

Bitterroot AUDUBON



SEPTEMBER 2014

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 29, NO. 1

The Bitter Root Land Trust and Bitterroot Birds

By Gavin Ricklefs

Land, Water, Wildlife, Farms, Ranches, Peace, Tranquility, Beauty & Birds: these are what the Bitter Root Land Trust (BRLT) means to citizens of the Bitterroot Valley. Since 1996, the Bitter Root Land Trust has partnered with local landowners to conserve the Bitterroot's water, wildlife habitat, and working farms and ranches for future generations. We are truly fortunate to have this amazing and energetic organization. At the September 15th meeting of Bitterroot Audubon, BRLT Executive Director, Gavin Ricklefs, will discuss the Land Trust's recent conservation work from Stevensville to Sula with an emphasis on the Land Trust's work connecting landowners, the community and supporters to the importance of the Valley's natural resources. He will also discuss the success of Ravalli County's Open Lands Bond Program, approved by county voters in 2006, and how it has helped local families conserve their unique properties for future generations. The connection between what the Land Trust does and its benefits to birds and bird habitat are obvious.



Courtesy Gavin Ricklefs
Severson's Flying-E Ranch in the Burnt Fork.

Following Gavin's presentation, there will be an opportunity for questions & answers and open discussion on how the Bitter Root Land Trust can

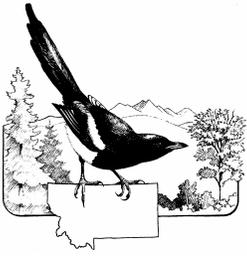
continue to partner with Bitterroot Audubon to help conserve these important areas.

Gavin has been with the Bitter Root Land Trust, in various capacities, since 2006 – initially, as a member of the Board, eventually becoming Executive Director in 2008. He received his Bachelor of Arts from Whitman College and earned his J.D. at the University of Montana School of Law. Prior to beginning his conservation career at BRLT, Gavin practiced transactional law in Hamilton, MT, focusing on real estate, water law, and estate planning. A passion for cooperative, landowner-driven approaches to conservation, a fascination with the details of complex land transactions, and above all else a love for the Bitterroot Valley have been the forces driving Gavin's work at the Bitter Root Land Trust. Gavin and his wife, Stacy, are the proud parents of three Montana natives: Andrew, Tatum, and Cate.



Courtesy Gavin Ricklefs
Skalkaho Confluence easement south of Hamilton.

Please join Bitterroot Audubon Monday, September 15th, 7:00 P.M., at the Forest Service Building, 1801 N. First St. (north end of Hamilton, west side of Hwy 93) Enter the building from the west side. The public is invited. Contact Kay Fulton, 642-3794, for further information.



Kate Stone

Montana Audubon 2014 Citizen Scientist of the Year Award

By Amy Cilimburg

Although birdwatching is a hobby for many, it can also be an important source of information about Montana's birds. When birdwatchers carefully record and catalog data on the time, environmental conditions, and location of birds seen, as well as nesting behaviors—and then take the time to input this data into eBird or the Montana Bird Distribution system—this information is extremely helpful for Montana's scientists and resource managers.

The recording of wildlife observations by volunteers is commonly called "citizen science." Citizen Scientists have been around for a very long time, lending a helping hand to researchers around the world. They are particularly critical for our knowledge base on birds—especially in a large state like Montana.

Because of her important work to increase our understanding of our state's birds, Montana Audubon would like to present Kate Stone with our 2014 Citizen Scientist of the Year Award. Kate has been a member and major force in Bitterroot Audubon since 2008. During that time, she has contributed countless hours to multiple projects. Specific citizen scientist projects she has worked on include:

- **Locating swift nests in the Bitterroot Valley.** This project is a challenge particularly for the rare Black Swift, which nests behind waterfalls in the Bitterroot National Forest—and can only be monitored at dusk and dawn. Vaux's Swifts are a little easier to monitor—they can be found along the Bitterroot River, as well as in the chimney of the Fire Hall in downtown Hamilton.
- **One particularly successful project involves monitoring Bald Eagle nests in the Bitterroot Valley and Missoula area.** Kate offered to set up this Citizen Science project when government agencies could not continue this work. Because Kate is incredibly talented at getting other citizens to participate in local monitoring projects, she publicized this Bald Eagle nest monitoring project, recruited over

100 volunteers, and now manages the monitoring of 30 nests.

