

Bitterroot AUDUBON



APRIL 2024

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 38, NO. 8

April Program: Birds and Brews Social at the Tin Can!

By Kate Stone



Courtesy Kate Stone

This bluebird would like to buy the first round.

April is ALL ABOUT BEING SOCIAL with Bitterroot Audubon! Our April speaker had to cancel, so the BAS social committee (aka Micki and Kate) decided we should take advantage of the free space on our calendar to invite ourselves down to the Tin Can in Stevensville for a fun evening of socializing, sharing food and beverages, and partaking in some low-key birdy activities. Will there be games? YES!! Will there be prizes? YES!! Do you actually need to talk to anyone? NO!! But if you'd like the chance to see some friendly faces, sign up for volunteer opportunities for the summer, buy one of the few remaining BAS visors, or plan outings with bird buddies new and old, then please consider joining us. We'll gather from 5:30-7:30PM on Monday, April 15th, 2024 and people can come and go as they wish. The Tin Can Bar and Draft Room is located at 207 Main Street, in Stevensville. They serve a variety of beverages and have a "greasy gourmet" food menu. If you have any concerns about accessibility, please let us know and we will scout for you!

contactus@bitterrootaudubon.org



Courtesy Micki Long

Bitterroot Audubon knows how to throw a good social!



Courtesy Kate Stone

Look forward to some low-pressure art and bird games like those enjoyed by Becky Peters at our fall social.

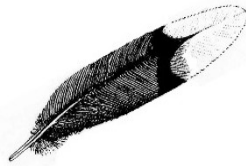
Letter from the President

By Micki Long, BAS President

Happy Earth Month! And Earth Day is only two days after Welcome Back

Waterfowl Day—on April

20th. Join us for an early celebration at Lee Metcalf Wildlife Refuge. See the article elsewhere in this newsletter.



April also happens to be National Poetry Month. Poetry and Nature—that combination should sound familiar to those of you who participated in, or were at least aware of a program that BAS (along with partners The Teller Refuge, Montana Natural History Center's Master Naturalist Program, and Blue Heron Tours) presented in late February, called "Poets in the Root." In a guest essay published in the April 1st *New York Times*, "How to Breathe with the Trees," Margaret Renkl not only combines nature and poetry but also focuses on Ada Limon, the Poet Laureate of the United States. I read Limon's poem "Proof" at "Poets in the Root" and talked about American Kestrels (which Limon uses in the poem)! There are so many passages in Renkl's piece that I'd like to quote, but I'll settle for this: "At this time of crisis, when worry governs our days, she [Limon] wants us to look up from our screens and consider our own connection to the earth. To remember how to breathe by spending some time with the trees that breathe with us." Limon and Renkl make some striking claims for poetry's power; they assert that nature poetry can help heal the earth. How so? Renkl ends the essay with this: "The answer lies in poetry's great intimacy, its invitation to breathe together. We read a poem, and we take a breath each time the poet takes a breath. We read a nature poem, and we take a breath with the trees. When the trees — and the birds and the clouds and the ants and even the bats and the rat snakes — become a part of us, too, maybe that's when we will finally begin to care enough to save them." I hope you can use this link and others I will give later in this letter:

https://www.nytimes.com/2024/04/01/opinion/ada-limon-poet-nature.html?unlocked_article_code=1.hE0.qfno.VW y0ZC2vQvH4&smid=url-share

Just a few days earlier, on March 26th, the same newspaper printed a piece called, "Do Birds Dream?" The article discusses what scientists have

learned about avian sleeping and dreaming from EEGs and MRIs.

https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/26/science/birds-dreaming-rem-sleep.html?unlocked_article_code=1.gk0.AKli.yoX q-Ed3Zvl_&smid=url-share And in a real gift to those of us familiar with renowned science journalist and Pulitzer Prize winner Ed Yong, the *NYTimes* also gives us "When I Became a Birder, Almost Everything Else Fell Into Place," https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/30/opinion/birding-spring-merlin-ebird.html?unlocked_article_code=1.gk0.6jFP.ajG5 DJaTIXBh&smid=url-share

One of my favorite lines from Yong's essay echoes my own belief about birding: "It has proved more meditative than meditation." Quietly listening to birdsong and scanning the trees, shrubs, reeds, or cattails for the source, I shut out distractions and focus intently, for a few or many moments. Somehow, I feel both excitement and peace. And another favorite line captures what many of us feel: "pursuits like birding that foster joy, wonder and connection to place are not sidebars to a fulfilled life but their essence."



