

Bitterroot AUDUBON



JANUARY 2017

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 31, NO. 6

Polar Bear Capital of the World: Cape Churchill, Manitoba

By Kay Fulton

Each year, in mid to late October, polar bears move to the Cape Churchill area on the west coast of Hudson Bay in Manitoba, Canada. The bears understand that fresh water ice flows will be coming down the large rivers and pack against Cape Churchill by the “wagnertok,” or northwest winds. This becomes the first ice shelf in lower Hudson Bay from which the bears can hunt ringed seals, their primary food source. The program for the February meeting of the Bitterroot Audubon Society, presented by Dr. Frank Tyro, will focus on the bears and other animals that inhabit the area, and the Great Bear Foundation’s (GBF) trips to bring people to learn about the animals, geology and ecology of this special place. A short segment from the upcoming film “Walking Bear Comes Home” will also be shown about the life and work of Dr. Charles Jonkel, the first scientist to systematically study polar bears. Dr. Jonkel founded the International Wildlife Film Festival in 1977 and co-founded the Great Bear Foundation in 1982.



Red Fox.

Courtesy Frank Tyro

The Great Bear Foundation offers high-quality, low-

impact experiential learning opportunities in polar bear habitat. Their summer field course, *Berries, Belugas and Bears* and winter courses on Polar Bear Ecology have been offered since 1984 by the non-profit foundation. Graduate and undergraduate credit options in Environmental Studies are available but not required through the University of Montana School of Lifelong and Extended Learning. 100% of the proceeds from the field courses directly fund bear conservation and education projects primarily in Montana, Alaska and Canada. Dr. Frank Tyro, the presenter, has traveled to Churchill 39 times over a period of 32 years and has observed the animals and changes in the climate and attitudes toward bears. He will be co-leading his 40th visit to Churchill in August of this year.



Courtesy Frank Tyro

Polar Bear.

Frank retired in 2016 from 32 years of teaching and managing a public television station at Salish Kootenai College. He is currently the President of the Board of the Great Bear Foundation and the Flathead Lake International Cinema fest.

Frank’s background includes 48 years in broadcast, producing television documentaries and teaching. He has a B.S. in Film and Television from MSU, Bozeman, an M.A. from Temple University,

Philadelphia in mass communications, and an interdisciplinary PhD from the Union Institute and University, Cincinnati in Distance Education with a focus on Internet-based coursework for American Indians. He has received numerous awards for his work in film and television.



Courtesy Frank Tyro

Beluga Whale

Bitterroot Audubon invites you to join them Monday, February 20th at 7:00 P.M. for this fascinating multimedia program, which will include Frank's outstanding photography. It promises to inform and educate. The program will be held in the Forest Service/Natural Resources Building, 1801 North 1st. (north end of Hamilton), west side of HWY 93. Enter the building on the west side. The Public is invited. Contact Kay Fulton for more information (642-3794).

Letter from the President

By Becky Peters, BAS President

Ahhh, Love is in the air!

February is the month that means romance to many of us. It is to my husband and me because we were married in February 48 years ago. Yikes, that's a long time, and it takes work as many of you know! Just a historical note about romance - this whole February being the month of love started with the Romans celebrating their god of agriculture with a fertility festival. They'd go around slapping women with bloody goat hides on the Ides of February! (I'm

not going to give any more details but you can imagine because it was a fertility festival after all!) Luckily a Pope came along later and tamed things down when he declared February 14th as Valentine's Day. Now for us Audubonites there is a link to February 14th that involves birds and love. During the middle ages the French and English felt that February 14th was the beginning of the birds' mating season, so they picked that date to symbolize courting. That's how February 14th actually got to be linked with romance. Awwww! Leave it to the birds to inspire us!

