

# Bitterroot AUDUBON



FEBRUARY 2015

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 29, NO. 6

## A Taste of the Bitterroots

By Michael Hoyt

At over 1.3 million acres, the Selway-Bitterroot is the third largest Wilderness in the Lower 48. California's Death Valley and Idaho's Frank Church-River of No Return are the only larger Wilderness areas. This vast wild land is one of the roughest mountainous areas in the developed world—a country filled with barren peaks rising high above the dense patches of forest below. The Bitterroots are extremely popular to those seeking outdoor recreation. From traditional and top-rope climbs in Kootenai Canyon, bouldering near Lost Horse, multi-pitch big wall aid climbs in Blodgett and Mill Creek Canyons, mountaineering and hiking to the high peaks, or simply viewing the abundant and diverse flora and fauna, the "Root" provides unlimited opportunities.



*Courtesy Michael Hoyt*

*Clematis growing in the Bitterroot Mountains.*

Michael Hoyt is one of those “seekers” and he has agreed to come down from the peaks to share his love for these mountains with Bitterroot Audubon at the February meeting, Monday, February 16<sup>th</sup>. His presentation will include photographs he has taken during his many outings, descriptions of some of his experiences and insights into protecting these treasures. **“Given the importance that wilderness and wild things play in our survival on this planet, it is far past time for us to stop attempting to**

**reshape nature for the sole purpose of satisfying human demands. It is time to begin learning how to moderate our way of living to fit smoothly into the biophysical limits that nature and the earth provide.” -Michael Hoyt**



*Courtesy Michael Hoyt*

A life-long outdoorsman, he lives in Corvallis, Montana, with a panoramic view of the Bitterroot Mountain Range. For more than 25 years, he has hiked and climbed in the Rocky Mountains and, for the last 10 years, concentrated his efforts in Montana's Bitterroot Mountains. He has authored guidebooks for hiking and climbing in these mountains. Many of his beautiful pictures are included in his books.

**Come join Bitterroot Audubon, Monday, February 16<sup>th</sup> 7:00 P.M. at the Forest Service/Natural Resources Building, 1801 North 1<sup>st</sup> (north end of Hamilton, west side of HWY 93). Enter on the west side of the building. THE PUBLIC IS INVITED. Contact Kay Fulton for more information (642-3794).**

## eBird to the Rescue!!

By Kate Stone

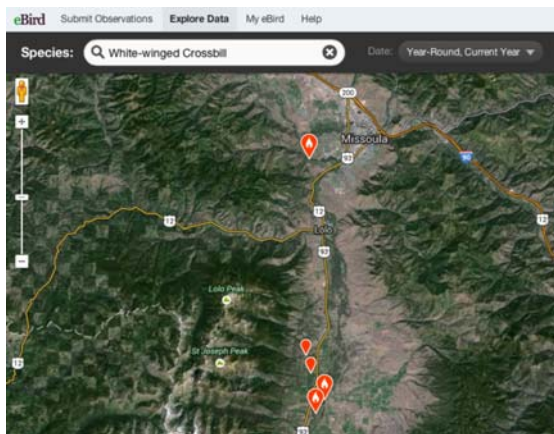
Are you curious about what other people are seeing in the area? Several local websites have installed a “widget” that connects you directly to observations reported to eBird. Visit these websites for recent bird observations:

[Bitterroot Audubon](#)- observations in Ravalli County

[Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge](#): observations at the Refuge

[Five Valleys Audubon](#)- observations in the Missoula area

Keep in mind you can always go to the [eBird](#) website directly if you are interested in looking up sightings of a particular species in a particular time and place. Need a White-winged Crossbill on your lifelist? We’ve had several observations of them in the Stevensville area in January. How about Snowy Owls? Though common elsewhere, the only reports in Montana this year are from the eastern part of the state.



*eBird White-winged Crossbill observations in January 2015.*

Remember, eBird observations are only as good as the people reporting. So please consider entering your bird observations and become part of the largest Citizen Science Project ever!

