

Bitterroot AUDUBON



DECEMBER 2012

NEWSLETTER

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Participate in Area 2012 Christmas Bird Counts

Hamilton

by John Ormiston

On Saturday, December 15, Bitterroot Audubon members and other birders will count all the birds present in a 7 ½ mile radius of Hamilton. The 26th annual Hamilton Christmas Bird Count, sponsored by National Audubon Society and Bitterroot Audubon, adds information to the other Christmas Bird Counts throughout the nation and the rest of North America. 2011 marks the 112th anniversary of Christmas Bird Counts in North America. Volunteer citizen scientists will count birds in over 1,000 CBC circles, in the effort to document trends in wintering bird populations. In the past, each birder was asked to donate \$5 for the privilege to participate, but for the first time in memory there will be no required donation to participate in the count. Hamilton birders meet at 7:30 AM at the Teller Wildlife Refuge Education Building (Slack Barn) about ¼ mile south of the junction of Chaffin and Quast Lanes, north of Corvallis. We'll organize into parties of 3 or 4, always matching bird "experts" with people who are not as skilled or confident of their abilities. We welcome any one with an interest in birds no matter their skill level. The day can be a marvelous learning opportunity for the beginner and extra eyes in a party will contribute to more birds seen and identified.

At noon everyone meets back at the Slack Barn to compare the morning results and enjoy Bill Good's special chili (he promises 2 new secret ingredients) and Oreos lunch. Please feel free to bring some of your special Christmas goodies to share. After lunch we reorganize and spend the rest of the day finding birds in places not covered in the morning.

If you cannot participate in the field counts you can help by counting the birds at your feeders. If you live within about 7 miles of Hamilton, know most or

all the bird species frequenting your feeders and have a few hours, or all day, to count the visitors, call Colleen Powell, 363-2116 to receive instructions so you can help.

We expect around 30 participants and 20 feeder watchers. We'll see about 65 different species of birds and a total of over 6,000 birds, if the future reflects history. Bring your binoculars, bird guide, warm clothes, and a jug of something hot to help Bitterroot Audubon have a great birding day.

For more information call John Ormiston at 360-9530, or go to the Bitterroot Audubon website at www.bitterrootaudubon.org.

The Big Hole

By Kate Stone

Join members of Bitterroot Audubon on Sunday, December 16th for the 6th annual Big Hole Christmas Bird Count. This count had the honor of being the coldest count in the state last year, with a low temperature of -9° F. If that number doesn't scare you, consider traveling the back roads around Wisdom in support of this unusual count. You will be sure to see several interesting species; last year's participants



Courtesy Kate Stone

Rough-legged Hawk, a common species observed in the Big Hole.

were lucky enough to record a Gyrfalcon and a Snowy Owl, as well as many Snow Buntings, Common Redpolls, and Rough-legged Hawks. Participants usually spend about 4 hours in the field searching for birds, followed by lunch in Wisdom. If you'd like to participate, please contact Kate Stone (381-1115, kroestone@hotmail.com) to register and for information about the meeting place and time.

Stevensville

By Dave Lockman

The 48th annual Stevensville Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is scheduled for Saturday, December 29th. It's a big area and we need all the help we can get. Experience is helpful, but certainly not required. Field observers will meet in the basement conference room of the Stevensville Ranger Station between 7:30 and 7:45 AM to form small teams and get area assignments. Birders who live in the Count Circle (anywhere within 7.5 miles of the Ranger Station) can opt to get up at their leisure and count the birds on their property. Both types of counters are critical to a successful count. You don't have to spend all day counting birds; any time you have is helpful.



Courtesy Nathan DeBoer

The Great Horned Owl, a species you might observe at this year's CBC with Bitterroot Audubon.

National Bird counters on last year's Stevensville CBC found 10,071 birds representing 87 different species, both of which were a little lower than in recent years. We didn't find any species new to the count, so our total cumulative species has remained at 155.

There are always some interesting birds out there just waiting to be discovered, so come and help us

find all the common and unusual birds hiding in our winter landscape. Please contact Dave Lockman (777-2929 or 381-7679) for more information.

Letter from the President

By Kay Fulton, BAS President

A YEAR IN REVIEW

I have had the "pleasure" recently of compiling the BAS year-end report for National Audubon and though I'm sure many of you will groan at the thought of doing "one of those" reports, I was pleasantly surprised at how rewarding it was to do. So, I just want to list out for you what a small group of only 200 people can do for Birds!



1. We have instituted a Riparian Habitat Restoration Program, which helps fund projects with small grants, and volunteer labor. The first three grants totaled \$1385 and approximately 170 volunteer hours. All of the properties are in the Bitterroot River Important Bird Area. Sherry Ritter is the IBA Chairperson
2. The new Byron Weber Scholarship Program was begun and will soon be offered to Montana college students who meet the criteria. Skip Horner is the Chairperson.
3. We have had some great field trips, thanks to Kate Stone and wonderful monthly programs by great speakers.
4. Bitterroot Audubon's participation in The Lee Metcalf Wildlife Refuges' Welcome Back Waterfowl Day, led by Judy Hoy, with her rehabilitated bird program, and The Migration Celebration.
5. With the leadership of Becky Peters, BAS has successfully completed sales of almost 500 Calendars for 2013, entitled "Birds of the Bitterroot Valley." Over 25 Bitterroot photographers submitted 170 pictures of Bitterroot Birds and 23 were selected. The calendar also includes artwork of 3rd and 4th graders throughout the Valley. The proceeds will be used for the Scholarship and Education programs.
6. Leslie Nyce, single handedly, reached approximately 330 children in the local schools through the Audubon Adventures program she coordinates as well as through "Kids in the Garden" and other educational programs she does.
7. The Bitterroot Audubon Newsletter is absolutely one of the best around, thanks to our editors Sara Ashline and Karen Griffing. Being able to print it

in color either from e-mail or off the webpage is wonderful – worth framing!

