

Bitterroot AUDUBON



APRIL 2013

NEWSLETTER

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Birds on the Move: Migration, Boreal Birds, Energy, Climate Change and Us

By Kay Fulton, BAS President

Amy Cilimburg, Director of Bird Conservation and Climate Policy for Montana Audubon has been studying the relationship of changing bird behaviors and climate change. On Monday, April 15th, she will share her insights with Bitterroot Audubon. In preparation for this fascinating slide show presentation, consider the following:

“It’s the season where birds are on the move and the pace of migration quickens. Many birds come home to Montana, while others are passing through. Where are they headed and what changes are in store for migrants as our climate changes? Just north of Montana lies the boreal forest, home to a plethora of birds and a critical forest in so many ways. What Montana birds also rely on these lands to the north and what threats are they facing? What’s in store for these birds and Montana birds



Rufous Hummingbird.

if global climate change accelerates?” Amy’s presentation will highlight not just answers to these questions, but the voices of the people in Montana and beyond, and the voices of the birds. The story of birds and wildlife impacted by energy development here in Montana is connected to the boreal forest, and we’ll

circle around to our state and the status of climate change solutions. Much can be done locally for bird conservation with our own voices— to create a better future for all.



Courtesy Amy Cilimburg

Evening Grosbeak.

In her role with Montana Audubon, Amy works to educate and inspire action around issues related to climate change, birds, wildlife, and energy both here in Montana and nationally. She spearheads the Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program in Montana and collaborates with others to protect Montana's birds and their habitat. Prior to coming to Audubon, Amy was the Assistant Director of the University of Montana's Avian Science Center. She has a M.S. in Wildlife Biology from the University of Montana. She lives and strives to reduce her carbon footprint in Missoula with her husband and daughter.

Join us on Monday, April 15th, at 7:00 P.M. at the Lee Metcalf Refuge Visitor's Center (north of Stevensville), in the Okefenokee Room. The public is invited. For further information, contact Kay Fulton at 642-3794.

Letter from the President

By Kay Fulton, BAS President

Happy Spring Migration to Everyone! We had an absolutely beautiful day to celebrate Welcome Back Waterfowl at the Lee Metcalf Refuge. The birds, ducks, raptors (including a Golden Eagle), Snow Geese, Swans, and even Sandhill Cranes put on a great show for the many people who came to enjoy and learn.



Courtesy Kay Fulton

View of the Bitterroot Mountains from the Lee Metcalf NWR.

Bitterroot Audubon had binoculars, scopes, information and cookies along the road and the refuge staff had a number of activities going on at the visitor's center. The number of adults and children participating seemed higher than in other years. I was once again struck with how fortunate we are to have such an outstanding refuge right in our backyard. It is absolutely a gem. This brings me to a plea to everyone who loves the refuge and the birds and wildlife it supports, to oppose the Legacy Ranch proposal. The impact of this proposal for 600+ houses & condos with all the necessary wells, septic tanks, roads, pollution, noise, chemicals, etc. will be devastating to the entire refuge. Its not often that we have the opportunity to protect something so close and personal but this is it.

CONTACT THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS AND TELL THEM TO DENY THE LEGACY RANCH PROPOSAL.

Bitterroot Audubon Society's 2013 Welcome Back Waterfowl Day

By Judy Hoy, BAS Member

At the 2013 Welcome Back Waterfowl Day at the Lee Metcalf Wildlife Refuge on March 30, both people and birds came out to enjoy what was an absolutely

gorgeous day. Participants reported observing a total of 55 bird species, 2 mammals and 1 reptile. Bird species observed include Ring-necked Pheasant, Mourning Dove, Belted Kingfisher, Trumpeter and Tundra Swans, Bald Eagle (one adult did a beautiful flyby), a Golden Eagle (being harassed by a Red-tailed Hawk), several Turkey Vultures, several other Red-tailed Hawks, one Rough-legged Hawk, one Northern Harrier, a Northern Goshawk, Osprey, two American Kestrels, a Great Horned Owl, several Sandhill Cranes, Killdeer, a Great Blue Heron (fishing), two Pied-billed Grebes, 70 plus Snow Geese and several Canada Geese. Ducks observed included American Wigeon, Cinnamon Teal, Lesser Scaup, and 14 others. Songbirds included several Marsh Wren, two American Tree Sparrows, both Red-winged and Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Western Meadowlark, American Robin, House Finch, Tree Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, Song Sparrow, European Starling, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Common Raven and Black-billed Magpie. The mammals seen were Columbian Ground Squirrel and White-tailed Deer. Five Painted Turtles, which appeared to be watching the people who were watching the birds were the only reptiles seen.