Courtesy Micki Long

Common Yellowthroat, often heard before seen.

Our April program is not really a program at all—it's a social event at the Tin Can (207 Main Street), in Stevensville. You'll find an announcement with more details elsewhere in this newsletter. While we will have fun with friends at this event, the initial reason we traded a presentation for a birder party was that our April presenter cancelled. I just didn't

have it in me to scramble for another presenter. Since Kay Fulton, an excellent Program Chair for many years, resigned and moved away (we miss you, Kay!), I've been doing double duty as President and Program Chair. Other Board members have helped, but I am the default, and it's tiring. As a Board, we've decided that maybe we don't need to have programs every month. The other option, however, is that one or two of you step up and take on the role of program chair. The job wouldn't be so hard if two people shared the load as Program Co-chairs! Additionally, members, please check your email for an invitation to suggest new names for our chapter.

Welcome Back Waterfowl Day!

By Micki Long



Courtesy Kate Stone

Judy and Bob Hoy enjoy waterfowl at a past Welcome Back Waterfowl Day.

Mark your calendars: Bitterroot Audubon will be welcoming back waterfowl and wonderful birders at Lee Metcalf Wildlife Refuge on Saturday, April 20, 2024. We'll meet on the dike west of the Visitor's Center from 10AM-1:30PM. We'll observe the waterfowl, other birds, and mammals that use the refuge wetlands; we'll help the public identify what we see. This special event is for everyone. Bring binoculars, a scope (if you have one), and warm clothes.



Courtesy Micki Long

American White Pelicans, with American Coots in the background, at a previous WBWD.

AWESOME HIGHWAY CLEANUP

By Skip Horner

Our semi-annual highway cleanup will take place on Tuesday, May 7th, 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!

For Pollinator Gardeners (really, for everybody!)

By Becky Peters

If you have already established a pollinator garden, then our native insects, moths, butterflies, bees, hummingbirds, beetles, etc. are all abuzz and thank you, and our birds thank you too! For anyone who is thinking about starting a pollinator garden here in the Bitterroot, we thank you as well. So why is it a great idea to establish a pollinator garden? Because we are losing pollinators all over the world, mainly due to human activities such as: harmful pesticides (I'm looking at you Round Up!), climate change, air pollution, farming techniques, and habitat loss. If we have caused their decline, then we can sure help to increase their numbers. Why do we care about pollinators? Well, because they support our food supplies and thereby our public health (and our birds' food supplies and avian health). How can you personally help? Limit your pesticide use, establish natural habitats and plant native plants. And why are the pollinators so susceptible to human activity? Because of the landscaping of our environments. The non-native plants that we put around our houses do not consistently supply the right surroundings or the right nectar at the right time. Our pollinators evolved with the native plants, which in turn evolved on our local soil types. They are all interconnected, all dependent on each other. It's way past time for us to realize that we are connected with them as well.

So here are some thoughts about ways you can help:

1. Go native! Our native grasses, trees, bushes, and flowers rely on the pollinators, and our pollinators rely on the plants they have adapted to. Non-native

plants do not support the life cycles of our pollinators.

2. Plant a diversity of native wildflowers and plants - different heights, different colors, different bloom times, different shapes.

3. Plant big patches of each plant species, which makes it more efficient for the pollinators.

4. Be messy in your garden. 70% of native bees nest underground. Protect them!

5. Leave piles of branches and hollow twigs, rotten logs, and stumps. Those are pollinator havens.

6. Leave patches of bare soil. Then when it gets wet, watch the butterflies and moths congregate!

7. Stop using chemicals (these can stay in our soil for up to seven years!). Pesticides and herbicides are killing our pollinators and our birds.

