

# Bitterroot AUDUBON



NOVEMBER 2011

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 26, NO. 3

## Ghost Birds of Montana and Incredible Crossbills

By Judy Hoy

Though Halloween has passed, ghosts will be the topic of this month's Bitterroot Audubon Society meeting - ghost birds, that is. Judy Hoy, a wildlife rehabilitator for more than 45 years, will give a fascinating program about "ghost" birds whose feathers developed with abnormal coloration. She will discuss and show photos of a variety of birds which grew white feathers where colored feathers usually occur.



Kate Davis photo ©

Courtesy Kate Davis

### Leucistic Red-tailed Hawk

As a special treat, a live Red-tailed Hawk which featured an abnormal molt pattern as a juvenile will be at the meeting. The photos of this hawk that you will see at the presentation are possibly the first ever photographic documentation of a Red-tailed Hawk that grew adult feathers as a pre-fledgling rather than normal colored juvenile feathers. There will also be photos of other amazing birds featuring abnormal feather patterns from photographers around Montana.

Judy will present a short program entitled "Incredible Crossbills," highlighting how Crossbills get their bills to cross, what happens when they are unable to do so, and other interesting facts about this species.



Courtesy Eugene Beckes

### Red Crossbill

In addition to being a wildlife rehabilitator, Judy is an Audubon Board Member. She has made numerous presentations at schools, libraries, etc. where she often has brought some of her rehabilitated birds. As a scientific researcher, Hoy has co-authored several published papers on subjects including Flammulated Owls, white-tailed deer, Montana's dryland mosses and one published in October on *Brachygnathia superior* in ruminant species.

**Bitterroot Audubon invites the public to join us on Monday, November 21st at 7:00 P.M. at the Hamilton Library in the downstairs community room. The address is 306 State Street. Snacks will be provided by Colleen Powell. For further information, contact Kay Fulton at 642-3794.**

## Letter from the President

By Kay Fulton, BAS President

Hi, everyone. I hope you are enjoying this glorious fall. The colors have been just outstanding and migration has been fast and furious. Apparently the Aurora Borealis was also in full display around Kalispell as well as Minnesota and all the way down to Oklahoma. I tried to see it but no luck. Still, it's always exciting to know it's out there.

October is especially important to my family and me because that's when my Dad, Earl Harper, has his birthday. This October 21st we celebrated his 101st birthday, and I thought I'd share some of his secrets to longevity. He has always been active, physically and mentally. He worked as a conductor for the Union Pacific Railroad in Wyoming, and during his off time he hunted for artifacts, gems and minerals. He walked all over the state of Wyoming, as well as a great deal of Montana, Idaho and Utah carrying out all of the collected rocks in his knapsack. He read books on geology, got equipment for cutting and polishing rocks, and eventually began doing lapidary work. He made all kinds of jewelry and display items.

My Dad was always fixing and building things around the house. He also loved reading Westerns, playing cards, fishing, and hunting. When he retired he read all of James Michener's books, moved with my Mom to Utah and started gardening (too cold in Wyoming). He eventually learned how to propagate roses and developed a rose garden with 70 bushes. That was in addition to growing fruit trees and all kinds of vegetables. Now at age 101, he lives with me and continues to be active: he plays bridge and pinochle weekly, listens daily to books on tape from the Montana Library for the Blind (he is legally blind), makes Christmas and birthday cards for family and friends, and follows sports – especially the Denver Broncos and the New York Giants. Above all, he has maintained a great sense of humor. His famous secret to a long and healthy life, in addition to keeping the mind and body active is, "Prunes in the morning and cheese at night, makes everything come out all right." -Kay

## October Field Trips

By Kate Stone

Members of Bitterroot Audubon participated in two field trips in the month of October. Steve Hoffman of



Montana Audubon and Kate Davis of Raptors of the Rockies organized a trip on October 1. Steve and Kate led a group of 19 people to the Sula Peak Lookout in the southern Bitterroot to observe migrating raptors. Despite vigilant scanning of the skies, very few raptors were observed. The group saw four Turkey Vultures, two Sharp-shinned Hawks, two Red-tailed Hawks, two Bald Eagles, a Cooper's Hawk, an American Kestrel, a Peregrine Falcon, and five unidentified raptors. An ominous weather system, complete with lightening, rain, and gusty winds, may have limited the raptor flight. A few Yellow-rumped Warblers entertained the group in between raptor sightings.