## Calendar of Events

**Feb 12**-Hamilton WWA Backcountry Film Festival

**Feb 13--16**-Great Backyard Bird Count

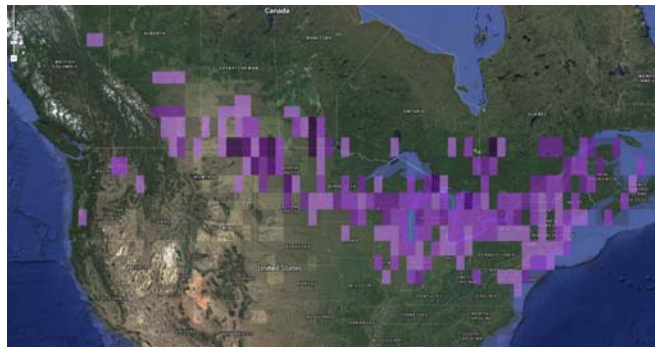
**Feb 16**-MPG Ranch GBBC Field Trip

**Feb 16**- Audubon Meeting, Forest Service/DNRC Building, Hamilton, MT 7PM, Board Mtg. 5PM.

**Feb 21**-Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT 10AM-12PM.

**Apr 11**-Welcome Back Waterfowl, Lee Metcalf NWR

**Jun 5-7**-Helena, MT, Wings Across the Big Sky

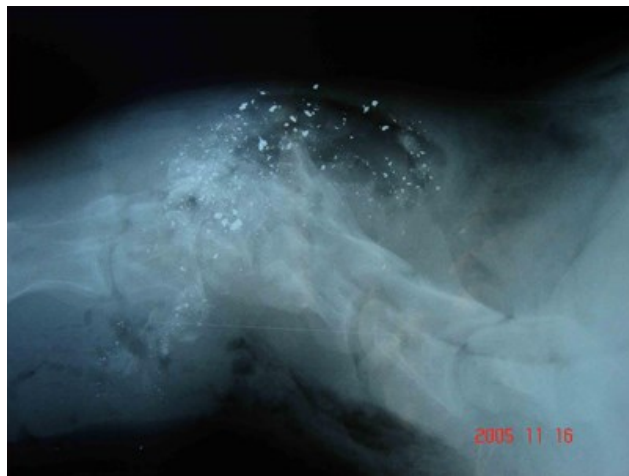


*eBird Snowy Owl observations in January 2015.*

## Montana Unleaded

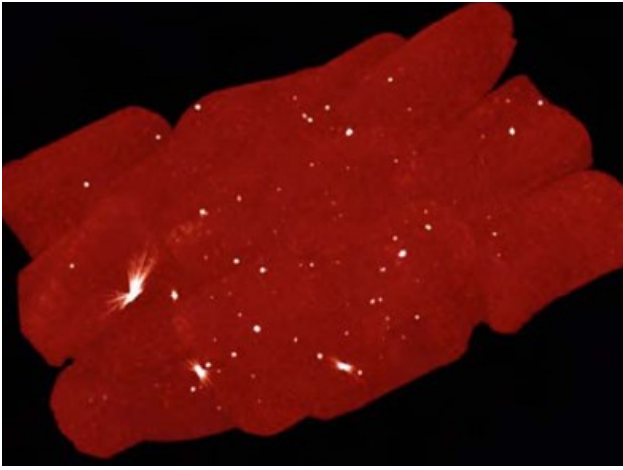
By Kate Stone

Are you a big game hunter in Montana? Do you use lead ammunition when hunting? Lead ammunition will fragment on impact and loses between 20-40% of its mass when it hits an object. As many as 200 fragments can disperse throughout a carcass, and are often too small to see. The fragments may permeate the meat you bring home, and often riddle gut piles and carcasses left in the field.



*Courtesy Craighead Beringia South  
Deer neck shot with lead ammunition.*

Why are lead fragments a problem? Mammalian and avian scavengers feeding on carcasses may inadvertently ingest the lead fragments. Overwintering eagles in many parts of Montana test positive for elevated lead levels, and several die each year from acute lead poisoning. Raptor View Research Institute tested 32 Golden and 11 Bald Eagles from the Bitterroot Valley during the winter, from 2011 to present. The majority (86%) had elevated blood-lead concentrations. Evidence from multiple studies points to lead fragments as the culprit behind elevated lead levels in eagles and other avian scavengers.