The eagles are out there now courting and bonding by working on their nests together. They surely know it takes a lot of work to keep romance alive. Anything that we hold dear takes a lot of work to keep it alive. So what do you hold dear? What things do you work at to keep them vibrant and healthy? So many things that we value: Healthy relationships with family and friends, physical and spiritual well-being, our memories, our homes, education, careers, etc. And since we are Audubonites I bet one of them is Nature! So I say we show our precious Nature some lovin' during February and all year long. And yes, it is going to take work and vigilance and serious action. Some country's citizens don't have to work and take action as much as we Americans do because they don't use up Mother Earth's resources to the degree that we Americans do. Bill and I cancelled a long awaited trip so that we could afford to put in solar panels. Some people don't buy that RV, some buy an electric car. Some people carbon offset their purchases. Others have bought LED bulbs instead of new skis. Saving our earth however we choose to do it needs to take work and sacrifice NOW! I'm sorry to be a Johnny-one-note lately but if we don't have our earth we have nothing. Her physical health is not good and mankind has exacerbated it. The science about the oceans, the ice caps, the bird migrations, and much much more means we have to make serious decisions and do our part ASAP! Have you checked out: Audubon's action site, audubon.org/onlineactions; Montana Environmental Information Center; League of Conservation Voters; Environmental Defense Fund; 350.org; Union of Concerned Scientists? I know I'm preaching to the choir, but please check them out and support them for they do the work globally that we can't do individually. I was so proud to see the number of outdoor -and non-partisan - enthusiasts who went to



Helena to fight for our public lands. It's obvious that some Montanans already use these Climate Change sites. On a more partisan note – I am truly more frightened for our earth now than a few months ago. How quickly what we value and have worked for gets challenged and bulldozed away so cunningly.

To end with an action statement – I plan to go to Helena and lobby our legislators with Montana Audubon but I refuse to drive alone. *Let's get a car full and go up to Helena for Montana Audubon Lobby Day February 23 and/or March 17th*. Let me know. rpeters@montana.com In the meantime, show **Montana Audubon some lovin' this February.**

<http://mtaudubon.org/join-our-online-network> "Friend" them on Facebook and you'll be alerted to events. You'll get conservation updates, legislative news.

Thank you for your patience everyone.

"Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect."- Chief Seattle

Winter Raptor Identification Workshop
Saturday 25 February 2017, 08:30am - 01:00pm
By Michelle Long

Winter is a great time for observing a large diversity and abundance of raptors in the Bitterroot Valley. The Bitterroot Audubon Society is offering a Winter Raptor ID Workshop. One 2-hour evening class and one half-day field trip will incorporate the natural history, identification, conservation, behavior, habitat requirements, and migration ecology of all hawks, eagles, harriers, and falcons known to occur in the Bitterroot Valley. The classroom session will take place on Friday evening, February 24, from 6:30-8:30 at the Forest Service building in Hamilton (park and enter in rear of building). The field trip will take place on Saturday, February 25th, from 8:30-1:00. The instructor will be Steve Hoffman, former Executive Director of Montana Audubon and founder of HawkWatch International. Steve's considerable expertise and passion for raptors will be enthusiastically shared with all participants! The cost for the workshop is \$20

for Bitterroot Audubon members and \$25 for non-members. **Pre-registration is required, and this workshop is limited to 25 participants.** Bird enthusiasts of all experience levels are welcome. To register, please see the Bitterroot Audubon website (<http://www.bitterrootaudubon.org>). For more information or questions, please email Micki Long at mickilong@gmail.com.

Bitterroot Valley Winter Eagle Project Update
By Kate Stone

We have now set out more than 20 carcass and camera stations on private lands throughout the valley to try and "recapture" marked Bald and Golden Eagles. This week, we had our first re-sighting of an eagle captured as part of the project. Bald Eagle "53" was captured on Sunset Bench on 1/23. We saw her again beginning on 1/29, on a camera station 6 miles to the south, just north of Victor near the Bitterroot River. She showed up on that camera for at least three days. We are posting project updates and some of our amazing photos on the Bitterroot Audubon Facebook site. You can learn more about the project by visiting the [Citizen Science](#) page of the [Bitterroot Audubon](#) website.



