

# Bitterroot AUDUBON



SEPTEMBER 2015

NEWSLETTER

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## ON BECOMING A BIRD PHOTOGRAPHER

By Mel Holloway

Be prepared for a most enlightening and entertaining program at Bitterroot Audubon's kickoff meeting of the "Year" (9/15 – 5/16). Mel Holloway, one of our fantastic BAS Calendar Photographers, will share many of his wonderful pictures of birds while he describes his progression as a bird photographer over a few years and the progression in equipment that enabled it. Growing up, he always heard, "it's a poor workman that blames his tools." Well, the truth is a crappy saw is a crappy saw. It helps to have competent gear.

Mel will also share what he has learned about birds, photography, equipment, & technology and how he utilizes all of this to create his beautiful images of birds. For a taste of his work, get your 2015 BAS Calendar and look at the April picture. It is Mel's Yellow-headed Blackbird – Beautiful! His Vesper Sparrow is one of the smaller pictures in June and on the "Waterfowl Challenge" page look at #2, Mel's Barrow's Goldeneye. Bring your cameras and smart phones so you can ask questions and/or try out some of his ideas.



Courtesy Mel Holloway



Courtesy Mel Holloway

*Lewis's Woodpecker.*

Mel states that he "escaped Virginia" after high school and landed at UM and then MSU. He graduated in Forest Management after a hitch in the army. Choices and circumstances have taken him to the Sierras in California, to Washington Irving (Ichabod Crane) country in New York, and then back to Virginia. After working as a geodesist and a computer programmer for Department of Defense, he retired to Montana where he can now devote more time and resources to photography.

**Come join Bitterroot Audubon, Monday, September 21<sup>st</sup>, 7:00 P.M. at the Lee Metcalf Wildlife Refuge Visitors' Center. Located on Wildfowl Lane, just north of Stevensville. The Public is invited. Contact Kay Fulton at 642-3794 for more information. Come early so you can see the activity on the ponds.**



MONTANA  
AUDUBON



Fall is around the corner and we have something new for you! We are excited to announce September as the beginning of a six week focused effort to highlight Montana bird species threatened by climate change and to deliver to you actions every individual can take to be an advocate and important player in keeping our favorite birds around far into the future.

Join us on Facebook, sign up for our eNews, and follow us at [mtaudubon.org](http://mtaudubon.org) to see each awesome species, take action, and be a part of Montana Audubon's mission to keep Montana's native birds and wildlife here and healthy!



## Letter from the President

By Becky Peters, BAS President

I became committed to Bitterroot Audubon starting with attending the meetings, then tentatively going on brain-expanding field trips (“Oh my gosh, I can ID a new bird!! I hope I can remember it”), then going whole hog to promote all that BAS does. When I was first asked to join the Bitterroot Audubon Board I was hesitant because I wondered what on earth I could contribute, what could I add that would be of help? Then when I attended the first Board meeting and each member went around and introduced themselves and told their backgrounds, I remember leaning over to Kate Stone and saying “What on earth am I doing here?” I am no scientist, I never worked for the Forest Service or a wildlife organization, etc. I was surrounded by these unbelievable experts with impressive resumes. My background is in teaching elementary school and being an elementary school counselor. Now I’m on a board whose goals are to protect birds and their habitats!! Gulp! My aim then was to be of the most help to Bitterroot Audubon, its Board and its members however I could, even though I didn’t know how to pronounce *Seiurus noveboracensis*!

I came to the Board with various board experiences: Spokane YWCA, Hanford Education Action League, Washington State Preschool Parent Cooperatives, Washington State Alternative Learning Association and various Spokane School District committees. I’m currently on the Ravalli County Democrats Ex. Board and I have the immense pleasure of being the BAS representative to the Montana Audubon Board.

When attending board meetings I saw that the BAS Board members’ purpose was to help the Bitterroot Valley birds in every way they could: the Important Bird Area, the handouts for the public, the Bitterroot Valley Bird Checklist, donations to important endeavors, field trips, educational presentations, and the Byron Weber scholarship fund. So I thought maybe one way I could help would be by increasing the BAS coffers!! And with the help of an unbelievable committee and generous, talented local photographers we started the Bitterroot Audubon Calendars! Thank you everyone who helped us out!

Now, bless their trusting hearts, the BAS Board voted me in as president when I wasn’t at the May meeting!! So if you are on a board, beware of missing



any board meetings!! I will try to be as competent a President as I can be for Bitterroot Audubon. I am proud to follow a long list of amazing presidents through BAS’s 30 years: John Ormiston, Jim Story, Mike Daniels, Clif Barry, Dave Lockman, Sherry Ritter, Fred Weisbecker, Peter Allen, and Kay Fulton along with their committed Board members during their tenures. There is much to do to keep our avian friends happy and healthy and to keep the public informed and engaged. I am becoming a Bird Nerd, I love it and I’m having fun! And I hope you feel the same way. Call me anytime, 369-5210.