Courtesy Nathan DeBoer

Judy Hoy's Long-eared Owl at the Welcome Back Waterfowl Event.

We sincerely thank the Lee Metcalf Refuge. A special thank you to Bob Danley for doing publicity, Kay Fulton, who brought cookies and all the Audubon members who provided expertise with finding and identifying the birds. Most of all, thank you to all who came to view and learn about Montana's birds and welcome the migrating birds back to the Bitterroot Valley.

Landowner Grants Available

By Sherry Ritter

Bitterroot Audubon and its Important Bird Area Committee are excited to be able to offer small grants to landowners for enhancing riparian habitat along the Bitterroot River within the boundary of the Bitterroot River IBA. We are now soliciting proposals for projects to take place in 2013. Grants will be provided for projects having 5 acres or more lying within the boundaries of the IBA. Adjacent landowners may work together to meet this qualification. Grants won't exceed \$1,000 per project. Grants may request volunteer labor from Bitterroot Audubon. Examples of appropriate projects include fencing to keep livestock, deer, or elk from eating shrubs and trees; purchase and planting of native shrubs and trees; and pulling of noxious weeds.

The deadline for proposals is May 6, 2013. Proposal forms are short and can be obtained from Sherry Ritter, s287ritter@mac.com, 777-7409.

Strange But True

By Fred Weisbecker, BAS VP and Conservation Chair

So what do the current mass hysteria over buying guns and ammo and wildlife conservation have in common?? Actually more than you would think. It's a story with a great silver lining. In 1937 two US senators named Pittman and Robinson penned a law that put an excise tax on all hunting supplies with the goal of returning the proceeds back to the states for wildlife conservation work. Since its inception the fund has given out millions of dollars to state wildlife commissions for wildlife management and the purchase of quality habitat. Montana received \$13.8 million this year alone. The amount Montana has been getting has steadily risen from the \$7.9 million it received in 2007. The law allocates the money to the states by how many hunting license holders there are and the size of the state. It turns out that Montana gets one of the larger shares. The recent purchase of the 10,000 acre Fish Creek management tract west of Missoula was accomplished with these monies. So as bullets and guns fly off the shelves of sporting goods stores remember they are generating lots of money for wildlife habitat. As one US Fish and Wildlife Service employee noted we are still seeing an election year bump in the Pittman-Robinson Fund.

Bitterroot Audubon Offers Beginning Birder Class

By Leslie Nyce, BAS Member

Bird watching is a very popular activity. According to a United States Fish and Wildlife Service report, over

45 million people bird watch in the United States alone. Imagine what that number may be worldwide. Do you wish you could identify the birds that you see? Do you want to learn more about their behavior and habits? If you answered, "yes" to these questions then you may want to consider joining us for two evening classes and two field trips designed for beginning birders. The classes will cover optics, bird identification, behavior, habitat, birdsong, migration, and much more. Classroom sessions will take place on Thursday, April 18 & 25, and the field trips will take place on Sunday, April 28 and Saturday, May 4. Cost for the class will be \$25/Audubon members and \$35/non-members. **Pre-registration is required and limited to 20 participants.** For more information or to pre-register, call Leslie Nyce at 961-3808.

Citizen Scientists needed to monitor Bald Eagle nests

By Kate Stone, BAS Board Member

Bitterroot Audubon is teaming up with MT Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (FWP) to monitor Bald Eagle nests in the Bitterroot Valley. Bald Eagle numbers in Montana have increased dramatically in the recent past; Bald Eagle nesting pairs increased from only 12 in 1980 to almost 650 in 2012!



Bald Eagle.

Courtesy Nathan DeBoer

MT FWP coordinates annual monitoring of bald eagle nests through ground-based and aerial surveys. But the sheer number of nests to monitor makes it difficult for agency personnel to visit all nests and to gather the productivity data that will help us figure out how well the eagles are really doing.

