

Bitterroot AUDUBON



MAY 2012

NEWSLETTER

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Bringing Birds to Your Yard with Native Plants

What does your backyard have that attracts birds? Looking at residential landscapes from a birds-eye perspective will be the topic of Bitterroot Audubon's next program, Monday, May 21st. Madeline Mazurski and Poody McLaughlin will discuss the merits of native plants in attracting birds to the home landscape and how to design for both birds and people.



Courtesy John Ashley

Calliope Hummingbird

Madeline Mazurski is the owner of Montana Native Landscapes in Missoula, specializing in native plant and water wise landscape design since 1995. She has taught landscape design and plant classes. She has also designed and helped establish a Water Wise Demonstration Garden in Missoula, Montana. She has been an active member of the Montana Native Plant Society, serving on the state board for many years. She was a co-author of a Wildlife Conservation Manual for Utah. With degrees in botany and landscape architecture, Madeline is passionate about plants and design (and sort of looks at the birds).

Poody is approaching her 30th anniversary as a member of Five Valleys Audubon. She worked for 15

years in a research lab of the Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit at the University of Montana that generally focused on landscape effects on wildlife. Her BA in English from UM dovetails well with her current position as Publicity Chair. The house that she and her husband built has led to her ongoing curiosity and development of a home landscape that attracts birds.

Now is the time to get those plants in the ground so your property will be a haven to birds and wildlife. This is a perfect opportunity to learn how to do it. **Come join Bitterroot Audubon, Monday, May 21st, 7:00 P.M. at the Natural Resources/Forest Service building, 1801 N. First Street (Hwy 93, north end of Hamilton). Enter the building from the west side. The public is invited. For further information contact Kay Fulton, 642-3794.**

In Memoriam: Shirley Able 1935-2012

By John Ormiston

Shirley Able passed away March 2, 2012. I can't say I knew her well, but I will miss her calls about the new, mysterious bird she just saw in the yard, or the cool observation she made from her living room window. I remember the first bird conversation we had. She called about the strange birds with giant beaks that were frequenting her feeders. They weren't in "the book," she reported, and wondered what in the world they could be. After several questions and answers, we zeroed in on grosbeaks, and since we had just banded some juvenile Black-headed Grosbeaks (BHGR) at our banding site in Rock Creek, I knew that juvenile plumage didn't look anything like adult plumage. She was seeing a family of BHGR's regularly.

More bird calls followed. I was able to direct her to the proper places most often, because she was a careful observer and described plumages and markings well. As time went by there were fewer and fewer calls; she became quite adept at identifying her

yard birds. I remember the last call; it was about the 11 Turkey Vultures she saw roosting in a large cottonwood just north of her house. She got quite a thrill seeing them warming themselves in the morning sun and winging off with the thermals later in the day.

A life well lived, ended too soon. Her children, who recognized her intense interest in birds, called me soon after she passed to see if Bitterroot Audubon had established an endowment fund or similar financial arrangement for memorials. I directed them to our newly established Byron Williams Scholarship Fund. Shirley's obituary asked that in lieu of flowers, contributions could be made to Bitterroot Audubon. As a result we were able to add nearly \$700 to the Scholarship Fund.

Thank you Shirley Able for your interest in birds, and thank you children for your thoughtfulness to name Bitterroot Audubon as the beneficiary of memorials to your beloved Mother.

Call for Bitterroot Photographers

Bitterroot Audubon is looking for local photographers who would like to donate a picture or two of our various Bitterroot Birds! We will be making a Bitterroot Audubon 2013 Calendar. The sales of the calendar will go toward our Scholarship Fund and our Education Fund. These funds help our local students in the study of birds and their habitats.

Send us your photo in jpeg format, minimum 350 dpi, at 9"W x 9 1/2" H, CMYK, 100% quality. Please no water marks on the photos. Send photos by June 1st to bitterrootcalendar@gmail.com

In June a Committee will go through the contributions and decide on the photos Bitterroot Audubon would like to use. If your photo is chosen you will be notified and your name will appear with the photo. Any questions? Just email us at bitterrootcalendar@gmail.com

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.

