

# Bitterroot AUDUBON



APRIL 2010

NEWSLETTER

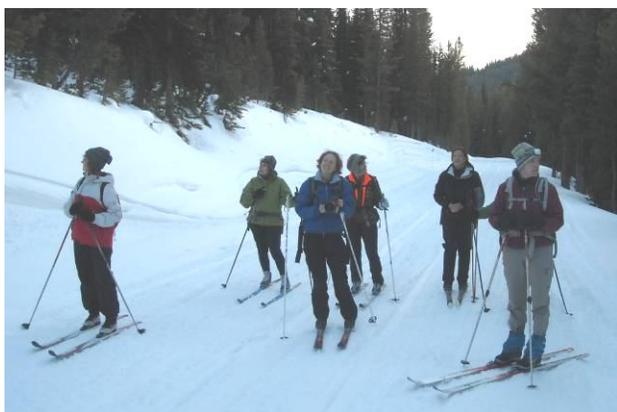
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## OWL PROWLs *by Kate Stone*

March is the time for owls! Thanks to everyone who submitted owl observations or “adopted” a local owl route. We detected two new western screech owls and eight northern saw-whet owls. Bitterroot Audubon held two owl-related field trips in March. The first was an evening owl walk on March 3, co-hosted with The Teller, along their riverside trail. Over 30 people joined the walk. Unfortunately, no owls were detected and the trip was cut short by a cold rain. But it was still a beautiful evening.



The second trip, on March 6, was a ski adventure near Lost Trail Pass. Despite less than ideal snow conditions, the group was lucky enough to hear boreal owls, and a barred owl made its presence known at very close range.



## DRAGONFLIES OF MONTANA

**Dr. Robert Martinka**, well-known Montana bird watcher & photographer, will present a program on “**Becoming an Amateur Dragonfly Watcher**” at the April meeting of the Bitterroot Audubon Society.



Over the last few years, Bob has fallen in love with these delightful creatures. He will be sharing some of the information he has learned, along with his beautiful pictures. The program will cover what dragonflies are as well as where, when, and how to find them. Bob and two other collaborators have just completed a “Checklist of Montana Dragonflies and Damselflies” which he will bring to the program for distribution.

Bob retired in 1997 after nearly 30 years with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. He began as a field biologist and closed as Deputy Director. He has become an avid birder and photographer, traveling to numerous locations in the Western Hemisphere to pursue these interests. He has served as a member of the Montana Audubon Board for the past 6 years. He and his wife, Kathy, live in Helena.

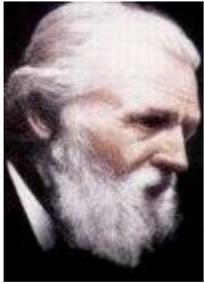
**Beware! Bob’s enthusiasm for his newfound dragonfly passion is infectious.** Come join BAS, Monday, April 19<sup>th</sup> 7:00 P.M. at the Lee Metcalf Refuge meeting room, Wildfowl Lane, north of Stevensville just off the Eastside Highway. For more information, contact Kay Fulton at 642-3794.



## Letter from the President

by Peter Allen

April is here – income taxes (ugh!), spring in the garden (yeah!), too much to do (as always), and Bob Martinka returns to inspire us all (yeah!) And – he'll be back, I'll bet, because he recently returned from a birding trip to Ecuador with some phenomenal photos.



April also brings us to thoughts of Earth Day, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, and the birthday of John Muir, the day before. About 100 years ago, Muir wrote, *“When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe.”* That means that

whatever action you take on this 40<sup>th</sup> Earth Day, however slight and seemingly insignificant, is connected to everything else, and therefore has an effect. As published in the San Francisco Chronicle (10/16/2006) *“As Muir pointed out, it is all connected. Business success, quality of life and a sustainable environment are not in opposition. They are related, and we can make positive progress in each area together. Each of us. Here. Now.”*

So – Earth Day, John Muir's Birthday – what will **you** do to make a difference, however slight?

### Call for Audubon Award Nominations!

Montana Audubon is seeking nominations for 4 awards recognizing individuals who exemplify a commitment to birds, other wildlife, and habitat conservation. This year's awards will be given for Conservationist of the Year, Environmental Educator of the Year, Special Achievement, and Lifetime Achievement Award. The award ceremony will take place on June 5 at the Bird Festival in Missoula.

To nominate a candidate, please request an award nomination form from the Montana Audubon Office, or just download the form from the website at <http://mtaudubon.org/about/awards.html>. To be considered for this year's awards, nominations and all supporting material must be postmarked no later than May 14, 2010. All nominations and supporting material should be sent to Montana Audubon, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624, or by fax: (406) 443-7144. Questions? Contact Janet Ellis at 406-443-3949 or [jjellis@mtaudubon.org](mailto:jjellis@mtaudubon.org).

