

Bitterroot AUDUBON



APRIL 2011

NEWSLETTER

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The Bitter Root Land Trust

By Kay Fulton, Program Chair

On April 18th the Bitterroot Audubon Society will present Kyle Barber, Conservation and Stewardship Manager of the Bitter Root Land Trust, to discuss the work and mission of this local conservation organization. The Trust works with private landowners in permanently protecting water resources, wildlife habitat, and working agricultural lands in the Bitterroot Valley. It is the only organization focused on the needs and challenges of land conservation in the area. Kyle will share the history of the organization, information about conservation easements, current projects, and their work with the Ravalli County Open Lands Program as well as their Stewardship Program.



If you ignore beauty, you will soon find yourself without it; but if you invest in beauty, it will remain with you all the days of your life.

Kyle has been a staff member at the Bitter Root Land Trust for over a year and has a strong background in private land conservation, having worked with the Crested Butte Land Trust in Colorado and Gathering Waters Conservancy in Madison, Wisconsin. He is currently completing work for his Master's degree on "Working Ranchland Conservation" at the University of Montana.

Please join us Monday, April 18th, 7:00 P.M. at the Lee Metcalf Refuge on Wildfowl Lane, north of Stevensville. The public is invited. For more information, contact Kay Fulton at 642-3794.

Welcome Back Waterfowl Day 2011

by Bob Danley

On Saturday, April 16th, 2011, Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge will once again be hosting *Welcome Back Waterfowl Day*, sponsored by the Bitterroot Audubon Society and the USFWS. Come out



between 10 am and 2 pm and celebrate the great spring migration. There will be activities for the whole family on both Wildfowl Lane and at the Refuge Visitor Center including birding, drawing, mammal and aquatic invertebrate exhibits, and more. The birds will be in their beautiful spring plumage so bring your



cameras and binoculars if you have them. Scopes will be on hand for close up views as well as experienced Audubon members to help you identify birds. Drinks and treats will also be provided. Hope to see you there!

Letter from the President

By Peter Allen

Welcome Back Waterfowl should mean *Welcome Back, Spring*, shouldn't it? Yet as I sit at the keyboard it's snowing outside. Well, okay, it's spring-like snow, and it's falling on grass that's turning green(er). So – kwitcherbellyaching and get on with it. Helen and I just returned from a visit to our son, presently working at Joshua Tree National Park in the Mojave Desert of California. It was a quick trip, but we're glad to be back. The desert is an interesting place – I spent five years at Lake Mead during my own career as a park ranger – and we're always intrigued by the adaptations developed by plants and animals to survive in that harsh environment. Lots and lots of ravens, mourning doves, and house sparrows seemed to get by very well. The black-throated sparrow was new to me, and I was pleased to see Gambel's Quail running through the creosote bush and the cactus.

The weather was warm and sunny, of course, and I wished I'd brought more tee-shirts. At one point a young clerk in a store, finding that I was from Montana, said, "Oh! This must be like Heaven for you." I didn't want to tell her how much I preferred my adopted state, where passing three cars on the highway constitutes heavy traffic, so I just told her how we wade through thigh-deep snow in frigid sub-zero weather to get the mail, just to escape cabin fever. Maybe she'll stay in California, and leave Montana the way I like it.

Chernobyl – A Nuclear Nature Reserve?

by Fred Weisbecker, Conservation Chair

Under the heading of "weird but true," I heard a piece on public radio the other day that sure fits this category. Professors Robert Baker & Ronald Chesser from Texas Tech and their students are studying the effects on area wildlife of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster. Since all of the people have been permanently evacuated from an area twice the size of South Carolina, natural forces have returned to the region. The professors' observations have been totally unexpected. The animals, large and small, seem to be



doing just fine, in the short term anyway. Game cameras and live traps show plenty of critters thriving. Trapped mice are indeed highly radioactive but no abnormalities have been seen yet. No two-headed deer mice anyway. The game cameras show everything from deer to raccoons going about their daily routines. In the radio interview one of the professors mentioned several times how impressed he was by the return of wolves. They seem to be running the new show.