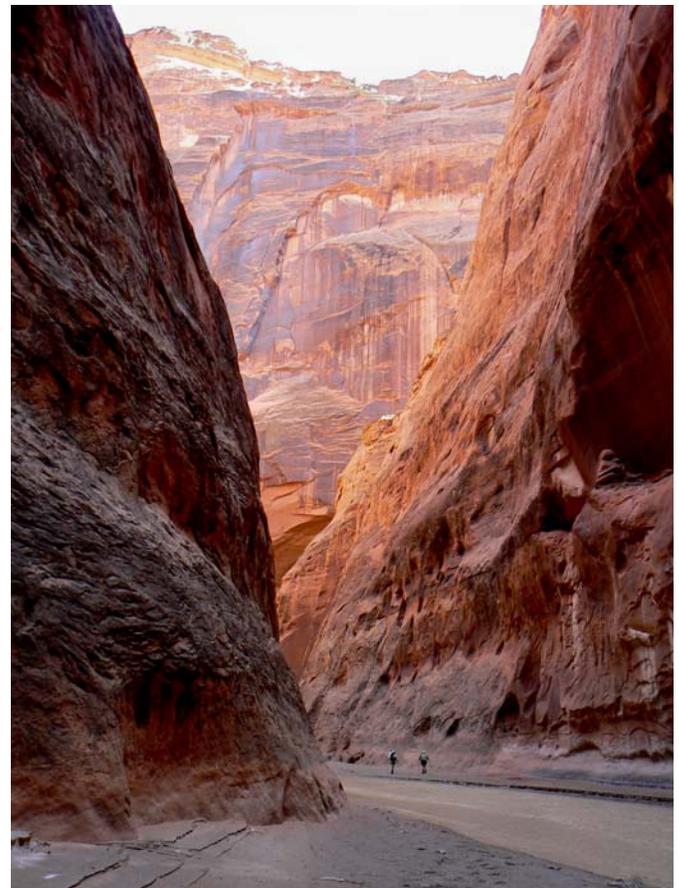
Letter from the President

By Kay Fulton, BAS President

In search of the Canyon

Wren:

Several years ago I had the pleasure of backpacking down the Paria Canyon in Southern Utah and had my first opportunity to hear a Canyon Wren. What a glorious song resounding off the narrow canyon walls-- cascading series of clear whistles. Three weeks ago I returned to the Paria and Buckskin Gulch, and once again was delighted with that beautiful song from not just one Canyon Wren, but several. I wish I had a recording to play for you. I would say that it is the prettiest bird song I've ever heard, but then there's the Western Meadowlark, American Dipper, House Wren, and others. I saw several Peregrine Falcons, Cliff Swallows, White-throated Swift and Common Ravens but no California Condors (much to my disappointment). I hope you get out and enjoy the summer. Remember to Stop, Look and Listen!



Courtesy Kay Fulton

Paria Canyon, UT

Golden Eagle Study

by Kate Stone

In early December of 2011, Rob Domenech of Raptor View Research Institute put satellite transmitters on an adult male and adult female golden eagle captured on the MPG Ranch, northeast of Florence. The transmitters provide point locations for the eagles every hour. The purpose of this project was to look at over-wintering behavior and movements of golden eagles in Montana, and to hopefully identify a local breeding area.

The results of this project have been amazing. Both eagles moved much more than anticipated throughout the winter, and both migrated completely out of the Valley to breed. The marking of these and other golden eagles, and the use of remote cameras at bait stations, also suggest that there are many more golden eagles over-wintering in the Bitterroot than previously realized.



Courtesy Eric Rasmussen

The adult male golden eagle after release, with the transmitter antenna visible on its back.

