

# Bitterroot AUDUBON



DECEMBER 2013

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 28, NO. 4

## **Hamilton, MT Christmas Bird Count**

**December 21st, 2013 at 7:30AM**

*By John Ormiston*

Deck the Halls, it's nearly Christmas and that means Saturday, December 21, BAS and friends will count all the birds in the 114 square mile Hamilton Christmas Bird Count circle for the 27<sup>th</sup> time. We need to uphold tradition by meeting at The Teller Education Building (south of Quast Lane on Chaffin) at 7:30 AM, eating chili and Oreos at noon (thanks for the 27<sup>th</sup> time to Bill Good), and having a grand time with fellow birders. Just like always the total count will be heavily dependant on favorable weather, but we'll count no matter what the forecast. We'll organize into 6 or more groups, each with an experienced leader, and get out into the field shortly after daylight. At noon we'll reorganize and try to cover any place missed in the morning.

We annually see over 7,000 birds and about 65 species. In 2006 we saw about 6,900 birds of 74 species and lead the State. Our cumulative species list contains 128 species with 31 species seen every year and 25 only once. We even get to officially count California Quail this year since the "official" bird committee decided they are no longer feral escaped birds and represent a sustainable population. The Hamilton Count annually finishes in the top 5 in the state, most often in the top three, competing with Big Fork, Missoula and Stevensville. We need the help of birders of all skill levels to help find and identify all the birds in the 7 ½ mile circle centered on the Hamilton Airport.

Feeder watchers provide essential help. Every year folks who can't go to the field add several species to our list. You can help by counting the birds at your feeder for the entire day, or for a few hours or minutes when you can take the time during the day. You all know someone who feeds birds; encourage them to

report their findings to Colleen Powell, the feeder watcher coordinator for the 27<sup>th</sup> time, by calling her at 363-2116. We've only had about 20 feeder watchers each year, surely more folks than that feed birds and can identify their beneficiaries.

Please call Colleen at 363-2116 or me at 360-9530 if you know someone who could count birds at their feeder, or if you need more information about the 27<sup>th</sup> annual Hamilton Christmas Bird Count.

## **Big Hole Christmas Bird Count**

**January 4th, 2014**

*By Kate Stone*

Like Snow Buntings, Rough-legged Hawks, Common Redpolls, and Great Gray Owls? Join members of Bitterroot Audubon on Saturday, January 4<sup>th</sup>, for the 7<sup>th</sup> annual Big Hole Christmas Bird Count. Explore the back roads around Wisdom, enjoying some frosty fun. There are opportunities for both car-based and foot-based surveys. 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, [krosetone@hotmail.com](mailto:krosetone@hotmail.com)) to register and for information about the meeting place and time.

## **Stevensville, MT Christmas Bird Count**

**December 28th, 2013 at 7:30AM**

*By Dave Lockman*

The 49th annual Stevi Christmas Bird Count is scheduled for Saturday, December 28th. We hope you'll be able to join us for a fun day (or morning) of meeting new folks and finding birds in our local winter wonderland. 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.

Bird counters on last year's Stevi CBC found 16,857 birds of 90 different species, which set a new species record. We found one new species (rusty blackbird), which increased our total cumulative species count to 157. 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*

Another Year in Review:  
Before we launch into 2014, I thought I'd share with you some of the highlights from the recent BAS Annual Report for National Audubon. First of all, it is absolutely amazing to me how much such a small organization can accomplish. Here are some of the highlights:

The first BAS Calendar was a resounding success. 500 were sold; making a profit of \$5,000. This amount was divided between the new Byron Weber Scholarship Fund and the ongoing Education Fund. Perhaps the greatest benefit of the Calendar, though, is the educational value. Through presentations, classroom visits, workshops, farmers' markets, bazaars, and casual contacts, hundreds of adults and children were introduced to the World of Birds. Becky Peters, coordinator, is the person to thank!

The first Byron Weber Scholarship was awarded to Philip Williams, a student at the University of Montana majoring in a natural science field.

Citizen Science Project opportunities have increased by leaps and bounds due to the creativeness and enthusiasm of Kate Stone, Field Trip coordinator. Last Spring she introduced one of the most exciting and far-reaching projects: monitoring Bald Eagle nests and Osprey nests. She put out a call for volunteers and received over 100 calls. Like the process of selling the calendars, this monitoring project has had numerous educational impacts on people of all ages.



Our Chapter continues to focus on the Bitterroot River Important Bird Area. This year involved a great deal of effort to defend it from developers, primarily the Legacy Ranch proposal which was approved by the County Commissioners in spite of the major negative impacts it will have on the Lee Metcalf Refuge and the IBA. Efforts continue to prevent this from happening. Hopefully, they will see the "light" in 2014.