*Photos courtesy Craighead Beringia South  
Packaged venison with lead fragments.*



*Courtesy Jeremy Roberts/Conservation Media  
X-ray images of lead (top) and non-lead (bottom) ammunition  
shot into a ballistics gel.*

What can we do about this issue? Luckily, this problem has a relatively easy solution: hunters can switch to non-lead ammunition, namely copper.

Many hunters don't realize the impacts that lead ammunition may have. Or they may be aware of the issues, but are deterred by the price of copper ammunition. For these reasons, I am interested in forming a working group with two goals:

- To provide the public with information on the impacts of lead ammunition and the benefits of using copper ammunition.
- To develop a voluntary incentive program that works to remove barriers to the use of non-lead ammunition.

This project will only be effective if it encompasses a broad range of values and expertise, including input from biologists, wildlife conservation advocates, and particularly sportsman's groups. I invite anyone interested in this issue to participate in the Non-lead Working Group.

Will such a program work? Fortunately, such non-regulatory programs have been implemented in other areas, with success both in the voluntary switch to non-lead ammunition, and a resulting decrease in lead levels in avian species. For example, multiple agencies in the Jackson Hole area (Wyoming Game

and Fish, Bridger-Teton National Forest, National Elk Refuge) encouraged a voluntary switch to non-lead ammunition, and in some instances, provided hunters with free or discounted copper ammunition.



*Photo courtesy Brooke Tanner, Wild Skies Raptor Center*

*This adult Bald Eagle was found in March 2014 outside of Hamilton, MT, with a blood lead level of > 65µg/dl (> 20 µg/dl is considered clinical lead poisoning). He weighed less than 6 lbs, had pale mucous membranes, head and wing droop, muscle tremors, and anorexia. He died within 2 days of admission. Even though chelation therapy was started, it is a lengthy treatment process that can take several weeks.*

Decreased use of lead ammunition corresponded with a decrease in blood-lead levels in eagles during the 2009 and 2010 hunting seasons, according to the Craighead Beringia South research institute. In Arizona, Arizona Game and Fish teamed up with the Arizona Deer Association, Arizona Antelope Foundation, Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society, and Arizona Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation to promote the voluntary switch to non-lead ammunition, largely out of concern for California Condors. These examples show that multiple-stakeholder partnerships can work, and that voluntary efforts can make a big impact on the health of our wildlife.

Are you interested in participating in a Non-lead Working Group? If so, please contact Kate Stone (381-1115).

## **MPG Ranch Great Backyard Bird Count Field Trip, Monday, February 16<sup>th</sup>, 8am-2pm**

*By Kate Stone*

Once you've finished counting the birds in your backyard, please consider helping the MPG Ranch staff count the birds in their 10,000-acre yard! The MPG Ranch will host a field day to count as many birds and species as possible, as part of National Audubon's Great Backyard Bird Count.

Participants will split into small groups led by MPG Ranch staff. They will spend the morning hiking through a wide variety of habitats, including floodplain forest, open agricultural fields, shrubby draws, and upland conifer forest. At 1 pm, we will gather at one of the ranch houses for a brown bag lunch and to share observations.

Species we may see include: Snow Bunting, American Tree Sparrow, Lapland Longspur, Horned Lark, Pine Grosbeak, Rough-legged Hawk, Northern Harrier, Golden Eagle, Pygmy Nuthatch, and many more!

Please note: All of our surveying will be on foot, and participants need to possess the ability to hike for several hours in winter conditions.

Participants must REGISTER for this field trip by February 13<sup>th</sup> by contacting Kate Stone (381-1115, [kstone@mpgranch.com](mailto:kstone@mpgranch.com)). Additional information and directions will be sent to registered participants.

## **Hamilton Winter Wildlands Alliance (WWA) Backcountry Film Festival, February 12, 2015**

The Winter Wildlands Alliance's Backcountry Film Festival celebrates its 10th Anniversary with nine unique films to inspire winter adventurers to seek the snow less traveled.

The Backcountry Film Festival highlights the beauty, diversity and fun of the winter backcountry experience. Submissions come from world renowned filmmakers who travel every corner of the globe to submit their best backcountry work, and from grassroots filmmakers who take a video camera out on their weekend excursions and submit their best film short. The top films are then juried and assembled into a night of fun for all – whether you like to ski, snowboard, snowshoe, or even just stay indoors and drink hot cocoa by the fire, there is something for everyone. These films are as diverse as

the backcountry experience and will put a smile on the face of even the most winter-averse viewer.