8. Speaking of the Webpage, Kate Stone has brought us into the modern era with a super webpage which is getting 85 to 190 unique visitors/month and the Facebook page has received 80 “likes.”
9. Of course the Christmas Bird Counts continue to be a big hit so I encourage all of you to get out again this December. Coordinators are John Ormiston, Hamilton area; Dave Lockman, Stevensville area and Kate Stone, the Big Hole.
Thanks to everyone for doing such great work!



Courtesy Nathan DeBoer

Harris's Hawk in flight., observed near Bell Crossing and Eastside Hwy, November 2012.

Montana's Wildlife Needs Your Voice

By Janet Ellis

With the 2013 Montana Legislature starting in January, many important issues impacting wildlife, wildlife habitat, and our environmental are at stake. The passionate and reasoned voices of Auduboners across the state can make such a difference.

We anticipate that most of our work at Legislature will be defensive. Our priorities are:

- **Fighting for Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat** by supporting wildlife program budgets—and fighting legislation that prohibits the purchase of any new public land, including for wildlife habitat.
- **Advocating for Climate Change Solutions** by ensuring that Montana's energy development remains as wildlife-friendly as possible—and that the state continues to make progress on energy efficiency, renewable energy, and other climate change solutions.
- **Defending our Environmental Laws**, including the Montana Environmental Policy Act (which

requires a review of environmental impacts before they developing new mines, large subdivisions, oil and gas wells, timber sales, etc.), land use laws designed to regulate uncontrolled development (from subdivisions to gravel pits), and laws that protect our clean air and water.

Please lend your voice to help Audubon in Helena! You can do this by signing up for our action alert program at your local Audubon Chapter meeting or at www.mtaudubon.org.

We limit the use of our action alert program to the most critical times! And if you are not sure if you are signed up, just sign up again—we make sure that duplicate email addresses are weeded out.

Calendar of Events

Dec 15-Hamilton CBC, 7:30 AM at the Teller Wildlife Refuge Education Building (Slack Barn)

Dec 15-Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, 10AM-12PM

Dec 16-Big Hole CBC, contact Kate Stone (381-1115, krosetone@hotmail.com) to register

Dec 29-Stevensville CBC,

Jan 21-Audubon Meeting, Location TBD, 7PM, Board Meeting 5PM

No Audubon Meeting for the month of December

News and Notes

Dues Reminder

For those who are not members of National Audubon, and who would like to support our local chapter, membership dues of \$15 are due by the end of January for the 2013 calendar year. However, if you have renewed or joined since October 1, 2012 your membership is carried over until January 2014.

Would you like to see the newsletter in **COLOR**?

Visit 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. Please include "Newsletter" in the subject line.

Long-billed Curlew observers needed!

Did you observe Long-billed Curlews in the Bitterroot Valley this past year? The Montana Natural Heritage Program is working to compile curlew observations from across the state. Currently, the Bitterroot Valley represents a big void in their records. Want to contribute your observations? Contact Kate Stone for more information (kroestone@hotmail.com; 381-1115).

Winter Raptor Routes

Bitterroot Audubon will again be looking for volunteers to conduct driving surveys to document raptor populations over wintering in the Bitterroot Valley. Participants generally commit to a route of their choosing four times in the winter season. If you are interested in participating in this project, please contact Kate Stone (kroestone@hotmail.com; 381-1115) to discuss route options.

Want to learn about winter raptors in the Bitterroot Valley? Have you always wanted to learn more about bird identification?

We will be offering two workshops in 2013: A Winter Raptor Workshop and a Beginning Birding

Bird Shots

Workshop. Watch upcoming newsletters for dates and specific information about each workshop.

Call for Photos

Bitterroot Audubon is seeking images of birds for a 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, to BASeditors@gmail.com.

Bitterroot Audubon is on Facebook!

Bitterroot Audubon has created a Facebook page. If you use Facebook, please look for Bitterroot Audubon and “Like” us!

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 December 15th at 10AM for a two hour bird walk. Bring binoculars if you have them. Contact the refuge at [\(406\) 777-5552](tel:4067775552) for more information.



Western-screech Owl, Blodgett Canyon Trail, November 25, 2011.

Courtesy Nathan Stone

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NONPROFIT
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At large	Skip Horner*	642-6840
At large	Campbell Massey	381-0197

* Board Member

EMAIL: contactus@bitterrootaudubon.org

WEBSITE: www.BitterrootAudubon.org

Chapter Only Membership

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

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
State: _____ Zip: _____
Email: _____

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: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
State: _____ Zip: _____

Send this application and your check to:



Audubon

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