Bitterroot Audubon has offered to coordinate the “adoption” of Bald Eagle nest sites in the Bitterroot Valley. We are looking for people who are willing to visit known nesting areas approximately three times in the breeding season (April, May, June) to record occupancy and nest success. In some cases, nests can be observed using binoculars from the roadside. Other nests may require floating or hiking to access. If you are interested in adopting a nest, please contact Kate Stone (381-1115, krogestone@hotmail.com) and let her know the following:

- Where you live and how far you are willing to travel
- If you are willing to hike or float to a nest

Also, we are interested in learning about new nest sites or those that may not be in the MT FWP database. If you think you know of a new nest please let us know. If we get enough volunteers, we may also “adopt” Osprey nests throughout the valley.

Hummingbirds at Home – Audubon’s New Citizen Science Project

Hummingbirds visit our yards each spring to breed, looking for nectar from our gardens and feeders. Fascinating to watch, hummingbirds captivate us with their magical feats of flight and their showy colors. The Continental US is breeding home to 14 species of hummingbirds, with a few other species making rare appearances.

Recent science reports that flowers are blooming earlier and earlier due to climate change. Some flowers are blooming as many as 17 days before the migrating hummingbirds arrive. The impact for migrating and breeding hummingbirds is unknown.

Building on our Christmas Bird Count (CBC) legacy and the more recent success of the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), the National Audubon Society is launching a new program called Hummingbirds at Home.

The goal of this program is to gather data that will help document the hummingbirds’ journey, and better understand how changing flowering patterns and supplemental feeding by people relate to hummingbirds’ migration and breeding success, and also climate change. Since nectar is critical to

hummingbirds, we’re asking people to document which flowering plants hummingbirds are feeding on in their backyards as well as whether hummingbird feeders are supplied and used. The Hummingbirds at Home program will provide an opportunity for citizen scientists to help us learn how these changes in the environment are impacting hummingbirds.

In this family-friendly program, participants will log hummingbird sightings and the flowering plants or feeders they visit, with free mobile technology or on desktop computers. Participants can also view hummingbird sightings online in real time. Scientists will use the data to better understand how hummingbirds are impacted by feeders, non-native nectar sources in gardens, shifting flowering times, and climate change.

Do you enjoy watching hummingbirds and want to become involved in this program? You can participate at a level that fits your schedule – from one sighting to watching hummingbirds over several weekends throughout the program. To learn more about this exciting citizen science project, go to www.audubon.org/citizenscience.



Courtesy Nathan DeBoer

Sandhill Cranes.

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.



**Montana Audubon Celebrates the
Natural Diversity in the Heart of
Montana
Lewistown's *Wings Across the Big Sky*
Festival, June 7-9, 2013**

Few areas in Montana showcase bird habitats as rich and diverse as those found in the heart of our vast state, where the mountains meet the plains. Lewistown is a community located at the geographic center of Montana in the vast Judith Basin. Although mostly rolling prairie, farms and ranches, the Lewistown area features five beautiful mountain ranges, the Snowies, Judiths, Moccasins, Belts, and the Highwoods. Visitors will find spectacular examples of native prairie, forested coulees, river bottoms, and "breaks" badlands. Species such as Western Meadowlarks, Mountain Plovers, Chestnut-collared Longspurs, Prairie Falcons, Sage and Sharp-tailed Grouse, and Bald Eagles call this area home.

This year, the Montana Audubon bird festival will be held in Lewistown, June 7–9, the very heart of Montana! As one of only ten cities nationwide selected to receive an Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds grant, Lewistown is gearing up to welcome hundreds of birders to the region. The Urban Bird Treaty program, administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, brings together private citizens, as well as federal, state, and municipal agencies and non-governmental organizations to conserve migratory birds through education programs, participation in citizen science, conservation and habitat improvement efforts, and a reduction in hazards to birds in urban/suburban areas.

For its annual bird festival this year, Montana Audubon aims to capitalize on that rich diversity, and the abundance of species that comes with it, by basing the festival in Lewistown. Co-hosted by Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge and the City of Lewistown, the festival is centered at the Yogo Inn in Lewistown, June 7-9.

Dubbed *Wings Across the Big Sky*, this year's festival celebrates the area's ecological diversity and abundance of birdlife with 33 guided field trips to the area's shrub-steppes, grasslands, forest, and wetlands and riparian habitats on Saturday and Sunday. Led by ornithologists and local bird guides, the birding trips include tours of several national wildlife refuges in the area, among them Charles M. Russell, War Horse, Lake Mason, and Bowdoin National Refuges. Also featured will be trips to the American Prairie Reserve, Missouri Breaks Monument, the Judith Mountains, and many interesting destinations close to Lewistown.