*Courtesy Kate Stone*

Raptor watchers scan the skies

The Bitterroot River Important Bird Area committee organized a second field trip on October 8. Twelve participants visited the MPG Ranch near Florence, MT to view four quarter-acre exclosures built through a partnership between Bitterroot Audubon and the MPG Ranch. The exclosures were constructed to prevent ungulates like deer, elk, and moose from browsing the riparian vegetation that provides essential bird habitat. Heavy browsing in the past has limited the establishment and regeneration of important floodplain species such as cottonwood, aspen, and willow trees.

Participants on this field trip were able to view the exclosures and the habitat they protect, discuss management options for riparian areas, and search for birds currently using riparian vegetation as migratory stopover habitat. The group was also able to visit a banding station operated by The University of Montana Avian Science Center and get a close look at a juvenile White-crowned Sparrow, a juvenile Cedar Waxwing, and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Twenty-six bird species were seen on the trip; one of the highlights was a Merlin that circled the group several times.





*Courtesy Kate Stone*

BAS Board member Becky Peters releases a young Cedar Waxwing

A complete list of species observed on these trips can be found on the Bitterroot Audubon website ([www.bitterrootaudubon.org](http://www.bitterrootaudubon.org)).

## Calendar of Events

**Nov 13**

Highway 93 Clean-up, meet at mile marker 64, 1PM

**Nov 19**

Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, 9-11AM

**Nov 21**

Audubon Meeting 7pm, Location Hamilton Public Library, Board Mtg @ 5:30

**Dec (Date TBD)**

Hamilton Christmas Bird Count

Would you like to see the newsletter in **COLOR**? Visit [www.BitterrootAudubon.org](http://www.BitterrootAudubon.org) and click the link to download the current newsletter or visit the archives.

You can sign up to have an e-copy sent to your email inbox by contacting Susie Duff, our Membership Chair at 961-5455 or [sduff1@aol.com](mailto:sduff1@aol.com). Please include "Newsletter" in the subject line.

# News and Notes

## Call for Photos

Bitterroot Audubon is seeking images of birds for a new feature in our newsletter: *Bird Shots*. If you have taken a great photo and would like to submit it for consideration, please email the jpeg image with a brief description (who took the photo, what is the subject, where the photo was taken, and any interesting details) to [BASeditors@gmail.com](mailto:BASeditors@gmail.com).

## Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT

New to birding? Beginner Bird Walks at the refuge sponsored by Bitterroot Audubon and Five Valleys Audubon are held the third Saturday of each month. Meet at the Refuge Visitor's Center on November 19<sup>th</sup> at 9AM for a two hour bird walk. Bring binoculars if you have them. Contact the refuge at (406) 777-5552 for more information.

## Highway 93 Clean-up

Hope you are enjoying the fall colors. The cottonwoods in the river bottom have been brilliant. It's time again for the highway clean-up between mile markers 64 and 66. There will be plenty of room to park on the shoulder just near mile marker 64. The clean-up is scheduled for Sunday, November 13, at 1:00 p.m. Everybody can meet just past mile marker 64 and if we get at least 8 people, we can make quick work of this.

## Free

Free weathered boards of various widths for making bird houses. Call Bob Hoy, 777-2487.

## Bird Shots



*Courtesy Bob Detmers*

Owlet in Fred Burr Canyon, Hamilton, MT.

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WEBSITE: [www.BitterrootAudubon.org](http://www.BitterrootAudubon.org)

## Chapter Only Membership

The Bitterroot Audubon Chapter Only Membership is \$15/year. These members will be supporting local chapter activities, receive 9 issues of the newsletter, and enjoy Chapter benefits. To join as a Chapter Only Member, complete this form.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Check this box to receive full color email-only newsletters delivered to your inbox.

Send this application with \$15 to:



Bitterroot Audubon Society  
PO Box 326  
Hamilton, MT 59840-0326

## NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Become a member of the **National Audubon Society** and **Bitterroot Audubon** [Chapter Code C1ZN580Z]. You will receive *Audubon* magazine, *Bitterroot Audubon Newsletter* and a membership card. *Introductory membership is \$20.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Send this application and your check to:



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