

Bitterroot AUDUBON



OCTOBER 2009

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 24 NO. 2

“BE BEAR AWARE”

On Monday, October 19th, Bitterroot Audubon is sponsoring a presentation on this important topic by Fred Weisbecker, retired game warden and outdoor enthusiast known throughout the Valley. Although this may not seem like an Audubon topic, it can be directly related to birds. Just recently, one of our members who lives on the west side of the valley had been diligently putting his bird feeders away at night. He chose to store them in his mud room/entry way to avoid having bears tear up his feeders. While he slept, a bear smelled the bird seed through the window screen, tore it open and proceeded to lift out three 5 pound plastic tubs full of bird seed, plus the bird feeders! Our member woke to paw prints on the inside wall of his room and all the bird feed, etc. gone! You never know!! Not only do bears inhabit areas where we live but they are also often encountered in areas where we recreate.



**Stay Safe
Keep Bears Wild**

The “Bear Aware” program was developed to reduce human-wildlife conflicts and to provide people with information to recreate safely in areas where the large carnivores live. The program covers a brief biology of bears, information on how to tell the difference between black and grizzly bears, on bear sign and bear behavior as well as on food storage and proper use of bear spray. Encounters with wolves, cougars and rattlesnakes will be reviewed also.

Fred has a BS degree in Conservation from North Carolina State University and worked as a game warden for thirty years, managing people and

wildlife. He has taught numerous courses and is currently the education chairman for Bitterroot Backcountry Horsemen.



Come join Bitterroot Audubon on October 19th, 7:00 P.M., at the Forest Service Headquarters (1801 N. First Street) on Highway 93 at the north end of Hamilton. Enter the building from the west side. The public is invited. For further information contact Kay Fulton, 642-3794.

Ponderosa Pine Publication

by Sherry Ritter

The American Bird Conservancy (ABC) has published a report called "Landowner Stories in Bird Conservation: Managing for Cavity-Nesting Birds in Ponderosa Pine Forests." ABC is working with private landowners to implement bird conservation efforts in ponderosa pine habitat. The stories highlight what landowners have voluntarily done, while revealing stories of their personal relationships to their land. To download it for free, go to <http://www.abcbirds.org/newsandreports/specialreports.html>.

If you are an interested landowner who wants a copy and you don't have a computer, please contact Sherry Ritter, 777-7409.

Letter from the President

by Peter Allen

The past week I've spent most evenings watching the Ken Burns series on the National Parks, which is understandable when you consider that Helen & I worked for the National Park Service for a good deal of our lives. The episode detailing the struggle to create Everglades National Park seemed particularly applicable to the work of the National Audubon Society and the various chapters with which I've been associated during my lifetime. Everglades was the first National Park set aside not for its scenic beauty or its historical significance, but to protect an environment of great importance to a very large number of birds and other wildlife. To *conserve* the natural world! Sometimes we are so accustomed to the word "conservation" that we forget what it means. Even here in Montana, where we're surrounded by nature, there are forces in play which can cause deterioration of the environment in which we have chosen to live. We don't have to travel to the Everglades, or even Yellowstone or Glacier National Parks to enjoy the nature of our world, but we do have to conserve what's left for the enjoyment of ourselves and those who will come after us. As we enjoy our valley, let's be sure to protect it for the future.



26th Year of Audubon Adventures: Participants and Sponsors Wanted

by Leslie Nyce

Every year Bitterroot Audubon, along with the wonderful support of chapter members, offers participation in the nationally acclaimed program *Audubon Adventures* to classrooms around the valley. The 2009-2010 *Audubon Adventures* kit is titled, "Action for Planet Earth," an exploration of earth science topics from a conservation perspective. Geared for grades 3-6, the four specific topics for this year include Water, Energy, Habitats, and 'Pennies for the Planet.'

Participants will learn about the role citizens have in helping to protect local and national resources; the science behind the challenges society faces regarding our need for, use of, and supplies of energy water and



habitats; and how such challenges affect individuals, communities, and wildlife. Each classroom will be provided with the following materials: Teacher Resource Manual, student handouts, hands-on activities for inside/outside, a large classroom poster, and a nature journaling guide. Teachers also receive a one-year membership to National Audubon and Audubon Magazine, which also means they are members of our local Bitterroot Audubon Chapter.

If you are a classroom teacher in grades 3-6 and would like to participate in the 2009-2010 program, send an email to Leslie Nyce at bas4education@hotmail.com to sign up. Please put "Audubon Adventures" in the subject line and include your school, grade, number of students and contact information with a phone number where to be reached.