Over-wintering movements

The female moved all over the Bitterroot Valley, but generally avoided the valley bottom and traveled north and south in the foothills of the Bitterroot and Sapphire Mountains. She traveled as far south as the French Basin area near Sula. She also made an interesting mid-winter journey to an area west of Choteau, where she spent several days before returning to the Bitterroot. The male stayed closer to his capture point, but made more movements than anticipated within the region. He repeatedly returned to an area west of Victor, and also made one trip up towards The Jack saloon in the Lolo Creek drainage. Both eagles made larger movements and showed less fidelity to an area than expected.

Migration

Both eagles made major movements north beginning in late February. Instead of making one long continuous journey, both eagles utilized

“stopover areas” for long periods of time. The female hung out in late February and early March on the US-Canadian border east of Glacier National Park. In late March and early April, the male stayed for more than 10 days at a location in central British Columbia.



Migration routes of the male (left) and female (right) golden eagle as they traveled north from their over-wintering area in the Bitterroot Valley to breeding grounds in Alaska.

While migrating, the female eagle followed a travel route used by other eagles outfitted with transmitters, traveling on the east side of the Rocky Mountain front. The male used a different path, traveling west of the Rocky Mountains.

Breeding

The female has settled in the Brooks Range of Alaska, approximately 2,000 miles from her over-wintering grounds in Montana. The male has settled in southeast Alaska, less than 100 miles east of Prince William Sound and about 1,500 miles from the Bitterroot Valley. Both eagles are presumably breeding in remote areas far from human activity, a sharp contrast to their over-wintering areas in and around the Bitterroot Valley.

Researchers are concerned about golden eagle populations due to a variety of threats, mainly from human activities. Eagles routinely encounter risks such as vehicle collision, direct human persecution (e.g., shooting, poisoning, trapping for illegal feather trade), power line electrocution, energy development (wind, oil, gas), and lead poisoning. Both of the eagles with transmitters had elevated blood lead levels; lead-contaminated gut piles and carcasses from last fall's hunting season are suspected as the source of this lead.

For more information on this and other raptor projects, please see Raptor View Research Institute's website: <http://www.raptorview.org/>

Wings Across the Big Sky
June 8–10, 2012, Kalispell, Montana
Have you registered yet?

Now is the time to register for *Wings Across the Big Sky* in Kalispell (June 8–10) before field trips fill up ... See

www.mtaudubon.org/birdwatching/festival.html for the bird-fest lowdown including the link to register online or to download the mail-in form.

This is a family-friendly event so bring your children or grandchildren—no cost for their registration!

Contact Larissa at 406-443-3949 if you have any questions.

We Gladly Welcome Bird Festival Volunteers ...

If you are interested in volunteering at the festival please contact Kay Mitchell at kbmitch@centurytel.net. We offer volunteers wishing to go on field trips a discount on registration. We appreciate everyone's part in making this a fun and meaningful experience for all! As always, thanks for your support.

Call for Montana Audubon Award Nominations!

We are now seeking nominations for 4 awards that will be given away at the annual meeting in Kalispell. The awards acknowledge individuals who exemplify a commitment to conserving birds, other wildlife, and their habitat. The awards will be given for Conservationist of the Year, Environmental Educator of the Year, Special Achievement, and Lifetime Achievement.

To nominate your candidate, please call the Montana Audubon office to request an award nomination form or download the form from our website:

www.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 23, 2012. Nominations 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 9th at Montana Audubon's Bird Festival in Kalispell. Questions? Contact Janet Ellis (406-443-3949 or jellis@mtaudubon.org).

Marina Skumanich—National Audubon's Regional Representative for Montana—is coming to the Bird Festival!

Marina Skumanich, National Audubon Society's "Regional Representative" on the National Audubon Board for the region that includes Montana, will be at this year's Bird Festival in Kalispell June 7–8 (Thursday & Friday). Marina has signed up for one of the pre-festival conservation workshops on Friday,

and she will also lead the discussion at the Chapter Forum on Friday afternoon. Everyone is welcome to join us for the Chapter Forum and the discussion with Marina, scheduled to start at 2:45 P.M. on Friday, June 8th.

