parties who might work together to address identified conservation needs.

We joined volunteers from Audubon chapters across Montana and throughout the Intermountain West to replicate shorebird surveys done about 30 years ago. Volunteers will visit close to 200 wetlands throughout the region twice a year for at least three years. In Montana, the effort includes many familiar National Wildlife Refuges and Waterfowl Production Areas, including the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge.



Survey Region for the IWSS which includes close to 200 potential wetlands for surveys that may serve as important shorebird habitat during migration. Map by Point Blue Conservation Science and the National Audubon Society.

Lee Metcalf NWR is not known for high shorebird numbers or an abundance of shorebird habitat; water levels in the ponds are often beyond management's control and fluctuate wildly from year to year, spring to fall, and even week to week. Though we counted many fewer individuals and species compared to other Montana sites, we still enjoyed

our surveys and the diversity we observed. And we got to see many other bird species and other wildlife, including several porcupines!

Spring:

- 3 Killdeer
- 19 American Avocet
- 1 Long-billed Curlew
- 4 Lesser Yellowlegs
- 1 Greater/Lesser Yellowlegs
- 2 Least Sandpiper
- 2 Long-billed Dowitcher

Fall:

- 1 Sora
- 2 Killdeer
- 2 Wilson's Phalarope
- 27 Red-necked Phalarope
- 3 Greater Yellowlegs
- 1 Lesser Yellowlegs
- 4 Spotted Sandpiper

Because we counted so few shorebirds, we aren't sure if these surveys will be continued at Lee Metcalf in the future. Thanks to Lee Metcalf NWR Manager Tom Reed for working with us to grant a Special Use Permit for the surveys.



Courtesy Kate Stone

Susan Nelson, Micki Long, and Pam Murphy scan ponds at Lee Metcalf NWR for spring shorebirds on April 28th, 2023.



Courtesy Kate Stone

Pam Murphy near the Visitor's Center at Lee Metcalf NWR during our fall survey on August 21st, 2023.

Calendar of Events

- Monthly:** Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, 3rd Saturday of each month, Stevensville, MT 10AM-12PM.
- Sep 18:** Audubon Meeting/Potluck; Larry Creek Campground, Florence, MT 6PM.
- Oct 16:** Audubon Meeting/Program; details TBA. Teller Wildlife Refuge Slack Barn, 1180 Chaffin Ln, Corvallis, MT, 7PM.

Bitterroot Resilience Forum

You are Invited....

To a community discussion on resilience planning strategies to address the impacts of a changing climate.

Bitterroot Resilience Forum will include:

- Expert presentation to increase understanding of our community's vulnerabilities to anticipated climate changes
- Resilience planning through facilitated group discussion and deliberation
- Defining our own local action strategies to adapt to and mitigate climate impacts
- Exploring a spectrUM science exhibit on climate impacts
- Intergenerational dialogue
- Ongoing follow-up planning for resilience preparedness

Forum Topics

- Drought & Flooding
- Smoke & Fire
- Extreme Heat

Sponsors:



Location: Hamilton City Hall
223 S 2nd Street

Friday Oct. 13th 10-2pm

Resilience Day

Dr. Bruce Maxwell will present on forum topics followed by facilitated breakout groups for discussion. The forum will conclude with a selected panel of subject experts and group Q&A.

Free Lunch Provided for all participants

Wednesday Oct. 18th 5:30-7:30pm

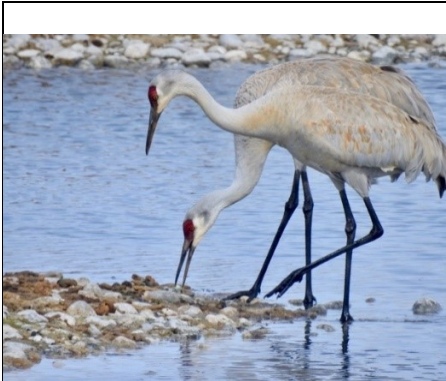
Resilience Night

Summary of key takeaways from Resilience Day, facilitated breakout groups for additional discussion and follow up on issues/solutions.

For registration and schedule:



bitterrootcaq.org/resiliencemt2023/



Bitterroot Audubon's

BIG YEAR

2023

Let's see how many total species our chapter members see **in Montana** from 1/1/23 until 12/31/23.

We'll count by using eBird and sharing our lists to a group eBird account.

Eric Rasmussen will present a workshop on using eBird for beginners or those who need a refresher, on Jan.9 at 3 p.m.

You must register in advance for this workshop:

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZlvf-mrrzlsHtMr0etOS9Wcm06xfO_GEtAC

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

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and on Facebook!

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
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