Courtesy Kate Stone

Bald Eagle "53" just prior to release east of Stevensville.

We have now raised over \$6000 to support this project, thanks in part to the donations and contribution of many Bitterroot Audubon members. One the most unusual and exciting groups of premiums we have are birding/naturalist trips offered by local birders. Many of these trips take place on private lands, areas that most of us don't get to visit and enjoy. We have trips to go

hummingbird banding, capture Common Poorwills, enjoy Bobolinks, explore the Bitterroot River Important Bird Area, count migrating raptors, capture Golden and Bald Eagles, or snowshoe in winter forests. Please consider donating to this project to show that private lands have a conservation value to you. You can see a list of the [premiums](#) and make a donation to the project by visiting our [Crowdrise](#) site.

We will also have project t-shirts, bird houses, and other small premium items at our next Bitterroot Audubon meeting.



Courtesy Kate Stone

We've captured as many as 9 Bald Eagles at once in one of our pictures.

52nd Stevensville Christmas Bird Count 2016 Recap

By Dave Lockman

The 52nd annual Stevensville CBC took place on December 31st, 2016. The weather on Count Day was sunny, with temperatures ranging from 5 to 34 degrees, calm winds and good visibility except when you were looking into the sun. The entire Count area was covered with at least 6" of snow. Holding the Count on New Year's Eve Day may have limited participation to some extent, but we still had 33 field observers and 29 feeder watchers helping to count the birds in the 177 square miles within the Count Circle around Stevensville.

Counters tallied 13,729 birds representing 86 species. The number of species ties our fifth best total ever, and is the highest species count for any CBC in Montana this year, while the number of individual birds was well above our 10-year average of 10,446. We didn't find any species new to the Count, so our cumulative total remains at 158 species over the 52 years of the Count. However,

one species had only been tallied once before on the Stevensville CBC: Brown-headed Cowbird (8 counted in 1999). Other fairly unusual species that we've found a limited number of times previously include Great Gray Owl, Western Screech-Owl, Lewis's Woodpecker, Harris's Sparrow and White-winged Crossbill.

We tallied new record high numbers for Red-tailed Hawk (a huge 59% increase over the previous record of 81 in 2012), Rock Pigeon (22% increase over the 2015 record of 797), Eurasian Collared-Dove (a ridiculous 103% increase over the 2015 record of 559), Western Screech-Owl (doubling the previous record of 1 in 2012 and several previous years), European Starling (42% increase over the 2008 record of 918) and House Sparrow (16% increase over the 2015 record of 1448). We also tied our previous records for Cooper's Hawk, Virginia Rail, Great Gray Owl, American Robin and Harris's Sparrow. Similar to last year, most of the large increases occurred in species native to Eurasia that seem to find conditions here to their liking.

The numbers of waterfowl and related birds were generally down, probably due to cold weather prior to Count Day that froze most still water. Exceptions were Ring-necked Duck and Hooded Merganser, which were more numerous than usual. However, we did find good species diversity in this group, especially at the Lee Metcalf NWR. As usual, this was important in boosting our overall species total. Raptor numbers were generally within 10-year averages, with the exception of the record number of red-tails and near-record numbers of Bald Eagles. We found more owl species than usual, including both the largest and smallest owls that we could reasonably expect in our area. Numbers of most songbird species were within normal ranges, and we had good numbers of some species that are often hard to find, including Horned Lark, Golden-crowned Kinglet, American Robin and both species of waxwings. The number for Townsend's Solitaire tied the second highest counted previously, and Red Crossbill numbers were the third highest we've ever recorded. On the downside, woodpecker numbers were at the lower end of 10-year averages, and the tally for American Goldfinch was the lowest we've recorded since 1988. We didn't find many Pine Siskins, and Evening Grosbeaks and Common Redpolls were completely absent. Also conspicuous by its absence was Steller's Jay, which we've only

missed three times previously.