Nightmare on Kevin Rim, Montana

by Fred Weisbecker, Conservation Chair/VP

Kevin Rim is a bluff north of Shelby and about six miles south of the Canadian border that none of us has probably heard of. It is also the location of a new wind mill farm currently under construction by a Spanish Company and financed by San Diego Power and Light to help meet their required green energy mandate by the State of California. The cost of the project is estimated at \$400 million. This sounds great, but Kevin Rim has the highest density of nesting raptors in all of Montana. Four golden eagle nests are located there. With no state or federal regulations, construction of the roads and windmill bases has already begun. With tax rebates on wind power about to expire in October there is a rush to get the project completed.

Montana Audubon's policy person, Janet Ellis, has been trying in vain for two years to get the developers to reconsider the location of some of the wind turbine sites. Fortunately, with pressure from California Audubon on San Diego Power, the construction company has agreed at last to relocate 25 of the 126 tower sites further away from the most threatened raptor nesting areas at a cost of \$2 million.

Last week the US Fish and Wildlife Service came out with guidelines for wind farm sites; unfortunately, Montana still has none. There are good places for a wind mill farm and there are bad places. Kevin Rim will probably be the poster child for bad wind farm site selection for years to come. There is no guarantee the revised plan will not disturb the nests. Only time will tell.

Calendar of Events

May 19-Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, 9-11AM

May 21- Audubon Meeting, Natural Resources/Forest Service building, Hamilton, 7PM, Board Mtg. 5PM. **Jun 8-10, 2012-**Montana Bird Festival, Kalispell

The next newsletter and meeting will be in September.

News and Notes

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 May 19th at 9AM for a two hour bird walk. Bring binoculars if you have them. Contact the refuge at [\(406\) 777-5552](tel:4067775552) for more information.

Lewis's Woodpeckers and Citizen Monitoring--The UM Avian Science Center and Audubon are looking for citizen volunteers to find locations and nests of Lewis's Woodpeckers along the Bitterroot and Clark Fork River valleys. We want to know more about the habitat they use for nesting. As a volunteer, you can adopt a location to look for Lewis's Woodpeckers or mark locations as you float or walk along the rivers. Volunteers must attend a short training to get information on how to record the data. You can volunteer as your schedule allows from mid-May to mid-August.

Bird Shots

We will provide any necessary training, equipment, and protocols. A tentative training date has been set for May 21st. If you are interested in helping us find Lewis's woodpeckers this summer or know locations where you've seen them in previous years, please contact Megan Fyelling (ASC) at megan.fyelling@mso.umt.edu or 243-2035 (email preferred).

Election of Officers--Bitterroot Audubon Society's annual meeting will take place as part of our regular chapter meeting on May 21st, and will include an election of officers for the upcoming year.

Another Riparian Grant Approved--Bitterroot Audubon recently approved another grant to improve habitat for birds in the Bitterroot River Important Bird Area on property owned by Ken Siebel. The Siebel grant will help pay for individual exclosures around small ponderosa pines and cottonwoods, and larger exclosures to protect clumps of shrubs or regenerating aspen from browsing animals. Bitterroot Audubon volunteers will assist in building the exclosures and pulling weeds. If you would like to join the crew, please contact Kate Stone at krogestone@hotmail.com or 381-1115.

Riparian Grant Pays for 2000 Native Seedlings--Bitterroot Audubon grant funds helped pay for 2000 native tree and shrub seedlings planted on recently restored riparian habitat along the Bitterroot River west of Stevensville. A number of Bitterroot Audubon volunteers joined many others to help the landowners, along with Russ Fox from Ridge to River Restoration, with the bank stabilization project. We're all holding our breath to see how this restoration holds up to high water.



Western Meadowlark.
Courtesy Nathan
DeBoer

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Vice-Pres. & Conservation Chair	Fred Weisbecker*	375-9317
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At large	Judy Hoy*	777-2487
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

Membership Data Center
PO Box 422250
Palm Coast FL 32142-2250