

# Bitterroot AUDUBON



NOVEMBER 2009

NEWSLETTER

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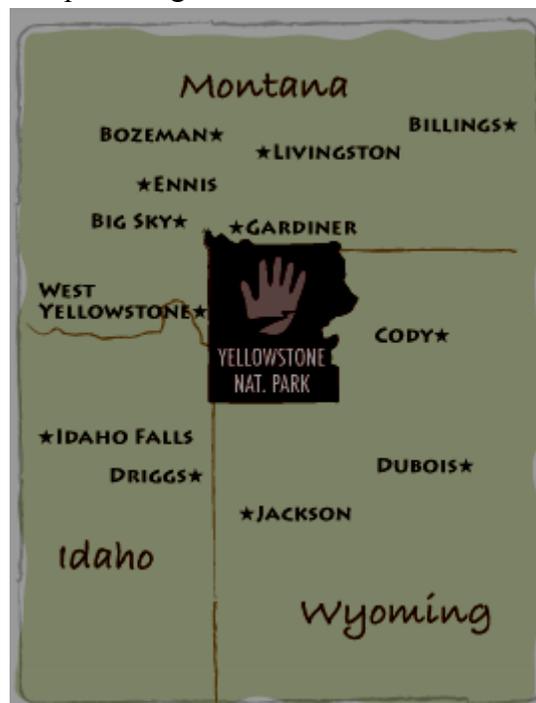
## The Wildness and Spirit of the Greater Yellowstone Country

The Bitterroot Audubon Chapter is pleased to have Michael Leach, founder of the *Yellowstone Country Guardians*, as speaker for our November program. His slide-show presentation is a celebration of place, wildness, and the Yellowstone community. It tells the story of “Yellowstone Country,” emphasizing the importance of indicator species such as the grizzly bear to the future integrity of the ecosystem and its communities. Although the term, “Yellowstone Country” might make one think of Yellowstone National Park, itself 2.2 million acres in size, it is only a portion of what makes “Yellowstone Country” one of the most important places on earth. One of the last intact temperate ecosystems on our planet, it includes mountain ranges, wild rivers, and wildlife in parts of Montana, Wyoming and Idaho.

While assets abound, there remain many threats. The Yellowstone Country Guardians is a grassroots organization working through its education and outreach programs to inspire a sense of pride and foster a commitment from local communities to ensure that Yellowstone Country remains a place of hope and wildness for this and future generations. Michael Leach, the Executive Director, has deep roots throughout the region and has worked as a naturalist, fly-fishing guide and writer based in

Gardiner, MT. His presentation will motivate those who know and love Yellowstone Country to rediscover the beauty of living with wildness.

**Please join Bitterroot Audubon, Monday, November 16<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 P.M. at the Lee Metcalf Refuge, north of Stevensville. The public is invited. For further information contact Kay Fulton at 642-3794**



## Funds Available for Wildlife Projects

Montana Audubon will offer grant money totaling more than \$1,400 to fund projects that benefit wildlife. Preference will be given to research and/or education projects that focus on nongame wildlife and their habitats. The funds may be used for mileage, supplies, equipment, printing, and communications.

Last year Montana Audubon funded Flammulated Owl research in western Montana, resurveying of historic pika locations in Southwestern Montana to determine population persistence in the face of climate change, a native habitat for field studies at Glacier High School in Kalispell, and development of a nature trail along the Milk River in Malta.

Applications must be postmarked on or before December 15, 2009. Grant winners will be notified by February 1, 2010. Audubon Wildlife Fund guidelines can be requested by mail (Montana Audubon, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624), phone (406-443-3949), or downloaded from our website [www.mtaudubon.org/about/grants.html](http://www.mtaudubon.org/about/grants.html).

## Letter from the President

by Peter Allen

Despite my resistance, it's November already. With the abnormally early hard frost, we didn't get much Fall color and many of the trees are retaining their dead leaves – at least for a while. Even so, Helen and I have been collecting many bags of leaves to compost for next year's garden. Halloween is behind us and Thanksgiving is just around the corner. It's time to think about birding activities for the winter. For many, it's time to lay in supplies of bird seed and it's not too late to still sign up for the 23<sup>rd</sup> season of Cornell's *Project Feederwatch* even though they started collecting data Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>. For a small fee of \$15 you can report the birds you see all winter and contribute your observations to the overall effort. You can participate from home, a school, or any location you choose. You can select your own bird-count days, as often as once per week from November through April, and watch birds on all or part of those days. Further, it's a good way to sharpen your observation and birding skills from the warmth and comfort of your home. Go to <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/> to sign up, or 800-843-BIRD (2473) for more information.

It won't be long before it's time for another Christmas Bird Count, or maybe two or three. For those who don't wish to go out in the winter weather, you can still participate in the CBC by reporting the birds which visit your feeder. More on this later.

## Monitoring the Bitterroot River IBA

by Kate Stone

The Important Bird Area (IBA) committee would like to thank all of the participants in the summer 2009 IBA bird surveys. Thanks to Sara Ashline, Alex Bittner, Janeen and Rob Curtis, Jill Davies, Doug and Susie Duff, Bill Good, Bridget and Steve Parker, Colleen Powell, Sherry Ritter, and Nathan Stone. Also thanks to Deb Goslin for providing bird data collected at Lee Metcalf's Bioblitz.