CBCs are great for looking at long term trends in bird numbers and winter distribution at local, regional and national scales. The Stevensville CBC documents a number of such trends. For instance, wintering raptors were apparently an uncommon sight around Stevensville until the early to mid 1990s, when numbers reported on the CBC started to increase dramatically. House Finches, which are now one of our most common birds, first appeared on the Count in 1981, and rapidly increased after that. Rock Pigeons first appeared on the Count in 1973. Mourning Doves were a rare find until the late 1980s, when their numbers started to increase. More recently, California Quail first appeared on the Count in 1994, and started to show up consistently in 2002. Their numbers and distribution continue to increase, and we now find them scattered throughout the non-forested parts of the Count circle. Eurasian Collared-Doves first appeared on the Count in 2007, and were restricted to Stevensville proper for several years after that. Now we're finding them spread throughout the more open rural and suburban areas of the circle, and their numbers seem to be exploding. Your efforts on the CBC help document these interesting changes in our bird community.

You can find the results of this and every other CBC ever done on the CBC website at

<https://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count>.

As always, many thanks to all of you that squeezed in time to participate in the Stevensville CBC around your plans for celebrating the holidays. Next year's Count will be on Saturday, December 30, 2017. I hope to see you all then. Thanks again for your help, and good birding in 2017.

Sincerely,

Dave Lockman, compiler
381-7679 (c), 777-7426 (w), or
stevicbc@gmail.com

What's the story, Story?

By Jim Story

Question: *What bird is the Turkey Vulture's closest relative?*

Answer: During a recent program about raptor migration, a question was asked about the genetic relationship of Turkey Vultures to other bird species. A 2008 study suggested that vultures were

closely related to storks. Judy Hoy did an internet search and came up with a recent paper, "Whole-genome analyses resolve early branches in the tree of life of modern birds" by Jarvis et al. in *Science*. In the study, 45 avian genomes (including the turkey vulture) representing all neoavian orders according to different classifications were analyzed. The study showed that the Turkey Vulture's closest relatives included the Bald Eagle and the White-Tailed Eagle. The Barn Owl was also a fairly close relative. Unfortunately, the stork genome was not included in the study, so the relationship of storks and vultures was not confirmed.

Local birding expert Jim Story answers your questions about birds and their habits. Jim welcomes your questions at jstory4689@gmail.com.



Courtesy Mel Holloway

Turkey Vulture rehabilitated by Judy Hoy.

Bitterroot Audubon is proud to announce the recipient of this semester's Byron Weber Memorial Scholarship

By Skip Horner

From a strong field of applicants, Niall Clancy was chosen to receive the Byron Weber Memorial Scholarship. Niall is a Senior at MSU majoring in Fish & Wildlife Ecology, and comes with an impressive set of recommendations and achievements.

He has performed numerous studies on fish topics on several Montana rivers and lakes, including in the Bitterroots and the Sapphires, as well as in the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers. His several publications and presentations address a variety of issues affecting the health of Montana's fish populations. Niall is from Hamilton, where he was Co-Valedictorian for the class of 2013.

Bitterroot Audubon presents this \$500 scholarship

twice annually to a student in a Montana college or university pursuing a Natural Resource major. Bitterroot residents are given preference. We urge any qualified student to apply. Applications available on our website.

Calling all Bitterroot Photographers!

By Becky Peters

We are proud to announce that Bitterroot Audubon is organizing another calendar, a 2018 calendar! We are delighted to be doing this again as people have been requesting our one of a kind calendar... The generosity of our local photographers has helped increase our Education, Scholarship and Conservation Funds with the sales of our very successful 2013, 2014 and 2015 BAS Calendars. If you would like to be part of this wonderful process please contribute any photo(s) you have taken in the Bitterroot of our migrating and resident birds. Be sure to go to our website for more information: bitterrootaudubon.org. The website has a list of birds BAS would like to have in next year's calendar. You can submit the photographs from now on up to April 15th. They need to be extremely sharp photos, a minimum of 300-600 dpi, with dimensions in an 8 1/2" W by 9 1/2" H format. Send your photos and any questions to bitterrootcalendar@gmail.com. As before, this is only for Bitterroot residents, showing our Bitterroot birds and made in the Bitterroot by Bitterroot Audubon!! Our Bitterroot birds thank you!