- **Since Kate had so many volunteers interested in surveying Bald Eagles, she set up an Osprey monitoring project, called the "Osprey Challenge."** The goal of this project in 2013 was to map 100 osprey nests in the Bitterroot Valley and western Montana. With that goal met, in 2014, the project hopes to map 100 more Osprey nests.
- **When Kate found out that little is known about overwintering raptors in Montana, she organized a winter raptor survey.** During the winter of 2012-2013, 13 volunteers surveyed approximately 200 miles of roads in the valley, recording over 1,200 raptors.
- **Kate started, and in the past 4 years continues to lead, a Big Hole-area (citizen science) Christmas Bird Count.**
- **Kate is currently developing a program to map sagebrush in the Bitterroot Valley and assess the bird population associated with that ecosystem.**
- **And for each Citizen Science project Kate coordinates, there is data entry. Kate makes sure that all observations are collected and entered into databases:** specifically eBird or the Montana Natural Heritage Program's database—so the information can assist researchers, land managers, citizens, nonprofit organizations, and more.
- **And Kate strongly believes that bird monitoring needs to contribute to conservation. Consequently, she has stepped forward to help the Bitterroot Audubon Board support conservation of wildlife habitat, working farms and ranches, and water quality in the remaining open spaces of Ravalli County.**
- And on and on...

One of Kate's peers wrote the following about her: **"She has a knack for mobilizing the masses. She is an astute observer, very fact oriented. She has the ability to take on large scale, complex projects and can convey complicated scientific information to others. She makes science fun!"**

We are also pleased to report that Kate's bird monitoring avocation has translated into professional wildlife monitoring on the MPG ranch in the lower Bitterroot Valley.

Because of her significant accomplishments, Montana Audubon—and Bitterroot Audubon—are honored and pleased to recognize Kate with this award. Her interest in and commitment to increase our understanding and knowledge of Montana's birds and their habitats is inspirational. Thank you very much, Kate, for all your good work.



CONGRATULATIONS, KATE!

News and Notes

Bitterroot River Important Bird Area field trip MPG Ranch September 22, 8-11

In 2011, Bitterroot Audubon helped construct four large ungulate exclosures on the MPG Ranch in Florence. The purpose of this project was to protect riparian vegetation from browsing, thus improving habitat for birds and other wildlife within the Bitterroot River Important Bird Area (IBA). How are the exclosures doing three years later? Participants will check out the status of vegetation within and outside of the exclosures. They will also get to see some of the bird species that make use of the Bitterroot River IBA during fall migration, with a visit to a songbird banding station staffed by UM's Avian Science Center.

This trip will involve hiking about 2 miles over uneven, but generally flat, terrain. Participants will be on their feet for most of the morning. To register for this trip, please contact Kate Stone (kroestone@hotmail.com, 381-1115) by September 19th.



Courtesy Kate Stone

Bitterroot Audubon board member Becky Peters releases a Yellow Warbler during a previous fall field trip to the MPG Ranch.



Courtesy Kate Stone

Aspens and shrubs protected by an exclosure (right) show a clear height advantage to those that are not protected (left).

News from the IBA Committee

By Sherry Ritter

It took a lot of work, but the BAS Important Bird Areas Committee sent out a mailing to more than 200 landowners who own land within the Bitterroot River Important Bird Area (IBA). In the mailing, we offered landowners within the IBA a chance to apply for a small grant to improve habitat for birds on their property, provided results of some of the past projects, gave results of a recent Lewis's Woodpecker research study, and offered Lewis's Woodpecker nest boxes for landowners to put up. We also sent them two publications, our habitat guidelines called *Our Birds Call This Home*, and a new checklist of the birds of the Bitterroot River IBA. You can find these documents on our website and we'll have them at meetings this fall.

Did you know that there is another IBA in the valley? A few years after the Blodgett Fire, Montana Audubon showed the importance of early post-fire habitat by recognizing the Blodgett Fire IBA. This summer, BAS volunteers did surveys in Blodgett Canyon, Blodgett Overlook Trail, Cow Creek, and Mill Creek to assess the IBA's continued value to birds. We will pass on our recommendations to Montana Audubon for their decision about whether to maintain this area as an IBA. The best place to visit the IBA is the Blodgett Overlook Trail, which starts at the Canyon Creek trailhead. A hundred yards up the trail is an informative sign about the value of the area to birds.

Lewis's Woodpecker Nest Boxes Available

Dan Casey from the American Bird Conservancy has many free Lewis's Woodpecker nest boxes available. We will have some to give away at our September meeting. If you'd like one and cannot make the meeting, please contact Kate at 381-1115.



Courtesy Kate Stone

Lewis's Woodpecker nest boxes.