There have been many, many other great activities and programs occurring this past year; too many to list here but I encourage all of you to get involved in as many "Bird-related" activities as you can. Contact us if you have any questions or suggestions. Thanks, Kay

### **Montana Audubon Offers Grants for Wildlife**

Montana Audubon will be offering grants totaling more than \$1,700 to fund projects that benefit wildlife. Preference will be given to research and education projects benefiting nongame wildlife and their habitats. The funds can be used for mileage, supplies, equipment, printing, and communications.

Applications must be postmarked on or before Friday, December 13, 2013. Grant recipients will be announced by February 7, 2014. Project guidelines and the grant application can be requested from: Audubon Wildlife Fund, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624; by phone: (406) 443-3949; or from our website at: <http://www.mtaudubon.org/about/grants.html>.

### **California Quail Joins Montana State Bird List**

*By Dave Lockman*

California Quail have become a common sight in many parts of the Bitterroot valley over the last 10 years, but they weren't considered an "official" Montana bird until recently. Quail were first documented in the Bitterroot in 1998, and were presumably the result of birds released by game farms, dog trainers, etc. They started to appear regularly on both the Stevensville and Hamilton Christmas Bird Counts in 2002. Numbers reported on the two CBCs have generally increased since that time, especially after 2006. The two CBCs recorded a total of 1,291 quail in December of 2012. There are obviously many more quail in the valley, since much occupied quail range occurs in areas not included in either CBC. I asked Bitterroot Audubon members and others to send me reports of quail coveys in 2008 and 2009, which helped document the abundance and distribution of quail in the valley, as well as the fact that they were reproducing very successfully on their own.

Although there was a large population of quail in the Bitterroot, the Montana Bird Records Committee (MBRC) was reluctant to add them to the Montana State Bird List. The MBRC is responsible for reviewing reports of rare bird species in Montana, and for determining which species appear on the State Bird List. New birds that arrive here on their own and are sufficiently well documented are reviewed, and if accepted are added to the List. However, the MBRC's rule of thumb is that introduced species such as California Quail should be added to the State List only after data indicate that they have been self-sustaining for 10 years. The MBRC first voted on whether to add California Quail to the State List in 2011, and turned them down due to a concern that continued releases might be augmenting the population, and that it might therefore not be self-sustaining. Ditto for 2012. However, the MBRC did vote to add California Quail to the State Bird List in October 2013, apparently swayed by the continued increase in numbers reported on the CBCs. So far, quail populations in Montana seem to be mostly confined to the Bitterroot valley, so this is a great place to look for them if you want to add them to your Montana list. They're finally legal, thanks in large part to Bitterroot Audubon members who helped count them. You can view the State List and find out more about the MBRC at <http://mtaudubon.org/birds/mbrc.html>

### **Bitterroot Audubon Society is going GREEN**

*By Sara Ashline and Karen Griffing, BAS Editors*

Beginning Fall 2013, Bitterroot Audubon began delivering monthly newsletter electronically. If you haven't already done so, please send us your email address to receive your newsletter via email. Starting this fall, we'll send a meeting reminder by postcard, but the full newsletter will be sent to your email address and is always available at [www.bitterrootaudubon.org](http://www.bitterrootaudubon.org). This will allow us to reduce printing and mailing costs and waste, while offering full color pictures and expanded coverage of Bitterroot Audubon activities. For those without computer access, we will continue to mail you an individual copy of the newsletter; please send a note to **Bitterroot Audubon, PO Box 326, Hamilton, MT 59840** requesting this service. Please send your email address to Susie Duff at [audubonmembership@gmail.com](mailto:audubonmembership@gmail.com) to begin receiving your newsletter electronically.

### **10 Reasons to be THANKFUL for Birds**

*By Leslie Nyce, Education Chair*

Every day that you wake up you can look outside and probably find at least one bird. During this season of thankfulness it is nice to remember how birds contribute to our well-being. Here are 10 reasons to be thankful for our fine feathered friends:

1. They provide pest control
2. They are money makers stimulating economies \$\$\$
3. They clean up as one of nature's scavengers
4. They spread seeds
5. They announce danger gauging the health of ecosystems
6. They pollinate
7. They help farmers cleaning up leftover seeds and plants
8. They poop providing sources of fertilizer
9. They are heroes helping to deliver messages during wars
10. THEY JUST ARE!

This information was adapted from the following website; check it out for more details:

<http://www.audubonmagazine.org/articles/birds/10-reasons-be-thankful-birds?page=show>

## **News and Notes**

### **Calendar of Events**

- Dec 13**-Montana Audubon Wildlife Grant application due
- Dec 21**- Hamilton Christmas Bird Count, 7:30 AM at the Teller Wildlife Refuge Education Building (Slack Barn) in Corvallis
- Dec 21**- Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, 10AM-12PM, Call 777-5552 for more information.
- Dec 28**-Stevensville Christmas Bird Count, 7:30AM, Stevensville Ranger Station, 88 Main St, Stevensville
- Dec 31**-Byron Weber Memorial Scholarship Application due
- Jan 4**-Big Hole Christmas Bird Count, Kate Stone (381-1115, [krocestone@hotmail.com](mailto:krocestone@hotmail.com))
- Jan 31**-Chapter Membership Fees due

### **Chapter Members Renewal Deadline**

If you are a BAS chapter member, your membership fee (\$15) are due by January 31, 2014. Please send payment to Bitterroot Audubon Society, PO Box 326, Hamilton, MT 59840.