This year's films include:

**Out on a Limb** Best of Festival award winner, from T-bar Films – tells the story of Vasu, whose love for skiing and the backcountry overcomes all obstacles.

**Powder Pilgrimage** Best of the Backcountry award winner, from Joey Howell – chronicles the ventures of two friends ski-bumming it to Valdez, Alaska, a trip we should all take once.

**Backcountry Baker** Best Grassroots Film award winner, from Jeremy Lurgio – follows Labrador retriever “Baker” and his owner as they pursue their love of mountains through backcountry skiing in Montana's Bitterroot Mountains.

**From the Road** From Fischer Creative – portrays the balance between liberation and limitation as a group of athletes come together to help a skiing comrade gain reconciliation with the Alaska peak where a 2009 accident ended his professional guiding career.

**Afterglow** From Sweetgrass Productions – is a revolutionary and visually spectacular film that brings a whole new light to skiing in the dark.

**95 to Infinity** From Doglotion Media – follows brothers Andy and Mike Traslin as they keep the torch lit for 95 months of winter turns.

**IRS Traverse** From Luc Mehl – a fun and quirky adventure through the Alaska Wilderness.

**Sundog** From SturgeFilms – captures the dog days of skiing in Patagonia.

**Higher** From Teton Gravity Research – continues the journey of athlete Jeremy Jones as he reaches new heights.

Date: Thursday, February 12, 2015

Location: Hamilton City Hall/Bedford Building, 223 South 2<sup>nd</sup>, Hamilton, MT

Price: \$10 at the door

Doors open at 6:00pm, Showtime: 7:00pm

### **Chapter Members Renewal Deadline**

If you are a BAS chapter member, your membership fee (\$15) was due by January 31, 2015. Please send payment to Bitterroot Audubon Society, PO Box 326, Hamilton, MT 59840 to continue supporting BAS.

# wings across the big sky

June 5-7, 2015

Helena, Montana

## Field Trips

It's not too early to begin planning your summer activities. During winter, when birds are sparse, it's easy to dream of long summer days and abundant birds. Where you will find plenty is in the beautiful Helena Valley and surrounding areas. Come join us for **Montana Audubon's Annual Bird Festival, this year co-hosted by Last Chance Audubon Society, June 5 - 7 at the Colonial Inn in Helena.**

*As for field trips we have close to 20 planned for each day!*— guided by knowledgeable birders and naturalists familiar with the species and their habitats in the Helena area. Here is just a brief sampling of some of those trips to contemplate as you anticipate the upcoming Bird Festival:

### Canyon Ferry WMA

This trip will explore mostly riparian and pond-type habitats adjacent to the Missouri River, and impoundments along Canyon Ferry Wildlife Management Area. It includes grassland, shrubs, agriculture and cottonwood bottomlands. Ponds include large breeding colonies of White Pelicans and several gull species. Caspian Terns may also be seen in one area, and Sandhill Cranes are common throughout. Many waterfowl species can be observed, along with grassland sparrows, swallows, orioles, and many marsh birds, and other common riparian and water-associated species.

### Little Prickly Pear Creek

This trip will follow Little Prickly Pear Creek north of Helena from the Canyon Creek store downstream most of the way to the Sieben exit on I-15. The riparian area is always within view, and willows dominate at the start of the trip, giving way to cottonwoods at the end. The trip starts in irrigated bottomlands where Bobolinks, Wilson's Snipes,

Sandhill Cranes and Wilson's Phalaropes may be expected. Moving into the canyon, which has shrubby and coniferous uplands, expect to see Willow and Dusky Flycatchers, Spotted Towhees, Lazuli Bunting, Gray Catbirds, Lark Sparrows, Bullock's Orioles and Rock Wrens. Species which have been seen here include Veery, Green-tailed Towhee, Yellow-breasted Chat, Pileated and Lewis's woodpeckers. The lower end of the trip is a wonderful aspen grove, and Red-tailed Hawks, Northern Flickers, Red-naped Sapsuckers, Least Flycatchers and House Wrens may be seen here.