In surveys conducted by Bitterroot Audubon, we identified 4,621 birds of 93 different species. The top bird was.....the yellow warbler (388) followed by the spotted sandpiper (357)! For the IBA's species of concern, we observed 55 Lewis's woodpeckers, 4 red-eyed vireos, 39 red-naped sapsuckers, 28 willow flycatchers, and 22 bald eagles. The data collected by Bitterroot Audubon will be shared with National Audubon and the Montana Natural Heritage Program. We are also working on making a birding checklist for the Bitterroot River IBA. This checklist will be sent out to landowners within the IBA's boundaries and will be available to the general public. If you'd like to see what species are on the list, and perhaps contribute unusual species you have observed in 2009, please visit our website ([www.bitterrootaudubon.org](http://www.bitterrootaudubon.org)). Species observations (species, date, location) can also be submitted to me at [kroystone@hotmail.com](mailto:kroystone@hotmail.com).

### MIGRATORY MARVELS

Body lengths traveled by a Rufous Hummingbird between Alaska and its winter refuge in Mexico:

**79 million**

Miles to the gallon used by a Blackpoll Warbler on migration if it burned gasoline instead of body fat:

**720,000**

Miles traveled by an Arctic Tern in its annual round trip between Arctic breeding grounds and Antarctic seas:

**22,000**

Estimated number of birds detected by radar passing over Cape Cod, MA, on a single night:

**12 million**

From Cornell Lab *BirdNotes*.

## What's the Story, Story? *by Jim Story*

**Question:** Why is there such variation in the number of eggs laid by bird species?

**Answer:** That question is one of many similar questions: Why do birds near the equator lay fewer eggs than related birds near the poles? Why do seabirds that forage close to shore lay more eggs than those that forage far from shore? Why do birds that are colonial lay fewer eggs than solitary relatives? Why do small species tend to have larger clutch sizes than large species? The short answer to all of these questions is that birds lay the number of eggs that will permit them to produce the maximum number of offspring. A bird laying too many eggs may lose all of them due to the inability to properly incubate them, while a bird laying too few eggs will fledge fewer young than it is capable of rearing.



↑ Anna's Hummingbird nest

← Rhea eggs on ground

## American Kestrels Nest in Boxes Attached to MDT Signs

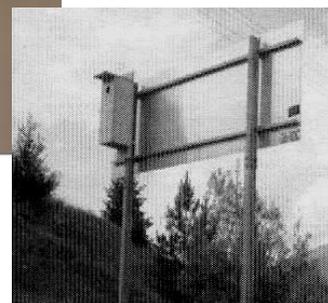
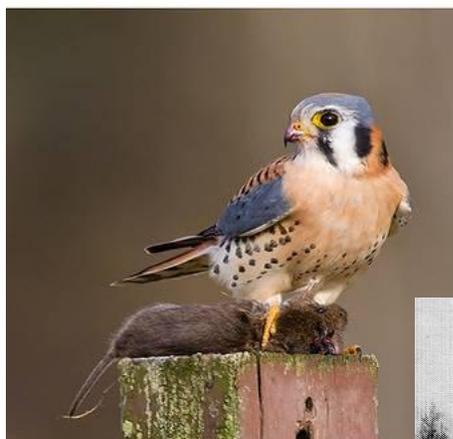
In the spring of 2008, the Montana Department of Transportation Ronan Maintenance Section started a collaborative Kestrel Nesting Box Program with the Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribe (CSKT) Wildlife Management Program. MDT's Environmental Services provides the boxes, MDT's Ronan Maintenance crews install them, and the CSKT arranges maintenance. Most travelers don't even notice the 12 wooden boxes attached to the back of signs along US Highway 93 between Arlee and Elmo, but to a handful of winged travelers, these boxes are home and a place to raise a family for the summer.

Although these colorful, graceful, fast, and powerful fliers remain fairly common, shrinking habitats, clearing of dead trees, and invasions of European Starlings have left many struggling to find suitable nesting and forage areas. Even when hunting habitat and prey are available, the lack of a nest site can be the major reason for the non-productivity in that area.

Nest boxes on the back of MDT signs are prime real estate for kestrels, allowing them to breed in areas formerly devoid of nest sites. These nest boxes provide high, predator-proof locations with clear views where kestrels perch or hover to hunt their prey. In the fall, when the birds have gone, the nesting material is replaced with a new layer of wood

shavings. A low or no-cost way of attaching the boxes to the metal H-shaped post is by using slide rail and brackets that have been discarded. The average box can be put up in about 15 minutes, depending on the terrain.

Other states have successfully implemented this type of Kestrel Nest Box Program. Iowa started a similar program in 1983. Nest boxes now occur on nearly every mile of I-35 from Missouri to Minnesota, and this corridor represents the nation's first statewide kestrel trail along an interstate system. Rhode Island, Nebraska, and Idaho have also adopted a Kestrel Nest Box Program.



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NONPROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
HAMILTON MT  
PERMIT No. 50

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IBA Program	Sherry Ritter	777-7409
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\* Board Member

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WEBSITE: [www.BitterrootAudubon.org](http://www.BitterrootAudubon.org)

## C A L E N D A R

Nov. 16 Audubon Mtg, 7 pm  
Lee Metcalf NWR  
(Board meeting @ 5 pm)

Dec. Christmas bird counts  
Details TBA

June 4-6 2010 Bird Festival  
Missoula

### Chapter Only Membership

The Bitterroot Audubon Chapter Only Membership is \$15/year. These members will be supporting local chapter activities, receive 9 issues of the 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

Become a member of the **National Audubon Society** and **Bitterroot Audubon** [Chapter Code C9ZN580Z]. You will receive *Audubon* magazine, *Bitterroot Audubon Newsletter* and a membership card. Call Judy Williams, Membership Chair, 363-1951, to receive the newsletter. *Introductory membership is \$20.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_  
State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Send this application and your check to:



# Audubon

Membership Data Center  
PO Box 422250  
Palm Coast FL 32142-2250