Becky Peters

## Biomimicry Founder Janine Benyus To Make Local Presentation

By Russ Lawrence, For the Bitterroot Star

Influential author and lecturer Janine Benyus will make a rare appearance before a Bitterroot Valley audience on Friday, Sep. 11, bringing home her message about solving human problems by emulating natural processes.

Benyus is the author of the 1997 title, “Biomimicry: Innovation Inspired by Nature,” a groundbreaking work that created a new field of study. In it, she describes how photosynthesis, for example, produces energy from sunlight, while giving off oxygen as a byproduct. What other processes can be adapted for beneficial use, while mitigating or even reversing our ecological impact?

Her presentation, at 7 p.m. in Hamilton’s Community Room at City Hall, 223 S. Second St., is sponsored by Sustainable Living Systems, Bitterroot Audubon, the Center for Spiritual Living, and Bitterrooters for Planning. Admission is free, but donations to the sponsoring organizations are welcome.

Biomimicry 3.8 is the for-profit consulting business that Benyus created in 1998. The number refers to the collective wisdom generated by 3.8 billion years’ worth of life on earth that waits to be tapped.

It operates alongside the Biomimicry Institute, which she co-founded in 2006, to educate and “to catalyze open-source innovation around biomimicry.”

Her ultimate goal is “to organize the world’s biological information into a form that is really easy for people to access,” she said, for designers to have useful biological wisdom available to them “at the moment of creation.

“I want to make biomimicry more usable every day,

to make it actionable,” she said.

Another goal is to tease out the deep patterns that are repeated in nature, that all organisms have in common. All life does chemistry in water, she pointed out, using a safe subset of elements, rather than using toxic solvents and high-temperature or high-pressure processes. “We try to identify those patterns, and have people adopt them not just to invent one thing, but to invent a ‘code of conduct’ for whatever they do.”

She is gearing her Hamilton presentation to an audience that may be unfamiliar with some of these concepts, and to equip listeners to go out and “do” biomimicry on their own.

“I want them to walk away thinking it’s not something happening in science labs, it’s a way of seeing things, and solving problems,” she said. The point is to learn from your place. It’s a new way of interacting with your landscape, she explains, as a teacher, not just scenery.

“A sustainable world already exists,” she continued. “The thing that’s cool about this talk is that we live in a ‘reference habitat,’ a model that works. The answers are in places like this,” she said, referring to the intact ecosystem bordering the Bitterroot valley. Such places provide what she calls “ecosystem services,” such as water and air purification, carbon storage, and the nurturing of biodiversity.

“One of the free ecosystem services we get from nature is a well worked-out solution set,” she said, that teaches us how to live well in place.

Locally, she points out that simple actions, when carried out on a large scale, have a cumulative positive effect when it comes to soil and water conservation, for instance.

Though she makes 20-30 presentations a year to business conferences, conservation organizations, and private businesses, she’s excited about speaking locally, though a bit nervous about talking to an audience of familiar faces. She’s planning a talk that features “some of the best case studies in biomimicry,” with a focus on local issues, such as agriculture and ranching, renewable energy, “green” housing, and sustainable ways of creating products.

She’ll take questions “with an eye toward local issues and solutions,” she said, “but first I want to get people on the same page.”

She also wants to let people know that biomimicry isn’t something happening in a far-away lab. Her headquarters is in Missoula, and they bring people to Montana from all over the world to teach the principles of problem-solving through biomimicry. Through Biomimicry 3.8 she’s even exploring her first joint venture, with the goal of manufacturing a product locally. It’s a business that has created a number of good-paying jobs, she said, that is committed to staying in Montana.

“I’m looking forward to it because I love sharing,” she said, and to presenting a hopeful message “in a time when we need radical solutions.”

### **The High Cost of Pesticides: Human and Animal Diseases**

*by Judy Hoy*

This is the link to a new study with the above title, by my colleagues and I.

<http://www.esciencecentral.org/journals/the-high-cost-of-pesticides-human-and-animal-diseases-2375-446X-1000132.php?aid=56471>)

The study addresses the birth defects and health issues documented on wild vertebrates throughout Western United States, including Montana (see [www.westernwildlifecology.org](http://www.westernwildlifecology.org)) and on humans, especially newborns, throughout the United States according to CDC records. The photos in the study help visualize the health problems being documented on wildlife, including birds. The correlations shown by the graphs suggest possible cause and strongly indicate that what is causing the health issues in wildlife populations is also affecting the health of humans, especially newborn babies.