This year's festival theme "*Birding and Conservation in the Heart of Montana*," will feature top-notch experts and speakers. Delivering this year's keynote address is Susan Bonfield, Director of Environment for the Americas, which coordinates the largest hemispheric celebration of migratory birds, International Migratory Bird Day. She is also the coordinator of the **Western Hummingbird Partnership** which brings together researchers and educators in efforts to conserve healthy populations of hummingbirds. Susan will be speaking on the fascinating world of these vibrant birds, what threatens their populations, and how you can help conserve them.

The festival also features four other authorities in their field who will share their expertise on topics such as Montana Audubon's current sage and grassland conservation and citizen science efforts, the Urban Bird Treaty project, the Long-billed Curlew Initiative in Montana, and the value and function of riparian areas for landowners.

This is a family-friendly event where both seasoned and beginning birders, including children, should find plenty to intrigue them. For more information and to register for the event, visit www.mtaudubon.org/birdwatching/festival or call (406) 443-3949. Special room rates at the Yogo Inn have been arranged for attendees.

Festival contact: Nat Forcier

Tel: **406-443-3949**

Email: **natalie@mtaudubon.org**

Call for Award Nominations

Each year Montana Audubon recognizes individuals who work for the conservation and protection of birds and other wildlife. We are currently seeking nominations in the following categories:

Lifetime Achievement Award. For an Audubon volunteer who has dedicated extraordinary effort, time and energy to shape the activities and successes of a local Audubon Chapter and/or Montana Audubon.

Educator of the Year. For a person who has shown outstanding achievement in educating others about birds, other wildlife, and conservation of habitat.

Conservationist of the Year. For an individual who has provided significant wildlife conservation achievement in Montana.

Citizen Scientist of the Year. For a person contributing significantly to our knowledge and understanding of birds and their habitats through monitoring and observations.

Special Achievement Award. For a person who has shown an extraordinary commitment to birds, other wildlife, and the conservation of habitat on a special project or through special activities.

Download a nomination form from our website (<http://www.mtaudubon.org/about/awards.html>).

Nominations are due at the office by May 22, 2013. Award winners will be announced at our Bird Festival banquet in Lewistown on June 7. Thanks for your help in our search for this year's award winners!

News and Notes

Bitterroot Audubon Offers Beginning Birder Class

The classes will cover bird identification, optics, behavior, habitat, birdsong, migration, and much more. Classroom sessions will take place on **Thursday, April 18 & 25**, and the field trips will take place on **Sunday, April 28 and Saturday, May 4**. Cost for the class will be \$25/Audubon members and \$35/non-members. Pre-registration is required and limited to 20 participants. For more information or to pre-register, call Leslie Nyce at 961-3808.

Lost Bird Project: National Television Broadcast & Grassroots Screening Series The Lost Bird Project, a film about five bird species driven to extinction in modern times and sculptor Todd McGrain's project to memorialize them, will be airing on Earth Day, April 22, 2013. Check your local public television listings for specific screening times or visit the Lost Bird Project website: www.lostbirdfilm.org

2014 Calendar Calling all Bitterroot photographers!! The 2013 calendar was so successful that we are going to make one for 2014! If you would like to enter your bird photos (limit of 3, please) make sure they are of high resolution, at least 300 dpi. The chosen photographs will be printed at 8.5" W by 10" H. Send to: bitterrootcalendar@gmail.com. The deadline for submission is May 31st, 2013.

Bitterroot Audubon is on Facebook! If you use Facebook, please look for Bitterroot Audubon and "Like" us!

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.

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 April 20th at 10AM for a two hour bird walk. Bring binoculars if you have them. Contact the refuge at [\(406\) 777-5552](tel:(406)777-5552) for more information.

Bird Shots



Courtesy Fred Weisbecker

Common Nighthawk, taken from a dirt road between Melrose and Twin Bridges in June 2011.

Calendar of Events

Apr 15- Lee Metcalf NWR, 7PM, **Board Mtg. 5PM.**

Apr 18, 25, 28, and May 4- Beginning Birder Class, contact Leslie Nyce to register.

Apr 20- Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, 10AM-12PM

May 20- Audubon Meeting, Forest Service/DNRC Building, Hamilton, 7PM, **Board Mtg. 5PM-** Board member elections.

Jun 7-9- Montana Audubon Wings Across the Big Sky Festival, Lewistown, MT

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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