8. Give your pollinator garden time to grow and time for the pollinators to find your garden.

9. Do it for the birds. For example, Chickadees need 500 caterpillars a day to feed their young. During this baby raising time they may use your bird feeders but they love the bugs that will supply protein for the little ones.

10. Encourage your friends to establish a pollinator garden, even if it might be just a few flower pots on a balcony.

11. Exotic plants may be beautiful in your landscaping but they are just plastic food to pollinators. Most plants in landscaping nurseries are there for the humans, not for our wildlife. Those exotic plants usually come from other countries. Check out Great Bear Nursery

<https://www.greatbearnativeplants.com/waterwisestore> They are located in the Grantsdale area.

12. And as Bitter Root Water Partnership tells us, native plants and wildflowers require less water use and increase our soil's water retention capacity. Another great environmental benefit!

13. Lessen the size of your lawn. If it shows no sign of life except for the constant green growing grass, that has to be mowed, then I call it green concrete. So, find a 10'x10' spot in your yard for a pollinator garden of native wildflowers, with 6 hours of sunlight a day, adequate moisture, and amend the soil if you need to with compost or mulch.

14. Check out these helpful resources to get you going:

- www.Audubon.org/native-plants Just put in your zip code.

- www.pollinator.org/guides Bitterrooters will want the Middle Rocky Mt. Steppe Guide

- www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news "Shrinking Pollinator Populations"

- www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/pollinators/gardening

15. And lastly – **Come and help Bill and me weed at Skalkaho Bend Park. Please!!** The people walking by will sing your praises. (they really do, don't they Kathy!?) If you have never been there then this would be a wonderful way to learn what BAS, the city of Hamilton, Bitter Root Water Partnership, and Bitter Root Land Trust have accomplished down there. We'd like to get weeding volunteers down there during the week of April 15th. Email me if you are interested, have any questions, and want more information on what to bring with you. rpeters@montana.com **Subject line: Weeding.** We are going to make this valley full of blooms and bugs and BIRDS!! Thank you, Becky Peters



Courtesy Janice Miller, Last Chance Audubon

Summer Field Trip at Big Creek Ranch: June 1, 2024 at 8AM

By Jill Davies

The Big Creek Ranch, owned by the Langton family for seven generations, has a wonderful variety of year round and migratory birds. Please join Jill Davies and Gretchen Langton for a walk around the ranch on Saturday, June 1, 2024 at 8AM. We ask folks to meet at 2977 Mittower Rd West to begin. Mittower is a county road just north of the Big Creek Bridge, off Highway 93, 3 miles north of Victor. Mittower Road goes West and then North. Please stay West. When the Big Creek Ranch sign

comes into view, 2977 Mittower is on the right. Pull in and park on either side of the driveway. We will begin near the house with the American Goldfinches, Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers, Nuthatches (three varieties), Chickadees and Great Horned Owls. We can then walk through the towering Ponderosa Pines along Big Creek where the Great Blue Herons and the Belted Kingfishers feast, and the Clark's Nutcrackers, Stellar Jay's and Northern Flickers holler at each other. Then we'll make our way out into the meadows and hopefully catch site of our resident Great Grey Owls and American Kestrels hunting voles. The Killdeer will no doubt be showing us their broken wings and the fat American Robins and proud Western Meadowlarks will make lovely background music. And we may hear the Sandhill Cranes in the field next door and the geese overhead making their way to the refuge. We often have Bald Eagles peering down into the chicken yard wondering at the odds. Usually, a Murder of Crows isn't too far off and we can't avoid the European Starlings or the Turkey Vultures. We feel lucky to live in a place with such bird bounty and we are excited to share this experience with the BAS folks.



Courtesy Elise Chavez

Great Gray Owl at Big Creek Ranch with St. Mary's Peak in the background.

Birdability—Volunteer Opportunity!

