

Bitterroot AUDUBON



March 2011

NEWSLETTER

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GOLDEN EAGLES OF THE WEST

By Kay Fulton, Program Chair

The March meeting of the Bitterroot Audubon Society will feature **Rob Domenech**, Executive Director of the Raptor View Research Institute, who will discuss the research being done on Golden Eagles in North America.



Golden Eagles breed mainly from northern Alaska to central Mexico and occupy a wide range of habitats from arctic tundra to desert. Several recent studies have indicated decreasing populations of migrant and wintering Golden Eagles in the western United States. Long term surveys of migrating Golden Eagles on the Rocky Mountain Front flyway have indicated up to a 50% decline in both autumnal and vernal Golden Eagle annual point counts. These observed declines appear to be associated with habitat alterations. With increasing human presence on the landscape and projected increases in development, it is critical to assess eagle responses to these changes.

The Raptor View Research Institute, incorporated in 2004 by Domenech, has as its mission “to understand and preserve raptor populations in western North America and to educate youth about ecological processes and field studies.” Domenech has been

studying migration patterns and the ecology of raptors since 1998. He has teamed up with experts Fred Tilly and Steve Hoffman to create one of the best “migration think-tanks” available. They have surveyed dozens of ridges and have identified several of the best observation sites in Montana. Domenech has begun one of the most in-depth studies of adult Golden Eagle migratory ecology in the West, including point count monitoring, satellite tracking, feather isotope analysis, wing-tagging, morphometric analysis and blood contaminant levels.

To learn more about this magnificent bird, the public is invited to join the BAS at the Forest Service/Natural Resources Building, 1801 N. First Street (Hwy 93, north end of Hamilton). Enter the building from the west side. For further information, call Kay Fulton, 642-3794.

Be On the Lookout ...

Rob Domenech recently captured and banded this 3- or 4-year-old golden eagle in the northern Bitterroot Valley.



It has blue tags, number 136, on both wings. If anyone sees this eagle, please contact Rob (rob.domenech@raptorview.org) or Kate Stone (krostone@hotmail.com) and tell them the date and location of your observation.

Letter from the President

By Peter Allen

It's warm and the snow is melting fast. Can Spring be far in the future? Well, yes, it might be! Nevertheless, the onion seedlings are growing in the garage, and seeds from Fedco are being delivered, ready for the vernal arrival. Despite wintry weather, it's not too early to be thinking about elections of new officers, as the annual meeting will be in May. The Board has asked Kay Fulton and Jim Story to constitute a nominating committee. If you are interested in a seat on the board or one of the officer positions, please call Kay (642-3794) or Jim (961-4689). I think back to my time in the San Juan Islands, and draw an analogy to the islands' ferries. There are those who read a book and have no idea where the ferry is going. Some sit on the stern deck and complain about where the boat has been going, as they only look backward, and some few come up on the bridge and offer to help navigate the ship. Which are you?

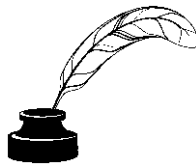
Trading for a moment my presidential gavel for my Editor's eye-shade, I have announced to the board that Helen and I will relinquish the editorial blue pencils with the May newsletter, so your board will also be looking for a new editor for next year. We find that there are too many demands competing for our time, and we desire to winnow some of them. It's time for a new editorial staff.

Montana Audubon's Annual *Wings Across the Big Sky* Bird Festival

Glasgow and Your Lodging Options

By Larissa Berry,
Montana Audubon

A small town like Glasgow, Montana, might not have a lot of lodging choices, but we have come up with several ideas for our annual bird festival – thanks to the local Bird Festival Committee and Chamber of Commerce. The Cottonwood Inn (www.cottonwoodinn.net) will likely be first choice



for many attendees. It will be the stage for festival activities – registration, lectures, meals, banquet, etc. Currently we have 85 rooms blocked out for festival-goers on Friday and Saturday nights. (One Queen / King bed at \$70 per night or two King/Queen beds at \$75 per night). We suggest you make your reservations soon!