### Little Blackfoot and Minnehaha Creeks

This trip will begin along the Little Blackfoot River near Elliston, proceed up Telegraph Creek, over the Continental Divide and down into Minnehaha Creek. Extensive willow bottoms mark the start of the trip giving way to irrigated pastures and then a trip through aspens and various life zones of coniferous forests when moving over the Divide. Expect to see Willow, Dusky and Hammond's Flycatchers; Northern Waterthrush; Song, Lincoln's, White-crowned, and Chipping sparrows; Wilson's, Orange-crowned and MacGillivray's warblers are possible, as is the Cassin's Vireo and Steller's Jay. On top, look for Clark's Nutcrackers, Dark-eyed Juncos, and Mountain Bluebirds. With luck, we will see expansive fields of beargrass in full bloom.

**Keep watch in early March:** Festival Brochures with all field trip information and schedules will be in the mail and the online system for registration will be active.

For more information please contact Montana Audubon Bird Festival Coordinator, Cathie Erickson, [cerickson@mtaudubon.org](mailto:cerickson@mtaudubon.org), or call (406) 443-3949.

# News and Notes

## **The Great Backyard Bird Count, February 13-16, 2015: It's as easy as 1, 2, 3!**

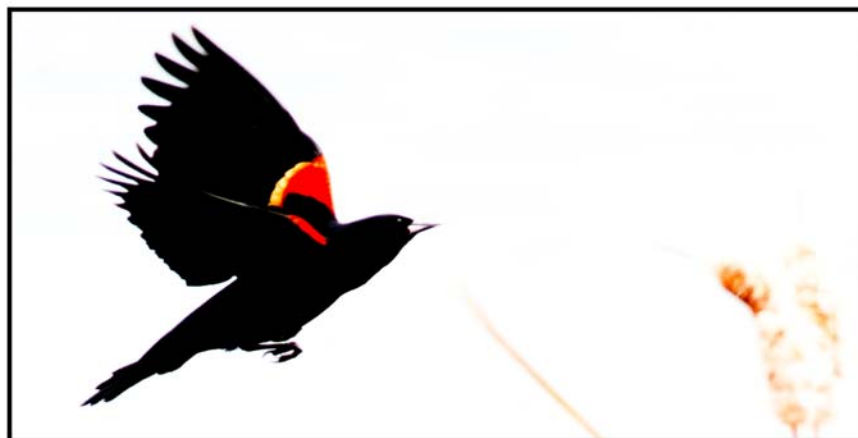
1. Register for the count **or use your existing login name and password**. If you have never participated in the Great Backyard Bird Count or any other Cornell Lab citizen-science project, you'll need to create a new account. If you already created an account for last year's GBBC, or if you're already registered with eBird or another Cornell Lab citizen-science project, you can use your existing login information.
2. **Count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the GBBC.** You can count for longer than that if you wish! Count birds in as many places and on as many days as you like—one day, two days, or all four days. Submit a separate checklist for each new day, for each new location, or for the same location if you counted at a different time of day. Estimate the number of individuals of each species you saw during your count period.
3. **Enter your results on the GBBC website by clicking "Submit Observations" on the home page.** Or download the free GBBC BirdLog app to enter data on a mobile device. If you already participate in the eBird citizen-science project, please use eBird to submit your sightings during the GBBC. Your checklists will count toward the GBBC.

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

*By Sara Ashline and Karen Griffing, BAS Editors*

Beginning Fall 2013, Bitterroot Audubon began

## **Bird Shots**



*Red-winged Blackbird, Lee Metcalf NWR, 2014.*

delivering monthly newsletter electronically. If you haven't already done so, please send us your email address to receive your newsletter via email. Starting fall 2014, we'll be sending the newsletter electronically only, and it is always available at [www.bitterrootaudubon.org](http://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](mailto: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](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 February 21st 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.

*Courtesy Sara Ashline*

BITTERROOT AUDUBON  
PO BOX 326  
HAMILTON MT 59840-0326

### 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	Kate Stone*	381-1115
Field Trips	Sherry Ritter	777-7409
Education	Rachel Ingram* <a href="mailto:zephyrmer@gmail.com">zephyrmer@gmail.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