Summer Field Trips Highlights

By Sherry Ritter

Bitterroot Audubon held seven field trips this summer led by Kate Stone, Jill Davies, Jim Story, and me. The most popular trip was a preliminary attempt organized by Kate and Debbie Leick to document species associated with the sagebrush throughout the valley. Of particular interest were species like the Brewer's and Clay-colored Sparrows, both of which were found, and Sage Thrasher, which wasn't found. On two trips, we visited private properties—the MPG Ranch near Florence and Woodside Farm just south of Woodside Crossing. Two (mostly) annual trips took us over Lost Trail Pass, one along the Gibbons Pass Road thanks to Jim Story and the other to the Big Hole that I

led on Memorial Day. On the Big Hole trip, we got the closest look and listen yet to a Sage Thrasher. We almost didn't even need binoculars, he was so close.

We're planning a few field trips this fall. If you aren't on our e-mailing list to learn about upcoming field trips, please contact me at s287ritter@mac.com.

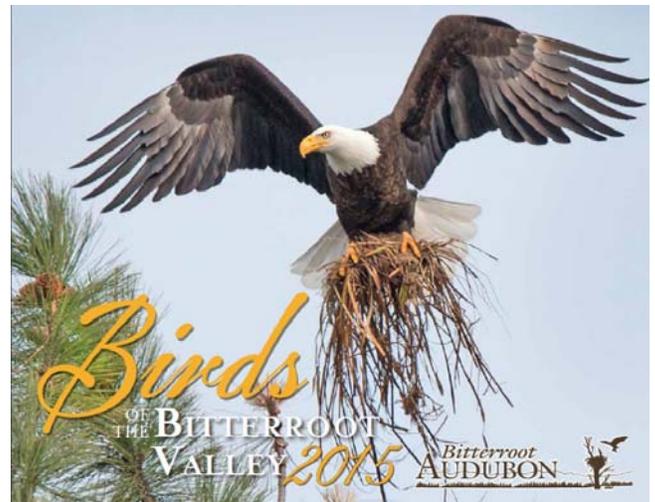


Courtesy Kate Stone

Sagebrush surveys in the Bitterroot.

Bitterroot Audubon 2015 Calendar

The 2015 BAS Calendar is now available! Only a limited quantity of calendars were printed so be sure to buy your copy before they are gone! The cost of a calendar is \$15 and proceeds from calendar sales support our Scholarship and Education Funds. You can purchase your copy from a BAS board member or on our website: www.bitterrootaudubon.org



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

Walk for Wildlife



Sunday, September 28 | 2:00 p.m.

Start at Teller Wildlife Refuge Slack Barn,
1180 Chaffin Lane, Corvallis

2 mile or 5K Family Fun Walk or Run A Benefit for Wildlife

4 informative stops on Teller's main property
to learn about wildlife, habitat and Teller programs

YOUTH

- **FREE** — 10 & under
- **\$10** — Ages 11-17

ADULT

- **\$20** — Pre-registration,
Sept. 2-20
- **\$25** — After Sept. 20 &
at the door

**First 30 paid
registrants receive
a free Teller
water bottle!**

Call 406-961-3507 or email Karin@tellerwildlife.org to register

fall 2014, we'll be sending the newsletter electronically only, and it is always available at www.bitterrootaudubon.org. 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 to begin receiving your newsletter electronically

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.

Calendar of Events

Sept 15-Audubon Meeting, Forest Service/DNRC Building, Hamilton, MT 7PM, Board Mtg. 5PM.

Sept 20-Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT 10AM-12PM

Sept 22-Field trip constructing exclosures on MPG Ranch. Register with Kate Stone at kroestone@hotmail.com or 381-1115 by September 19th.

Sept 28-Teller Walk for Wildlife, 2PM, Teller Wildlife Refuge, Corvallis, MT

Oct 20-Audubon Meeting, TBD



Several Bitterroot Audubon volunteers staffed an information booth at The Teller's Youth Expo 2014.

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 September 20th 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.

Bitterroot Audubon Education Opportunity ATTENTION! ATTENTION! ATTENTION! We Urgently Need Your Help

Our Coordinator of Education Services had to step down at the beginning of the summer and we need one or two people to help with this very important part of Bitterroot Audubon. There are several aspects to this position but it can be divided into smaller parts. One of the most important is the Audubon Adventures Program which involves coordination with the local schools.

Please, consider helping us and the children of Ravalli County. Call Kay Fulton at 642-3794 or email her at kayinmt@cybernet1.com

Bird Shots



*Courtesy Sherry Ritter
Lewis's Woodpecker in the Bitterroot IBA..*

BITTERROOT AUDUBON
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Officers

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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	Kate Stone*	381-1115
Field Trips	Sherry Ritter	777-7409
Newsltr Eds &	Sara Ashline* baseditors@gmail.com	
Distribution	Karen Griffing*	961-0181
Hospitality	Rosan Stover	
Membership	Susie Duff*	961-5455
Publicity	Dave Lockman	777-2929
Rep. to MT		
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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

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 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
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Palm Coast FL 32142-2250