## FIELD TRIP TO JUDY HOY'S

by Kate Stone

Judy and Bob Hoy will be leading a field trip on Saturday, April 24, from 2-4 pm on the Hoy's property on the east side of the Valley. The outing will combine a short birding walk on level ground with the opportunity to closely examine the unreleasable birds that Judy uses for educational programs. On the birding walk, we may see various species of chickadee, woodpecker, nuthatch, jay, finch, sparrow, California Quail, and possibly some raptors. The captive birds that Judy will present include a northern saw-whet owl, long-eared owl, flammulated owl, Harlan's hawk, red-tailed hawk and turkey vulture. This is a great opportunity for birders to see up close and personal native raptor species that are difficult to observe at close-range in the field.

Birders of all ages and abilities are welcome. Families with children

are encouraged to participate. Please bring binoculars, a field guide, and dress appropriately for weather conditions and for walking in the field. There is no charge for participation. Please call Judy Hoy (777-2487) for additional information.

**Directions from Judy:** From the north or the south on 93, turn and go east on Bell Crossing. When you get to the Eastside Highway, go directly across and continue east on Willoughby Lane for 2 miles. At the top of the hill, turn left (north) onto Pheasant Lane. Go down the hill to the old buildings on the right. Park there. Judy will meet you there to show the education birds. We may walk or carpool from the old buildings, depending on the number of cars.

**Warning:** Do not turn off of Willoughby Lane prematurely where the pavement turns and goes north at Sunset Bench Lane. Keep going east to the top of the hill where Pheasant Lane goes north. Pheasant Lane sign is on the highline pole on left side of Willoughby Road. It says HOY on last mailbox in group of mailboxes on right side of Willoughby Lane where Pheasant Lane goes north.



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

**Question:** How do birds cope with the parasites that frequently infest the nest?

**Answer:** Infestations of parasites (fly maggots, fleas, ticks, and mites) or pathogens are discouraged by various means. An important deterrent is the removal of fecal sacs of the

young. Some birds will incorporate aromatic green plant material with insecticidal properties in the nest



construction. This

latter tactic is often used by birds of prey which reuse old nests (many hawks and most eagles) and many passerines, especially secondary cavity nesters (Starlings, Purple Martin). Nuthatches often apply pine pitch and rub insects around the entrance of their cavity nest, apparently to deter parasites. Moderate numbers of parasites are probably tolerated by most birds; swallow nests often harbor high numbers of mites, but the young generally fledge successfully.

## WELCOME BACK WATERFOWL

*by Judy Hoy*

After a somewhat cool early morning, our 2010 Welcome Back Waterfowl Day on Saturday, March 20, warmed up to a gorgeous first day of spring. A group from Five Valleys Audubon helped add to the number of birds seen, bringing the total species to 39. Except for one young Trumpeter Swan, there were no unusual birds seen this year. Mammal species reported were muskrat, beaver, mink, Columbian ground squirrel and white-tailed deer. Thanks to all the people who came to view the waterfowl and other birds. You all helped to make our 2010 Welcome Back Waterfowl Day a big success.



We much appreciate help from the staff of the Lee Metcalf Refuge, with a big thank you to Bob Danley especially for doing the publicity and for picking a beautiful day. Thank you to members of Bitterroot Audubon Society who came and shared their knowledge and scopes. Special thanks goes to Kay Fulton for use of her table and for bringing her

yummy cookies, to Dave Lockman for making the bird check-off sheet, and to Bob Hoy, Kay Fulton, and Helen and Peter Allen for helping set up.

## Nest-box hanging at MPG Ranch

Members and friends of Bitterroot Audubon will meet to hang up bluebird boxes on a conservation property in the Florence area on Saturday, April 10, from 10 am to 2 pm. After the boxes are installed, participants will have the opportunity to take a birding walk on the property, which contains a portion of the Bitterroot River Important Bird Area. No skill is required for hanging boxes, and for those wanting exercise, there will be options for digging post holes. The bird walk will be on generally flat ground, but there are no trails. Participants should bring work gloves, hiking shoes, a picnic lunch, binoculars, a cordless drill and a post-hole digger (if you have them).

### REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED TO

**PARTICIPATE!** Directions and additional information will be sent following registration. Please contact Kate (381-1115; krostone@hotmail.com) to register.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### 1. Election of Officers:

The May meeting will be our "Annual Meeting," with election of officers. Please contact Kay Fulton or Jim Story if you would like to "throw your hat in the ring." See the back page or our website for contact information.

### 2. Program Ideas?

Kay Fulton, Program Chair, NEEDS your suggestions of potential programs for next year. If you know of a speaker, or have an idea for a program, please let her know.

### 3. Antique Newsletters Wanted:

Jim Story, seeking to plug holes in the chapter's historical records, would like to hear from anybody who happens to have copies of the newsletter from September, 1989, to May, 1992. Yes, we know it's not likely, but it's possible someone has copies squirreled away.