By Kate Stone

Perhaps you've experienced it: you arrive at a location excited to look at birds, but you encounter an obstacle that limits your enjoyment. Maybe it's a flooded trail, a swarm of mosquitoes, or a throng of people "pishing" obnoxiously. These inconveniences are relatively minor compared to what people with physical or mental disabilities may

face when they venture outside to bird. Perhaps you use a walker and also have impaired vision. Is the trail flat? Are there steps? Is there a bathroom you can access easily? Will you find a handicapped parking spot? If you're not sure about the answers to any or all of these questions, you might just decide to stay home rather than risk disappointment or an unsafe experience.



Graphic from the Birdability website.

Birdability's mission is threefold, ensuring birding is inclusive, accessible, and welcoming to all.

The organization Birdability was created to help break down birding access barriers for people with physical and mental disabilities. From their website: "Birdability's mission is to share the joy of birding with people who have disabilities and to ensure that birding is accessible for everyone. Through education, outreach and advocacy, Birdability works to ensure the birding community and the outdoors are welcoming, inclusive, safe and accessible for everybody. We focus on people with mobility challenges, blindness or low vision, chronic illness,

HELP WANTED: Support Wild Skies Raptor Center

I am looking for volunteers to help design & make the 2'x3' information posters that we plan to have at the Wild Skies event at the Daly Mansion on June 9th. If you are interested in helping, please contact me, Estelle Shuttleworth at: jc@shuttleworthje.com

Calendar of Events

Monthly: Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, 3rd Saturday of each month, Stevensville, MT 10AM-12PM.

Apr 8-May 7:

Citizen Science opportunity sponsored by Montana Audubon: Long-billed Curlew surveys. See newsletter article for details.

Apr 15: Birds and Brews Social at the Tin Can, 207 Main Street, Stevensville, MT, 530-730PM.

Week of Apr 15:

Weeding volunteer opportunity at Skalkaho Bend Park. See pollinator garden article in the newsletter for details.

Apr 20: Welcome Back Waterfowl Day, Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT, 10AM-1:30PM.

May 7: Highway Clean-up, 4PM, see announcement in this newsletter for details.

May 7-May 31:

Citizen Science opportunity sponsored by Montana Audubon: Long-billed Curlew surveys. See newsletter article for details.

May 31-Jun 2:

Wings Across the Big Sky birding festival, Carroll College, Helena, MT. See newsletter articles from Montana Audubon as details and announcements are shared. The registration period is open.

Jun 1: Summer Field Trip at Big Creek Ranch, 8AM. See newsletter article for details.

Jun 9: Raptor Day at the Mansion, Daly Mansion, Hamilton, MT, 1-4PM. See flyer in newsletter for details.

intellectual or developmental disabilities, mental illness, and those who are neurodivergent, deaf or hard of hearing or who have other health concerns. In addition to current birders, we strive to introduce birding to people with disabilities and other health concerns who are not yet birders so they too can experience the joys of birding.”

One great outreach tool Birdability sponsors is an interactive map that pairs birding locations with site assessments geared towards accessibility concerns. Site reviews can be submitted by anyone! As of now, the Birdability map only includes 8 site reviews for locations in the ENTIRE STATE OF MONTANA!!! My hope is that we can work together to double the number of reviews on the site,

particularly in the Bitterroot and Missoula Valleys. Are you in?

I’ve come up with a list of potential spots in the area that I think we can and should add to the map. The Birdability site provides all the resources needed to conduct a site review. The tools you need are simple and include a site review checklist, a camera, a way to measure trail or road distance, and a tape measure.

If you’d like to volunteer to do a site review, please use the contactus@bitterrootaudubon.org email address to let me know you’re interested. Please also include the distance you are willing to drive, if you have a preference for the Bitterroot or Missoula, or if you even want a location outside of our immediate area. If you are traveling elsewhere in the next few months and want to be pointed towards the resources for doing a site visit elsewhere, you can let me know that too.

Can we add eight site visits to the map by our May meeting? Please help Bitterroot Audubon meet this goal!!