The Great Backyard Bird Count

Every February, count for as little as 15 minutes in your own backyard to help expand our understanding of birds

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is a free, fun, and easy event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of bird populations. Participants are asked to count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the four-day event and report their sightings online at birdcount.org. Anyone can take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, from beginning bird watchers to experts, and you can participate from your backyard, or anywhere in the world.

Each checklist submitted during the GBBC helps researchers at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society learn more about how birds are doing, and how to protect them and

the environment we share. Last year, more than 160,000 participants submitted their bird observations online, creating the largest instantaneous snapshot of global bird populations ever recorded.

The 20th annual GBBC will be held **Friday, February 17, through Monday, February 20, 2017**. Please visit the official website at birdcount.org for more information and be sure to check out the latest [educational and promotional resources](#).

Bird populations are always shifting and changing. For example, 2014 GBBC data highlighted a large irruption of Snowy Owls across the northeastern, mid-Atlantic and Great Lakes areas of the United States. The data also showed the effects that warm weather patterns have had on bird movement around the country. For more on the results of the 2016 GBBC, take a look at the [GBBC Summary](#), and be sure to check out some of the images in the [2016 GBBC Photo Contest Gallery](#).

On the [program website](#) participants can explore real-time maps and charts that show what others are reporting during and after the count. Be sure to check out the [Explore a Region](#) tool to get an idea of

Calendar of Events

Feb 17-20- Great Backyard Bird Count

Feb 18- Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT, 10AM-12PM.

Feb 20- Audubon Meeting, Forest Service/DNRC Building, Hamilton, MT, 7PM, Board Mtg. 5PM

Feb 24-25- Raptor ID workshop, Hamilton, MT.

Mar 20- Audubon Meeting, Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT, 7PM, Board Mtg., 5PM.

TBA- Welcome Back Waterfowl Day, Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT

Apr 17- Audubon Meeting, Forest Service/DNRC Building, Hamilton, MT, 7PM, Board Mtg. 5PM.

May 15- Audubon Meeting, Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT, 7PM, Board Mtg., 5PM.

Jun 9-11, 2017- Wings Across the Big Sky Festival, Great Falls, MT. More details to be announced.

what you can expect to see in your area during the next GBBC.

For questions and comments, please contact the National Audubon Society or Cornell Lab of Ornithology:

National Audubon Society
citizenscience@audubon.org

Cornell Lab of Ornithology
Inside the US: (800) 843-2473
Outside the US: (607) 254-2473
gbbc@cornell.edu

The Great Backyard Bird Count is made possible, in part, by generous support from Wild Birds Unlimited.

News and Notes

Winter Raptor Survey Routes

This year we are trying a new type of survey for people interesting in documenting winter raptors. We will be continuing our surveys on a 60-mile route at the north end of the valley- from Lolo south to Stevensville, on both the west and east sides. The route will be broken up into short sections, and people can survey any section(s) they want, any time they want, and as many or as few times as they want. All we ask is that you feel reasonably confident in identifying winter raptors, and that you

are willing to record and report your birds using eBird. To participate, please contact Eric Rasmussen (erasmussen@mpgranch.com).

Chapter Members Renewal Deadline

If you are a BAS chapter member, your membership fee (\$15) was due on January 31, 2017. Please send payment to Bitterroot Audubon Society, PO Box 326, Hamilton, MT 59840.

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.

Bitterroot Audubon is on Facebook If you use Facebook, please look for Bitterroot Audubon and “Like” us!

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 18th 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.



Juvenile Bald Eagle takes flight. Hamilton, MT, January 2017.

