

Bitterroot AUDUBON



JANUARY 2024

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 38, NO. 5

Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion Subcommittee Presentation

By Micky Long

Our January program is going to be a little bit different than our usual programs. The first 30 minutes will be devoted to a presentation by our Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion subcommittee on the Audubon name issue followed by our program on Turkey Vultures. The subcommittee members will give a recommendation and explain their rationale. We ask that you use the chat box to ask simple questions, which we will answer via email in the days following the meeting. In the December newsletter, you'll find a list of articles that give you some background information:

<https://www.bitterrootaudubon.org/images/newsletters/2023/Bitterroot-Audubon-Newsletter-December-2023.pdf>

We invite you to give responses and perspectives via email, to mickilong@gmail.com, and they will be shared with the entire subcommittee and board. The board will then discuss the recommendations and your input at the February Board meeting.

Breeding Biology and Migration Ecology of Turkey Vultures in Western Montana

By Brian Busby, Adam Shreading, and Robert Domenech

Bitterroot Audubon is so excited to welcome Brian Busby of Raptor View Research Institute (RVRI) to share his knowledge of Turkey Vultures for our January program.

In recent decades, Turkey Vulture populations have both increased and expanded northward in western North America. At RVRI's annual fall migration count site in the Bitterroot Valley of western Montana, the number of vultures seen per 100 observation hours more than tripled from an average of 174 birds in the first four years of the count (2011 to 2014) to 581 birds in the last four years (2019 to 2022). Given their recent population growth and

expansion in the west, coupled with knowledge gaps in Turkey Vulture breeding biology and migration ecology, RVRI outfitted more than 50 birds with GPS transmitters over the last five years to better understand the western subspecies of Turkey Vulture. Brian will discuss early findings from this project, including the timing, distance, and fidelity of migration routes and the difficulty in identifying and locating breeding individuals. Brian will also touch on ecotoxicology and sources of mortality, including the second documented case of a Golden Eagle preying a Turkey Vulture.



Courtesy RVRI

Our January speaker Brian Busby of Raptor View Research Institute holds one of many Turkey Vultures captured in western Montana in recent years.

Raptor View Research Institute is a non-profit research and education organization established in 2004 and based in Missoula, Montana. The mission of Raptor View is to provide knowledge of raptors (birds of prey) and the ecosystems that support them to the public and scientific community, through research, conservation, and education.



Courtesy RVRI

Some Turkey Vultures receive easily visible wing tags that allow the general public to help re-sight vultures as they travel the West.

Brian first joined Raptor View as seasonal field biologist in 2015 after graduating from SUNY ESF with a degree in conservation biology. He left after four years to earn his Masters of Science degree in Raptor Biology at Boise State University studying Barn Owls. He and returned to RVRI full time in 2022.

You are invited to a Zoom meeting on January 15, 2024 at 7PM. You must register in advance for this meeting using the following link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYkceugrjMtH9UqIEC2PJ21pSBLP2Wj9u7K>

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



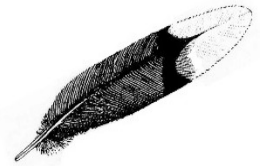
Courtesy RVRI

A face every mother should love: an adult Turkey Vulture showing its characteristic "turkey" head.

Letter from the President

By Micki Long, BAS President

I'm writing this a day after the Stevensville Christmas Bird Count, a highlight of my birding year. I'm guessing that by now, most of you have heard about the American Ornithological Society's decision to change the names of all U.S. and Canada birds named for people. Here is part of the AOS's November announcement:



Today the [American Ornithological Society](https://americanornithology.org/american-ornithological-society-will-change-the-english-names-of-bird-species-named-after-people/) (AOS) announced that in an effort to address past wrongs and engage far more people in the enjoyment, protection, and study of birds, it will change all English bird names currently named after people within its geographic jurisdiction. The AOS will also change the process by which English names are selected for bird species. The effort will begin in 2024 and will focus initially on 70–80 bird species that occur primarily within the U.S. and Canada. <https://americanornithology.org/american-ornithological-society-will-change-the-english-names-of-bird-species-named-after-people/>



Courtesy Micki Long

Christine Morris and Elena Ulev, taking a break during the Christmas Bird Count.

You will also remember that Sneed Collard presented a program for us last January, about the



Courtesy Micki Long

Our best find during the CBC—a Ferruginous Hawk.

Big Year he did with his son Braden. He and Braden write a blog called *FatherSonBirding*. In a recent entry generally supporting AOS's renaming plan, Sneed and Braden offer their recommendations for five new names for birds familiar to us (including my favorite species). They offer the same name for Clark's Nutcrackers as I do: Whitebark Nutcracker. The other suggestions are fun and make sense. You may be thinking of new ones too. I cannot remember who, on FaceBook, suggested Black-crested Blue Jay for Steller's Jay. I like that one too! One of the goals of renaming is to use names that actually reveal more about the birds. I think Whitebark Nutcracker and Black-crested Blue Jay both accomplish that goal. I hope that people will have so much fun with the renaming project that they don't mind learning new names and 4-letter codes! Check out Sneed and Braden's blog post to read their other recommendations.

