

# Bitterroot AUDUBON



NOVEMBER 2010

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 25 NO. 3

## SANDHILL CRANE MIGRATION AT THE PLATTE RIVER

**SPRING MIGRATION**, that is! Believe it or not, you must start planning now for your trip to the Platte River in Nebraska to see the most astounding spectacle a “Birder” could imagine: to stand in one spot and to see a quarter to a half million birds all at once, big birds as well. A panel of four Bitterroot Audubon Birders, Mel Mooers, Mimi Sauer, Molly Hackett and Kay Fulton, will share their stories of this amazing event experienced three different years. Sandhill Cranes migrate from south Texas, New Mexico and Mexico up the Central Flyway to northern U.S., Canada, Alaska and some into Siberia. Their primary staging area (a place to rest and eat) is the Big Bend area of the Platte River in central Nebraska. Over 80 % of Cranes use this route and stop at this staging area every spring between February and April. They have been doing this for centuries. At the heart of this staging area is the Audubon Rowe Sanctuary near Gibbon, Nebraska. The Sanctuary provides blinds and tours morning and evening for viewing the Cranes up close and personal. **To hear and see some great videos and pictures the panel members took and learn how you, too, can participate in this saga, come to the Bitterroot Audubon Chapter meeting, Monday, November 15<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 P.M. at the Lee Metcalf Refuge, north of Stevensville.** Contact Kay Fulton (642-3794) for more information. The Public is welcome.



## Semiannual litter cleanup day 1pm Sunday, November 7, 2010

Bitterroot Audubon is planning to do their fall highway 93 litter patrol on Sunday November 7th at 1pm. Our section of 93 is a couple miles south of the Stevi Y. Specifically mile marker 62 to 64. We invite members to come help. Someone always finds something of value. It could be you. We will meet near the K C Metal Fabrication Site across from the Custom Log Homes Company. The highway department provides the bags and safety vests. You might want to bring some gloves. See you there. Contact Campbell Massey at 381-0197 for more information.



## President's Letter

*By Peter Allen*

Helen and I are enjoying a long-awaited trip to Australia, the homeland I last saw when I was 12 years old. With my sister (last seen 20 years ago) we've been roaming around to places important to us as kids and re-living the scenes of my childhood. While our trip was not intended as a birding trek, we did bring along one pair of binoculars and have been blown away by the variety and color of unusual birds. Were these parrots and honey-eaters here when I was a child? Why do I not remember? We awoke the first morning, still rather blitzed by jet lag, to the flute-like warbling of the Australian Magpie. It was hard to accept that such a sound emanated from a bird. Then the Rainbow Lorikeets arrived in the eucalyptus tree in the adjacent yard, and it's been like that every day since. Helen's favorite has been the Superb Fairy-wren, a small feathered jewel, while I thrill to the sight of the Sulphur-crested Cockatoo.

Our host and hostess, cousins who visited us in Hamilton two years ago and convinced us that we could afford the trip, have been most generous hauling us around to the best places to enjoy the

scenery and wildlife.

Unfortunately, I had mislaid my glasses in the Los Angeles airport, and so couldn't even attempt to drive

here (on the **left** side of the road). Now, after phone calls and faxes to my ophthalmologist in Montana, I have a new pair of glasses and will be able to drive in New Zealand, probably to Helen's anxiety and consternation.

When you're accustomed to the birds of the U.S., where the last parrot is extinct, the variety and colors of the rosellas, lorikeets, cockatoos, and

honey-eaters is really quite spectacular, and that's just the **birds!** One evening my sister took us to a spot in Anglesea where we spent an hour or so watching Eastern Grey Kangaroos feeding. We enjoyed watching the mother eat grass while her baby, or joey, stuck its head out of the pouch and ate too.

Tomorrow we leave for Christchurch, New Zealand, and will spend two weeks touring the South Island before returning to Montana and wintry weather. I'll check in LAX to see if they have my glasses.

## Beginning Bird Walk, 10 am-Noon, Saturday, November 20, 2010

### Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center

Are you a beginning birder? Or do you want to brush up on identification skills? Then this monthly beginning birding field trip is just right for you! Learn basic skills for bird identification, including use of binoculars and field guides, key field marks, and much more. Binoculars available if needed. Families with children welcome. Minimal walking involved. Sponsored by Bitterroot Audubon Society, Five Valleys Audubon Society and Lee Metcalf NWR. Meet at the Lee Metcalf NWR headquarters at 10 am. For more information, contact Jim Story, 961-4689 or Lynn Tennefoss, 544-6323.



# Bird Mortality Perception Survey

Audubon members are invited to participate in the following survey:

We are wondering if you would be able to help us out with a research study being conducted this semester at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pennsylvania.

Many birds are killed each year by various forms of human technology and activity. Some of these human-made hazards attract much more attention than do others. We are interested in how various factors that have been shown to influence people's perceptions of the risks posed by nuclear power or sources of water pollution (e.g., is it a 'new' hazard, how 'natural' does the hazard seem) may also contribute to peoples' perceptions of various hazards to birds. This information will be useful in helping us strategize in campaigns to raise awareness with regards to different kinds of threats to birds and other natural systems.

We would greatly appreciate it if you could fill out the survey found at the following link:

<http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB22BDFEUJWXT>

Your participation will remain anonymous and confidential. The survey takes about 25 minutes to complete. At the end of the survey, you will be re-directed to a separate page upon which you can request a summary of what we find. This research project has met Muhlenberg College's Institutional Review policy requirements.

If you have any questions about the project, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Jeffrey Rudski at [rudski@muhlenberg.edu](mailto:rudski@muhlenberg.edu)

Thank you for your consideration,

Jeffrey Rudski, Ph.D  
Professor of Psychology  
Muhlenberg College  
Allentown, PA 18104



## Conservation letter by Fred Weisbecker

Montana DNRC has been trying to work up some best management practices (BMPs) for riparian areas across the state. The goal is to put in writing some basic do's and don'ts to help landowners manage their riparian areas. They held 12 public hearings across the state in the last year hoping to get input on what people have found is working in their area. I attended a meeting in Helena last month put on by DNRC to report on their findings. The results of the public meetings were mixed. Developing BMPs for these sensitive areas will be more of a challenge than they first envisioned, it appears. It will have to encompass guidelines for farmers, developers, homeowners, highway departments and loggers. To add to the challenge, what is needed to protect the integrity of a seasonal coulee or wash in eastern Montana is quite different than a mountain stream in the western part of the state. So, it looks like DNRC has its work cut out for them. Hopefully some basic guidelines will eventually be produced to protect this sensitive part of our ecosystem.