Courtesy Mike Daniels

BITTERROOT AUDUBON
PO BOX 326
HAMILTON MT 59840-0326

Officers

| | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------|----------|
| President | Becky Peters* | 369-5210 |
| 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 | 370-4778 |
| Programs | Kay Fulton* | 642-3794 |
| Website | Kate Stone* | 381-1115 |
| Education | Jodi Prout* | |
| Newsltr Eds & Distribution | Sara Ashline* baseditors@gmail.com | |
| Hospitality | Karen Griffing* | |
| Membership | Rosan Stover | |
| Publicity | Susie Duff* | 961-5455 |
| Rep. to MT | Dave Lockman | 777-2929 |
| Audubon | Becky Peters* | |
| Scholarship | Skip Horner* | 642-6840 |
| Aud. Adv. | Betsy Ballard* | |
| Field Trips | Michelle Long* | |
| At large | Judy Hoy* | 777-2487 |
| At large | Thomas Arminio* | |
| At large | Susan Nelson* | |

* 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



Audubon

Renew or Sign up
for your
National Audubon Membership at
Audubon.org

Montana Audubon is back in flight at the 2017 Legislature.

Every session since 1981 we have lobbied our state's Legislature. We are the voice for birds, wildlife, habitat, climate solutions, and environmental protections. We make sure there's funding for our agencies to do their job and we defend our bedrock environmental laws. Every day through April we're at the Capitol, educating legislators and fighting for clean air and water.

With two weeks under our belts we've already testified on numerous pieces of legislation, visited with many Senators and Representatives, and developed strategies for our priorities. We are excited to have Dan Roper as Montana Audubon's legislative assistant and together we have been off to a quick start. Dan comes to us with experience staffing natural resource committees for the Oregon Legislature's and has a master's degree in public policy. Check out our staff page for more on Dan!

In the coming months, we will be busy working on issues that protect Montana's wildlife and environment, from protecting spotted skunks to securing funding for Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation to promoting local clean energy opportunities and investment.

As we move through the session we will also be focusing on a few other priorities:

- Prevent the Privatization of Our Public Lands – join us for a rally (See below!)
- Habitat Montana – This is our state's main habitat program and we want to remove restrictions on how Fish, Wildlife, and Parks is able to spend the funds
- Clean Water – exempt wells, subdivision regulation and the state assumption of 404 Dredge and Fill permitting are all on the table
- Keeping our bedrock environmental laws intact

To see all of the bills we are working on this session, visit our Conservation Policy Webpage and click on "Montana Legislature". There you will find all of the insider information including our "Bill Table" that we strive to update weekly.

You can help - Lend your voice or come to the Capitol!

Contact your Legislators and Join Us in Helena.

We'll be emailing you "Action Alerts" the next few months to ask you to contact your Representative or Senator on key bills. It's *amazing* the difference a handful of constituent calls can make. So when you see an Action Alert in your email inbox be sure to open it!

And, mark your calendars. Come see and take action at the Capitol. We welcome you in Helena anytime, but these days are designed especially for you:

January 26. Lobby Day and Montana Conservation Voters Legislative Social (Evening at the Montana Club)

January 30. Public lands Rally – come show your support for public lands – we packed the Capitol last year and we want nothing less this year!

February 23. Solar Rally and Lobby Day

March 17. Lobby Day

Expect more information on these events coming as they get closer and be sure to check out our Facebook page for regular updates.

Keep an eye out for those action alerts and have your friends join us too. It's easy to sign up – just visit our homepage (<http://mtaudubon.org/>) and scroll to the bottom and share your email address!



wings across the big sky

MONTANA
AUDUBON

June 9-11, 2017 Great Falls, Montana

Field Trips

During the winter months, many birders find themselves dreaming of long summer days chasing diverse species of our feathered friends across beautiful Montana landscapes. Remember, it's not too early to begin planning your summer birding adventures! Come join us in Great Falls for **Montana Audubon's 17th Annual Bird Festival**, this year co-hosted by **Upper Missouri Breaks Audubon**, June 9 - 11 at the **Best Western Heritage Inn**.