Also reported in our study, the reproductive organs of male wild rodents here in Montana are being severely compromised. Without wild rodents, the small mammal predators, raptors, owls, corvids and other wild animals that depend upon rodents for food will likely decline. Here is a link to a recently published study about what effects exposure to low levels of the herbicide Roundup had on adult male lab rats. (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.toxrep.2015.07.021>) Wild rodents would likely be similarly affected.

## "The Montana Hotlist"

This is a focused, six-week effort starting September 1st to highlighting 6 of our favorite Montana species threatened by climate change.

Each week we will bring you new information on birds you care about! We'll also provide meaningful actions you can take to help mitigate future impacts to the birds and other wildlife we all cherish. Join this effort and see what's new each week! Follow the weekly posts on Facebook, Twitter (@Montana Audubon), by signing up for our eNews, or going to our website at [mtaudubon.org](http://mtaudubon.org) Learn amazing facts about each bird species, take action, and be a part of Montana Audubon's important mission to keep Montana's native birds and other wildlife thriving into the future! For more information contact Amy Seaman, Associate Director of Conservation at [\(406\) 210-9449](tel:4062109449).



## "B" is for Birding

by Sherry Ritter

A kind of common theme, Bs, threaded through most of our seven field trips this spring and early summer-- Bass Creek, Burnt Fork, Bobolinks, Burns, Big Hole. Here are some of my favorite memories of the trips I led. #1 Bobolinks, Swainson's Thrushes, and American Redstarts. One of our field trips was an evening to see the Bobolinks along Larry Creek Loop Road and listen to Swainson's Thrushes at Bass Creek. They didn't disappoint. The Bobolinks and other meadow birds entertained us early in the evening, singing their melodic song as they flew, chased females, or perched on posts. We then went to the Larry Creek Group Camp area where at first the

thrushes skunked us, but while walking along, we came across a quite cooperative American Redstart. We all got good looks and listens, although its song isn't anywhere close to the thrilling ones of the Bobolink or Swainson's Thrush. Then we walked east through a little stream area and when we emerged on the other side, there was a Swainson's Thrush sitting on the side of a ponderosa pine...for a l-o-n-g time! How lucky is that? #2 Sage Thrasher. I led my annual Memorial Day trip to the Big Hole again. This year, the Sage Thrasher wasn't as easy to find as the previous year when it landed right in front of us and sang, but after a couple of stops, we came across one who obliged us with a lengthy sone. #3 Burned area at Blodgett Overlook. My favorite there, besides the brilliant Western Tanagers, was a pair of Townsend's Solitaires hanging around near some rocks on a slope. We did some quick smart phone research and discovered they nest near rocks. That may be why they hung out so long. Thanks to Jill Davies and Deb Goslin for leading two of the trips: Woodside Farm and Burnt Fork Road. I heard great reviews of those.

## Raptor Migration Field Trip



Courtesy Kate Stone

Join Raptor View Research Institute for a day counting raptors at the MPG Ranch in Florence on Thursday September 24th and Tuesday September 29th from 10-3. This trip will involve

a short hike over uneven terrain to access the count site. Once at the site, participants will spend most of the day stationary, counting raptors as they fly past. Participants should be prepared for challenging weather conditions, including cold temperatures and wind. Participants will need to provide their own optics, warm clothing, portable chair, and food/water for the day. Some participants will need to drive their own high-clearance, 4WD vehicle to access the count site. Participation is limited; please register for this field trip by contacting Joshua Lisbon at [jlisbon@mpgranch.com](mailto:jlisbon@mpgranch.com). Additional information will be sent to registered participants.

## News and Notes

**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*

## Bird Shots

**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 September 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

## Calendar of Events

**Sept 11-**Biomimicry Presentation by Janine Benyus, Hamilton, MT, 7 PM in Hamilton's Community Room at City Hall, 223 S. Second St.

**Sept 19-**Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT 10AM-12PM.

**Sept 21-**Audubon Meeting, Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT 7PM, Board Mtg. 5:30PM.

**Sept 24/Sept 29-**Raptor Migration Field Trip, please register for this field trip by contacting Joshua Lisbon at [jlisbon@mpgranch.com](mailto:jlisbon@mpgranch.com), 10AM-3PM.



*Great Blue Herons*

*Courtesy Mike Daniels*

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### Officers

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\* Board Member

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## 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: \_\_\_\_\_  
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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: \_\_\_\_\_  
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State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Send this application and your check to:



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