

Bitterroot AUDUBON



JANUARY 2013

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 27, NO. 5

GREAT CLIMBS IN THE GREAT RANGES: A Life of Guiding at High Altitude with Skip Horner

Bitterroot Audubon will kick off 2013 with another great program by Skip Horner on January 21st. Although the talk will not be about birds, it will be about peaks around the world that loom higher than most birds fly.

Skip has been guiding people to the summits of high mountains worldwide for over 3 decades. In fact he was the first to guide people to the highest peak on each of the 7 continents, the famous "7 Summits." He has spent 30 seasons guiding in the Himalayas. He has also guided many expeditions in Antarctica and the arctic. He returns to each of these places almost every year. Additionally he has guided people to summits in more obscure ranges, such as the Karakorum, the Pamirs, the Atlas and the Mountains of the Moon.



Courtesy Skip Horner

Skip's presentation will highlight these climbs that have spanned his prolific career as the world's most far-ranging mountain guide. Be prepared to be dazzled by pictures, stories and information, including some world geography. **Join the Bitterroot Audubon Monday, January 21st at 7:00 P.M. at the Forest Service/DNRC building, 1801 N. First St. (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.

Winter Raptor Workshop

Winter is a great time for observing raptors around the Bitterroot Valley. If you wonder what raptors you may see flying around or sitting on fence posts and telephone poles, then this is the workshop for you! Bitterroot Audubon Society is offering a Winter Raptor Workshop which includes one evening class and one mid-day field trip that will cover tips for winter raptor identification, behavior, habitat and migration. The classroom session will take place on Friday evening, February 15 with the field trip on Saturday February 16. The instructor will be Steve Hoffman, Montana Audubon's Executive Director and founder of HawkWatch International. In years past on the field trip, participants were treated to a variety of raptor species and many other non-raptors. Raptor species ranged from four to seven with a total number of individual raptors ranging from a low of 43 to a high of 65. Yes, all right here in the Bitterroot Valley!

Cost for the workshop will be \$20.00/Audubon members and \$30.00/non-members. **Pre-registration is required and limited to 20 participants. Due to the popularity of this workshop, participants may not sign up for only one portion of the workshop but must commit to attending both the evening class and the field trip.** The workshop is open to birders of all abilities from beginner to those with more experience. For more information or to pre-register, call Leslie Nyce at 961-3808.

Letter from the President

By Kay Fulton, BAS President

Combat Global Warming with Renewed Personal Energy and Commitment

In 2007, Bitterroot Audubon had the privilege of hosting a talk by Dr. Steve Running, Professor at the University of Montana and member of the scientific team awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for its work on global warming. At that time, many people doubted the existence of global warming. Recent surveys indicate that more than 70% of the population acknowledges that global warming is real but the number of people actively addressing the problem has dropped. I propose that all of us become involved in combating this worldwide problem, no matter how small or how local our effort. We need to do as much as we can NOW! There are numerous websites with comprehensive articles and "to do" lists which address actions that can be taken: individually, locally and nationally. I encourage all of you to review some of these and select which one or ones, you want to address. Montana Audubon, National Audubon, Sierra Club and others have great information:

policy.audubon.org; mtaudubon.org (click on Issues & Actions); sierraclub.org

A recent movement to encourage fossil fuel reduction by encouraging schools, colleges, religious organizations, etc. to divest themselves of investments in the fossil fuel industry can be followed on:

gofossilfree.org

Let's get more involved for ourselves, families friends, our nation, environment, wildlife and OUR BIRDS!

Area Christmas Bird Count Results

Hamilton

by John Ormiston

Hamilton's 26th annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) on December 15 dawned clear and cool with the promise of a great day for birding. Sixteen hardy folks (the fewest since 1998) gathered at the Teller Slack Barn to form groups to try to effectively cover over 176 square miles of bird habitat in the Hamilton Bird Count Circle. We had help from 30 feeder watchers.

The highlight of my day occurred at noon when the Storrud girls (in the 10-12 year old range) enthusiastically reported the sighting of two Brown Creepers and a Pileated Woodpecker. It made their day, and mine too. Thanks to Colleen Powell for



offering to take them out, with their dad, for the morning bird walk. I predict they'll be back next year for another go at the Christmas Bird Count.

It did turn out to be a great day for birding. We tallied 74 species to tie the highest number seen only once, in 2006. We saw over 2,000 more birds than average and established 26 year high counts for 12 species: Tundra Swan, Canada Goose, American Widgeon, Shoveler, Lesser Scaup, Ruddy Duck (one of two new species), Barrow's Goldeneye, American Kestrel, California Quail, Varied Thrush, Eurasian Collared Dove, and Great Gray Owl (the other new species). We've seen 31 species every year of the count and 25 have been seen only once.

Some of our traditions just seem like they should be maintained. We've never met anywhere but at the Slack Barn (thank you The Teller), Bill Good has always supplied his favorite chili and Oreos for lunch, and we've always had an enthusiastic army of dedicated birders to maintain the long term data base. Thanks to all who made the 26th annual Hamilton Christmas Bird Count another banner year.