The professor made no claims on the long term effects of radioactivity; he is just monitoring and reporting on current conditions. The story reminds me of the cartoon in Audubon some time ago that showed a bunch of animals on a ridge watching atomic bombs going off in the distance.

The caption at the bottom said "good riddance." He noted that one of the world's greatest disasters has created one of the world's greatest wildlife sanctuaries. Maybe one day it will be a popular wildlife theme park? As the old saying goes, fact sure is stranger than fiction.



Editor's Note: not all scientists agree (do they ever?) and some point out that humans were a greater influence on the lives of large animals than the radiation is now, so the large animals are more successful. Birds, butterflies, and bumblebees, however, are still hard to find.

Beginning Birding Class



On March 19, Kate Stone conducted a Beginning Birder class at Lee Metcalf NWR.
Photo by Bob Danley

Elections Next Month

As pointed out in the President's Letter last month, the May meeting is our "Annual Meeting," and elections will be included for your board of directors and officers. Be sure and let either Kay Fulton or Jim Story know if you are interested (or even just 'willing') to take a seat on the board. They are developing a slate of candidates, and want to be sure that all members are included if they wish to stand for office. Their phone numbers are on the back page.

In addition, next month's newsletter will be the last issue produced by your current editors. The Board is seeking a replacement. The job does take several hours each month from September to May, and some knowledge of either PageMaker or a good word processor such as MS Word. In our four years of editing this newsletter and our previous editorships for other organizations, we have found that our skills at word processing increased greatly. We know a lot more now than we did when we started, so don't be discouraged by some perceived lack of skill. If you want to improve your computer skills, this is a good opportunity.

Wings Across the Big Sky Bird Festival Call for Award Nominations!

By Larissa Berry, Montana Audubon

Montana Audubon is now seeking nominations for four awards to be presented at this year's Montana Audubon annual meeting. These awards acknowledge individuals who exemplify a commitment to birds, other wildlife, and habitat conservation. This year awards will be given for Conservationist of the Year, Environmental Educator of the Year, Special Achievement, and Lifetime Achievement Award.



To nominate your candidate, please call the Montana Audubon office to request an award nomination form or download the form from <http://mtaudubon.org/about/awards.html>. To be considered for this year's award, nominations and all supporting material must be postmarked no later than May 16, 2011. All nominations and supporting material should be sent to Montana Audubon, PO

Box 595, Helena, MT 59624, or by fax: (406) 443-7144. The award ceremony will take place on June 4 at Montana Audubon's Bird Festival in Glasgow. Questions? Contact Janet Ellis at 406-443-3949 or jellis@mtaudubon.org.

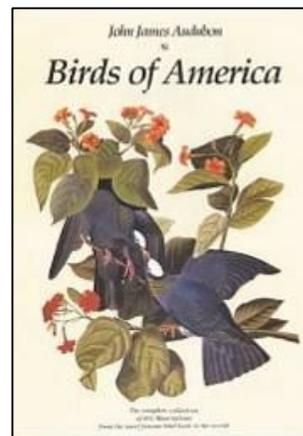
Moving?

Please let Bitterroot Audubon know as early as possible of any change in your postal address. Under the terms of our bulk mailing permit, the Post Office does not automatically forward your newsletter to your new address. Instead it sends it back to us and we pay a return fee. You can write, phone, or email the change of address to us, giving your name, old address, new address, and date of change.

Birds of America Sold for Record Price



A copy of "Birds of America" by John James Audubon was sold December 7, 2010, at auction in London for more than \$10 million, making it the world's most expensive printed book. The book, one of the best preserved editions of Audubon's 19th-century masterpiece, with its 435 hand-colored illustrations, sold for £7.3 million (\$11.5 million) at a Sotheby's auction to an anonymous collector bidding by telephone. The book came from the estate of the second Baron Hesketh, a collector who died in 1955.



Overall, 119 copies of the masterpiece are known to exist. The previous record for a printed book, \$8.8 million, was set in 2000, also for a copy of *Birds of America*.