Bitterroot Audubon Society  
Post Office Box 326  
Hamilton, Montana 59840-0326  
[bitterrootaudubon.org](http://bitterrootaudubon.org)



BYRON WEBER MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP  
2013-2014 APPLICATION for \$300 per semester

*In memory of Byron Weber, teacher, naturalist, leader and conservationist*

Byron is remembered for his passion for living things. This passion fueled his entire life. He made learning about our natural environment accessible and meaningful. Encouraging all ages to explore, respect and preserve the splendid natural world around us was how Byron lived and worked. It is in this spirit that the Byron Weber Memorial Scholarship will be awarded by Bitterroot Audubon. The scholarship committee will decide on a qualified candidate after all applications have been submitted and requirements have been met.

ELIGIBILITY

- ◆ Currently attending a Montana College/University (4 year degree program)
- ◆ At least a sophomore status
- ◆ Majoring in a Natural Resource Field
- ◆ Good academic standing
- ◆ Bitterroot Valley resident desired

APPLICATION

To complete the application the student must provide:

1. Current transcript—an official copy.
2. 2 letters of recommendation. One letter must be from a professor familiar with the applicant's work.
3. A list of programs, activities, employment, organizations, or community service in which the applicant has been involved.
4. An essay in response to the following question: (500 words or less)  
***What would you consider to be currently the single most important issue in the Natural Resource Field or your chosen major?***
5. In 2 sentences, explain how this scholarship will support your further studies.
6. A signed copy of the non-plagiarism pledge below.

I hereby certify that, except for material directly cited in quotations, the enclosed essay is an original work composed by me.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please send, FAX or e-mail completed application and required documents to:

Skip Horner, Scholarship Committee or Skip Horner at [skip@skiphorner.com](mailto:skip@skiphorner.com)  
2612 Dry Smith Rd.  
Victor, MT 59875  
FAX 406.642.6841

**Applications must be postmarked no later than December 31, 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](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 December 21st 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.

## Bird Shots



Wild Turkey in the Bitterroot.

### Bitterroot Audubon 2014 Calendar

Looking for a Christmas present? How about giving a 2014 Bitterroot Audubon Calendar? It features local birds of the Bitterroot Valley, with photos, drawings and natural history tips. Calendars are available at many valley locations, including:

Missoula - Naturalist's Mercantile; Stevensville - Lisa Archer Silks; Hamilton - Chapter One Book Store, Sam's Spade Garden Tools and Wares, The Paper Clip, Lakeland Feed, Art Focus, Bitterroot Drug, Robbins Hallmark; Darby - Deb's Restaurant; Plus, they can be found at most of the Holiday Craft Shows in December and on our website:

[www.bitterrootaudubon.org](http://www.bitterrootaudubon.org). For more information, contact Becky at [bitterrootcalendar@gmail.com](mailto:bitterrootcalendar@gmail.com).

*Courtesy Mel Holloway*



BITTERROOT AUDUBON  
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HAMILTON MT 59840-0326

NONPROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
HAMILTON MT  
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### Officers

President	Kay Fulton*	642-3794
Vice-Pres. & Conservation Chair	Fred Weisbecker*	375-9317
Secretary	John Ormiston*	363-5464
Treasurer	Jim Story*	961-4689

### Directors & Committee Chairs

IBA Program	Sherry Ritter	777-7409
Website & Field Trips	Kate Stone*	381-1115
Education	Leslie Nyce* <a href="mailto:bas4education@hotmail.com">bas4education@hotmail.com</a>	
Newsltr Eds &	Sara Ashline* <a href="mailto:baseditors@gmail.com">baseditors@gmail.com</a>	
Distribution	Karen Griffing*	961-0181
Hospitality	Rosan Stover	
Membership	Susie Duff*	961-5455
Publicity	Dave Lockman	777-2929
Rep. to MT		
Audubon	Becky Peters*	
At large	Judy Hoy*	777-2487
Scholarship	Skip Horner*	642-6840
At large	Campbell Massey	381-0197
At large	Alex Shaffer*	

\* Board Member

EMAIL: [contactus@bitterrootaudubon.org](mailto:contactus@bitterrootaudubon.org)  
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 the full color e-newsletter, and enjoy Chapter benefits. To join as a Chapter Only Member, complete this form.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_  
State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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