Courtesy Nathan DeBoer

Rough-legged Hawk.

The Big Hole

By Kate Stone

Thanks to everyone who helped with the Big Hole Christmas Bird Count. We had 12 people out roaming the Big Hole Valley under relatively nice weather conditions- 22° F, partial sunshine, and light wind. We identified 17 species. A few large flocks of Snow Buntings boosted our total number of birds counted to 525, which tied one previous year for the most birds counted. Top species were the Snow Bunting (280), Black-billed Magpie (107), and Common Redpoll (40). Species new to the count included the Belted

Kingfisher and Pine Siskin. The three counters at the Big Hole Battlefield were able to walk right under a roosting Great Gray Owl. Staff at the Battlefield also had two reports of Snowy Owls in the area, but we did not see any on count day. You can see a full species list for the count on the Bitterroot Audubon website: www.bitterrootaudubon.org.



Courtesy Nathan DeBoer

Bald Eagle in flight.

Stevensville

By Dave Lockman

The 48th annual Stevensville Christmas Bird Count took place on December 29, 2011. 51 field observers and 20 feeder watchers combined to try to find all the birds they could in the Count Circle, which includes all the habitat within a 15 mile diameter circle centered at the Stevensville Ranger Station. Count Day was brisk, with temperatures ranging from 16 degrees at dawn to about 27 degrees in the afternoon. Skies were mostly cloudy, but the sun peeked through occasionally. Warm weather leading up to the Count created more open water than usual. Most areas had an inch or two of snow.

Counters tallied 16,744 birds representing 90 different species, which is the highest species count ever for the Stevensville CBC. The most unusual species tallied this year was a Rusty Blackbird, found by Mark Lewing along the Bitterroot River south of Florence. This was the only new species for the Count, bringing our cumulative species total over the 48 years of the Stevensville CBC to 157. Unusual wintering waterfowl included one Northern Shoveler, two Redheads and two Ruddy Ducks. Other unusual wintering species included one Virginia Rail, one Spotted Towhee, one White-throated Sparrow and three White-crowned Sparrows. We set new records for the number of Great Blue Herons, Tundra Swans,

Trumpeter Swans, Canada Geese, Red-tailed Hawks, American Kestrels, Eurasian Collared-doves, Short-eared Owls, American Dippers and House Sparrows seen on the Count. Numbers of many common birds frequently seen at feeders such as chickadees, nuthatches, House Finches, Pine Siskins and American Goldfinches were similar to average counts over the past 10 years. For the second year in a row, we found good numbers of Common Redpolls, an irregular winter visitor from northern Canada and Alaska that doesn't come this far south every year. Thanks to all those who contributed part or all of their day for making the Stevensville CBC so successful again this year!

The Stevensville CBC is part of the National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count program, which is now in its 113th year. The Christmas Bird Count is the longest-running bird monitoring program in existence, and data collected by citizen scientists across the hemisphere has been used to document changes in bird species distribution and relative abundance over time. Locally, Stevensville CBC data shows that some species that we now think of as very common such as House Finches and Mourning Doves didn't occur here during the winter until the mid 1980s. Our data also shows that wintering raptors were uncommon around Stevensville as recently as the early 1980s, a dramatic contrast with the large numbers of Bald Eagles, Red-tailed Hawks and Rough-legged Hawks that can be easily viewed today along local roads. In contrast, other species such as Evening Grosbeaks that used to be quite common here are now rarely seen during the winter. On a broader scale, analysis of CBC data has recently shown that the winter ranges of many bird species have shifted northward by several hundred miles over the last 50 years, which may be another response to the effects of climate change.

Calendar of Events

Jan 19-Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, 10AM-12PM

Jan 21-Audubon Meeting, Natural Resources/ Forest Service building, Hamilton, 7PM, Board Meeting 5PM

Feb 15-16-Raptor Workshop with Steve Hoffman, Call Leslie Nyce at 961-3808.

Feb 16- Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, 10AM-12PM

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.

Bitterroot Audubon is on Facebook!

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

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.

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.

Bird Shots



Courtesy Carol Babel

Bonaparte's Gull, Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge, November 2012.

From the Web: *Fertilizer Company Scotts Miracle-Gro Fined \$12.5 Million For Poisoning Wild Birds*
Tuesday, 2 October 2012 8:56:04 AM
Australia/Brisbane

The fertilizer company pled guilty to "illegally applying insecticides to its wild bird food products that are toxic to birds, falsifying pesticide registration documents, distributing pesticides with misleading and unapproved labels and distributing unregistered pesticides" in February 2012.

The insecticides added to Scotts wild bird food products were Actellic 5E and Storcide II, but these were prohibited by the EPA.

Putting this chemical in the food was to keep microbes from eating the food before the birds could.

<http://www.greenhousegrower.com/article/30894/scott-s-miracle-gro-company-fined-12-5-million-for-poisoning-birds>

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 January 19th 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.

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* Board Member

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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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PO Box 422250
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