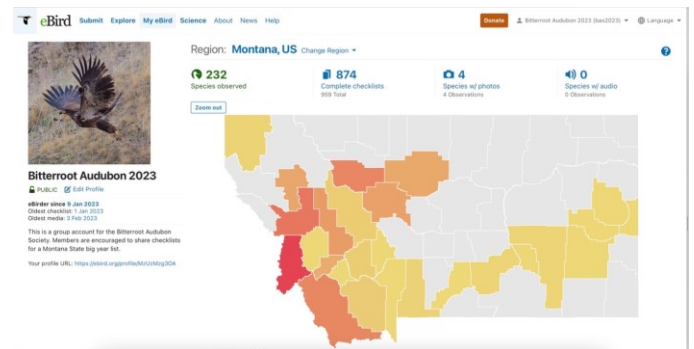
<https://fathersonbirding.com/avian-reveal-our-five-picks-for-new-bird-names/> Speaking of Big Years, our chapter-wide Big Year, which was limited to birds that members saw in Montana, is over. The results are impressive: 232 species and 874 complete checklists, with 26 counties represented. Good job, everyone!

Finally, a reminder that the January program meeting, on January 15th, will be a bit different than our usual program meetings. The first 30 minutes

will be a presentation by BAS's subcommittee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. We'll be talking about an issue that has been discussed in the birding world, at least in the U.S., for quite some time: the name "Audubon." We'll be briefly covering the options, making a recommendation, and explaining our rationale for our recommendation. Because we have only 30 minutes, we will not be "opening the floor" for discussion during this meeting. But we will have different options for member input. More on those options at the meeting. In the December newsletter, you'll find a list of sources about National Audubon's and various chapters' decisions plus other helpful resources :

<https://www.bitterrootaudubon.org/images/newsletters/2023/Bitterroot-Audubon-Newsletter-December-2023.pdf>

See you on Zoom!



Calendar of Events

- Monthly:** Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, 3rd Saturday of each month, Stevensville, MT 10AM-12PM.
- Jan 15:** Audubon Meeting/Program: Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion Subcommittee Presentation/Breeding Biology and Migration Ecology of Turkey Vultures in Western Montana. 7PM via Zoom.
- Feb 19:** Audubon Meeting/Program; details TBA. 7PM via Zoom.
- Feb 24:** "Poets in the 'Root," Teller Wildlife Refuge in Corvallis, MT at 1PM.
- Mar 18:** Audubon Meeting/Program; details TBA. 7PM via Zoom.
- May 31-Jun 2:** Wings Across the Big Sky birding festival, Carroll College, Helena, MT. Details TBA.

Byron Weber Memorial Scholarship, presented by Bitterroot Audubon

By Skip Horner, for the BAS Scholarship Committee

Each semester, Bitterroot Audubon presents a \$1000 scholarship to an upper-class student majoring in a Natural Resource field at a Montana four-year college or university. Preference is given to a Bitterroot Valley resident. This semester our winner is Rocky Verrue, from Florence, who studies soil science and entomology at Montana State.

Each applicant is required to write a 500-word essay describing what they feel to be the most pressing issue in the Natural Resource field. We also require two letters of recommendation and a copy of their Transcript. Our Scholarship Committee reviews each application and presents their selection to Bitterroot Audubon Board for approval.

This is not such a difficult process for college students, especially for such a significant reward. The few applications we receive each semester represent highly qualified students, but we would like to attract even more, to make this scholarship truly competitive. We define 'Natural Resource' very broadly, covering many related disciplines, so this should not dissuade possible candidates. If you know of a student who might meet our qualifications, please tell them to go to our website, bitterrootaudubon.org, to download our application. Spring semester applications are due January 31, 2024. We're eager to give away our money, so we would love to have Bitterroot Valley students apply. Please help us spread the word!

Please Support Audubon Adventures

By Betsy Ballard

Greetings – Bitterroot Audubon Members! We are asking for support for the Audubon Adventures Classroom program. Audubon Adventures is an environmental education curriculum product created by the National Audubon Society for grades 3 - 5. Developed by professional environmental educators, Audubon Adventures presents standards-based science content about birds, wildlife, and their habitats.

We are contacting the teachers from last year to see what kits they would like and also outreaching for additional teachers or home school parents who might be interested in participating. If you wish to participate this year, we and the teachers greatly appreciate your support.

Below is a link to Audubon adventures if you wish to see what curriculums are available.

<http://www.audubonadventures.org/>

The Classroom kits are \$45.95, which includes shipping.

If you would like to donate, you can mail your donation to: Bitterroot Audubon, P.O. Box 326, Hamilton, MT 59840, or bring it to a monthly meeting.

If you have questions please call or text Betsy Ballard (cell phone -239-5105) or email at; diamondback@cybernet1.com



Courtesy Janice Miller, Last Chance Audubon



Art by Deb Goslin

Poets in the 'Root Save the Date!

Nature in nearly all manifestations has inspired poets since there were poets! And at least since the Roman poet Horace wrote *Ars Poetica* or the *Art of Poetry* in 19BC, literature, including poetry, sought to both instruct and delight.

Poets in the 'Root combines these two aims in an uncommon but simple way. One person reads a favorite poem or part of a poem that uses an element of nature to convey its message (I have a list if you want recommendations). Then, the same or another person gives an explanation (5 minutes max) of some aspect of that nature element. The explanation focuses on nature interpretation, not literary interpretation. Listeners get a bit of poetry and a bit of natural history.

Anyone can volunteer to read poetry and/or offer the nature interpretation. This is a fun way for Master Naturalists to earn credit towards their certification. Free and open to the public.

The program will be held at the Teller Wildlife Refuge in Corvallis, on Saturday, February 24th, at 1PM. We'll have refreshments, including coffee, tea, wine, and snacks!

Bitterroot Audubon, Teller Wildlife Refuge, and the Montana Natural History Center are sponsoring this event.

To volunteer, ask questions, or get a list of poems, please contact Micki Long at mickilong@gmail.com

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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 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION



Renew or Sign up
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