Additional lodging options:

Campbell Lodge, 534 3rd Ave S, Glasgow
406-228-9328

La Casa Motel, 238 First Ave N-Hwy 2, Glasgow
877-228-9311 / 406-228-931

Fort Peck Hotel, 175 South Missouri Street, Fort Peck – 800-560-4931 / 406-526-3266

Lakeridge Motel & Tackle, 6004 MT Hwy 24 S, Fort Peck – 888-554-8125 / 406-526-3597

Carbon Neutral & Transportation

Once again, *Wings Across the Big Sky* will strive to be a carbon neutral event. We will track our festival emissions, look for ways to reduce them, and offset what we cannot avoid (more information will be on our website soon). Please consider carpooling options! We also plan for vans to depart from major cities to Glasgow based on demand. If you are interested in this travel option, please notify Larissa Berry at Lberry@MtAudubon.org.



See the January newsletter for “save-the-date” (June 3–5), a brief description of the 3-day festival, which includes a Friday “pre-festival” day of workshops, and our **campground/RV recommendations**. All of the above information is also included on Montana Audubon's website, complete with links to hotel websites: www.mtaudubon.org (click on the Bird Festival link on the home page). Moreover, look for your festival registration brochure to arrive in early March. As always, happy birding!

June 3–5

Wings Across the Big Sky

Montana Audubon's Annual Bird Festival

Cottonwood Inn, Glasgow, Montana

Contact: Larissa Berry, LBerry@MtAudubon.org
406-443-3949

Great Backyard Bird Count

By Peter Allen



The GBBC 2011 was conducted over last Presidents' Day weekend, and a great deal of information was collected by the folks at Cornell and their associated partners in this citizen science effort. We hope you participated. If not, we urge you to get involved next year.

Birders all over the United States and Canada contributed almost 92,000 lists of birds seen over the four-day event, listing 11 million birds of 595 species.

Montana contributed 529 lists comprising 119 species, with the Bitterroot Valley accounting for 13.4% of the lists. The results are reported geographically, as follows:

Corvallis	28 species / 10 lists
Darby	19 species / 3 lists
Florence	36 species / 6 lists
Hamilton	26 species / 10 lists
Lee Metcalf Refuge	26 species / 1 list
Stevensville	80 species / 33 lists
Victor	32 species / 8 lists

For further exploration of the results, see <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc>.

Montana Audubon's Tours

Take your pick of birding adventures across Montana, Alaska, Texas, Africa, and Peru!

Montana Audubon is known for its annual tours to great birding destinations, and the 2011–12 tour season is packed with eight different adventures offered close to home or as far away as Africa. You can explore the northeastern part of Montana by joining the Westby Birding tour (then consider traveling on to Glasgow for the 2011 Bird Festival!), or marvel at the abundance of species at Red Rocks Lakes in southwest Montana. New on our Montana tour list will be the Raptor Weekend where you can witness and participate in the banding of hawks and eagles. Our tours also take birders to exciting places across the world to experience the global diversity of birds, habitats, and human cultures. Imagine

discovering the African Finfoot in Gambia, Africa, or the Andean Cock-of-the-Rock in Peru.

Save the 2011–12 Tour Dates

- Freezeout Lake: March 26, 2011
- South Texas Birding: April 25–May 2, 2011
- Centennial Valley & Red Rock Lakes: May 27–29, 2011
- Westby Birding: May 30–June 2
- Alaska Denali/Kenai Peninsula: June 18–27, 2011
- Raptor Weekend: September 23–25, 2011
- Birding in The Gambia: October 28–November 11, 2011
- Birds & Wildlife of Peru: February 15–25, 2012

To make your reservations, contact Larissa Berry at the Montana Audubon office (406-443-3949). For more information see the Montana Audubon website: <http://www.mtaudubon.org/birdwatching/tours.html>

The first and closest of these is this month!

Freezeout Lake: March 26, 2011



Freezeout Lake is Montana's primary snow goose staging area, a place where as many as 300,000 Snow Geese and 10,000 Tundra Swans gather and rest before

flying onward. Each spring the Snow Geese head for Canada where they mass with hundreds of thousands more from the Gulf Coast States. They then make their way to nesting grounds on the wind swept Arctic coast of Canada. Snow Geese usually reach Freezeout Lake in early March, where they rest after a nearly 1,000 mile flight.

Montana Audubon will be running a van tour from Helena, but you may be able to arrange your own transportation to Freezeout and tag along with the Helena group.

And speaking of spring, Wayne Tree sent a photo of Meadowlarks near Bell Crossing. He's seen as many as 40, all singing!