Courtesy Kate Stone

The Kenai Trail at Lee Metcalf NWR is one of the few Montana locations mapped on the Birdability website. But even this site review could use an update. Will you help?

Wings Across the Big Sky Registration Open!

By Lauren Smith, MT Audubon

It’s finally here- Registration for the 2024 Wings Across the Big Sky Birding Festival is NOW OPEN! Visit the Montana Audubon website to learn more and to register online. Along with Last Chance Audubon, we’ve put together a fantastic lineup of trips, speakers, and more- you won’t want to miss it!

If you’re on our mailing list, check your mail for the registration brochure, or visit our website (<https://mtaudubon.org/events/wings/>) to view &

download the brochure. Register online -and early! - for the best field trip availability. You can also register via mail. If you have any questions or issues, please email the Montana Audubon office (info@mtaudubon.org), or call us at 406-443-3949.

See you in Helena this summer!



Long-billed Curlew Surveys

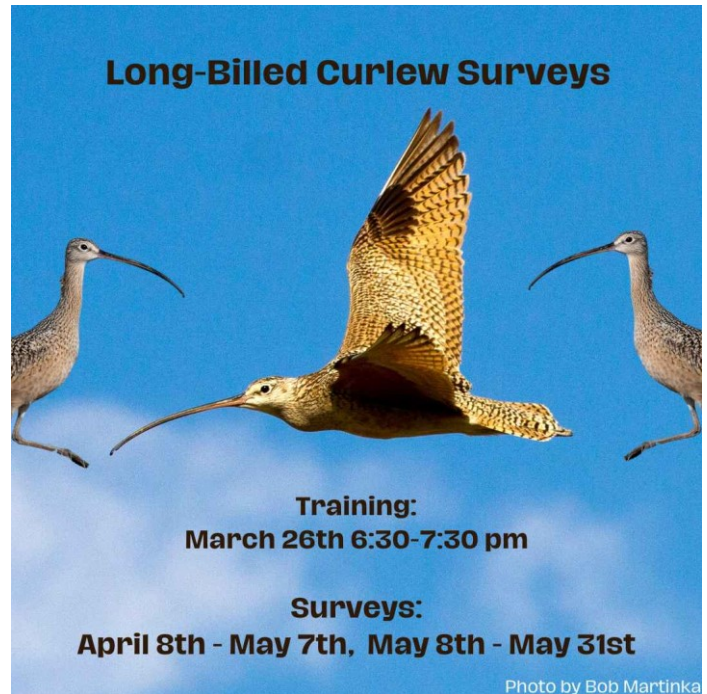
By Lauren Smith, MT Audubon

Spring is fast approaching, and with that comes the familiar “cur-leeeee” call of the Long-Billed Curlew, an icon of America’s prairies. These birds depend on Montana’s grasslands for breeding, and continue to decline across their range due to loss of this habitat due to development. With this decline, more research is needed to assess the health and conservation needs of the population-so we need your help!

Join Montana Audubon’s Long-billed Curlew surveys this summer! There are two survey windows: April 8th - May 7th, and May 8th - May 31st. The training session was on March 26th at on

Zoom, but the recording is available online.

Interested in participating, or want more info? Email Gwynne at gwynne@mtaudubon.org and visit the Long-Billed Curlew Survey page on our website: <https://www.montanabirdsurveys.com/long-billed-curlew.html>



Raptor Day at the Mansion



**WILD SKIES RAPTOR CENTER
PRESENTATION and FUNDRAISER**

Meet some of our Ambassador Birds!

***Raptor Rehabilitation -
from Rescue to Release***

JUNE 9, 2024 Time: 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Daly Mansion Lawns, 251 Eastside Hwy, Hamilton, MT

**Free event , but donations welcomed
*Bring your own water bottles and chairs***

Wild Skies
RAPTOR CENTER 



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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
Hamilton, MT 59840-0326

NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION



Renew or Sign up
for your
National Audubon Membership at
Audubon.org