The cost to sponsor a classroom is \$45.65. Partial contributions for half the amount may also be made. To sponsor a classroom, please make your check payable to Bitterroot Audubon and send it to Bitterroot Audubon, Attn: Audubon Adventures, P.O. Box 326, Hamilton, MT 59840.

Articles On Miller-McCune

from Judy Hoy

Two recent articles by Joan Melcher of Missoula were published online at www.millermccune.com. "Divining the Secret of Deformed Roadkill" is about developmental malformations in bird and mammal species here in Ravalli County and other places. The second article "Seeking Chemical Culprits for Those Deformities" discusses epigenetic changes caused by exposure to various factors, including chemical exposures, during fetal development.

Dedication at the Audubon Conservation Education Center

Montana Audubon and the Yellowstone River Parks Association announce the dedication of the Norm Schoenthal Field Lab in Billings from 4:00 to 6:00 pm, October 17, 2009. The Yellowstone River Parks Association is putting the finishing touches on the building while Audubon is installing phase one of the habitat gardens and outdoor amphitheater. This dedication will celebrate a great deal of work over the past several years by Paul Belanger, Project Director for Montana Audubon. Congratulations, Paul!

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

Question: What temperature is required for successful egg incubation in birds?

Answer: Successful egg development requires a prolonged exposure to temperatures a few degrees below the normal 104⁰ F avian body temperature. The ideal incubation temperature for many birds' eggs is about human body temperature, 98.6⁰ F. Most birds incubate by sitting on the eggs and transferring heat via a temporary bare area on the abdomen called the "brood patch." Some birds like penguins and pelicans transfer heat through their webbed feet. The embryo inside the eggs is very sensitive to high temperatures, so protection against the sun is often required. Eggs are turned periodically, presumably to ensure even warming and to prevent embryonic membranes from adhering to the shell.



Raptor Migration Workshop & Field Trip

by Kay Fulton

Twenty-one people had the privilege and pleasure of spending a delightful evening

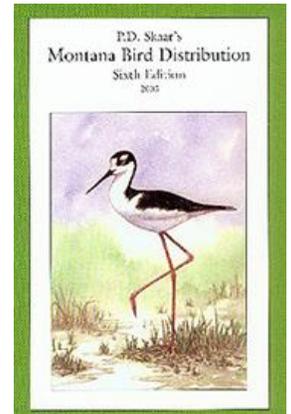


and full day with raptor expert Steve Hoffman, Executive Director of Montana Audubon and Founder of Hawkwatch International. Steve reviewed identification information and techniques Friday evening, September 25th, and then led an all day field trip to the Sula Peak Lookout on Saturday. Since migration is unpredictable and is affected by wind and weather, we did not know what the day would bring but by day's end, we were thrilled to have seen 30 migrating raptors and over 60 ravens. The raptors included several Sharp-shinned Hawks, Coopers Hawks, Golden Eagles, Swainsons Hawk, Merlins (Taiga & Richardsons), Kestrels, Harriers and one Red-tailed Hawk. We were privileged to have with us Kate Davis, Director of Raptors of the Rockies. Jack

Kirkley, Professor from MSU @ Dillon, and five of his students also made the trip to the Peak. It was a great day and some of us may have moved closer to identifying those small specs in the sky, miles away as Steve does so easily!

Bird Observations Needed *by Peter Allen*

P.D. Skaar's Montana Bird Distribution, sixth edition, is a book of maps showing the distribution of 409 bird species found in Montana. The book uses thousands of bird sightings submitted by volunteers and professionals to identify where birds are found in the state; it is a compilation of approximately 88,000 bird observation records. MBD is updated every five years; the Sixth Edition came out in 2003.



The next edition is due out in 2011, and will reflect the observations of many observers throughout the state. **You** can be one of them! The current edition includes observations by BAS members John Ormiston, Sherry Ritter, and Jim Story, and possibly others, and we hope the next edition will include more BAS members.

The maps use geographic rectangles based on latitude and longitude called "latilongs." These are further broken down into "quarter latilongs" and even "quarter-quarter latilongs" A quarter-quarter latilong (QQL) is a rectangle about 11 x 17 miles, and you can find maps of each at www.mtaudubon.org under the "birds & science" tab. Since some QQL's are seriously under-surveyed, Montana Audubon encourages observers to adopt a particular QQL and concentrate on making and filing observations for one of these under-surveyed areas.

Observations can be filed online by various methods, and your participation will advance the avian science of Montana. Visit www.mtaudubon.org for further information on the program in general or how to adopt a QQL. Even filing records of the birds which visit your backyard feeder will add data to the project. Just visit the website, determine the QQL in which you live or observe, then record and report your observations.