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

FIRST PEOPLES BUFFALO JUMP. First Peoples Buffalo Jump State Park and National Historic Landmark is an archaeological site with possibly the largest bison cliff jump in North America. Native peoples used this site for at least a thousand years before Lewis and Clark traveled through what became Montana. The bison jump site consists of a mile-long sandstone cliff; there are remnants of drive lanes on top of the cliff and up to 18 feet of compacted buffalo remains below. Expect to see Rock Wren, Say's Phoebe, Long-billed Curlew, Upland Sandpiper, Black-headed Grosbeak, warblers and flycatchers among the rock slopes, mixed grass prairie, and, as time allows, nearby riparian areas.

SULPHUR SPRINGS. Leaders from Audubon and the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center will highlight birds, plants, and Lewis and Clark history on this easy 3.6 mile round trip walk through yucca, grasslands and coulees. The hiking trail is along a relatively remote stretch of Missouri River to the cold springs. Water from Sulphur Springs proved vital in treating Sacagawea's illness during the 1805 portage at Great Falls. The interpretive signs along the trail offer information regarding Lewis and Clark expedition. Expect to see Lark Sparrow, Eastern and Western Kingbirds, Bullock's Oriole, American White Pelican, possibly Yellow-breasted Chat and Yellow Warblers.

SALISBURY FARM. Visit an 8,000 acre organic farm along the Missouri River near Floweree, 30 miles north of Great Falls. Learn about the small grain and cattle ranch run by Elsie and Russ Salisbury, while observing a variety of birds, a bald eagle nest and tipi rings. They recently finished a new home insulated with hay bales!

THAIN CREEK TRAIL. In the Highwood Mountains east of Great Falls, we will bird along the road through grassland and riparian habitat, then take a moderate two-mile round trip hike through conifers. Expect to see Lazuli Bunting, Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers, Red-naped Sapsucker, Mountain Chickadee, Warbling Vireo, Red Crossbill, various warblers, kinglets and Spotted Towhee.

GIANT SPRINGS STATE PARK. Giant Springs was documented by the Lewis and Clark Expedition in 1805 and is one of the largest freshwater springs in the country. The springs are the site of the Roe River, once listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as the world's shortest river. Large trees and Missouri River riparian habitat make this a dependable place to see birds near Great Falls. Bullock's Oriole, House Wren, swallows, kingbirds, Gray Catbird, Yellow Warbler, Northern Flicker, Downy Woodpecker, and American White Pelican are the usual species seen, and perhaps a Great Horned Owl. Great for beginners and families.

Keep watch in early March: Festival Registration Brochures with all field trip information, speakers 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, or call (406) 443-3949.

STEVENSVILLE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

PARTY LEADER 2016 Final Tally AREA COVERED All
 OBSERVERS 33 in field plus 29 feeder watchers QLL# 25 B & D, 26 A & C
 MILES DRIVEN 347.2 MILES WALKED 28.5
 HOURS DRIVEN 61.75 HOURS WALKED 36 HOURS WATCHING FEEDERS 64.75 DATE 12/31/2016

| CBC# | COMMON NAME | TALLY | CBC# | COMMON NAME | TALLY |
|------|------------------------|-------------------------|------|---------------------------|--------|
| 109 | PIED-BILLED GREBE | 1 | 540 | BELTED KINGFISHER | 15 |
| 167 | GREAT BLUE HERON | 34 | 555 | DOWNY WOODPECKER | 40 |
| 188 | TUNDRA SWAN | 6 | 556 | HAIRY WOODPECKER | 22 |
| 199 | CANADA GOOSE | 1692 | 599 | NORTHERN FLICKER | 135 |
| 205 | GREEN-WINGED TEAL | 48 | 567 | PILEATED WOODPECKER | 10 |
| 208 | MALLARD | 711 | 608 | HORNED LARK | 60 |
| 211 | NORTHERN PINTAIL | 29 | 608 | GRAY JAY | |
| 217 | GADWALL | 4 | 617 | STELLER'S JAY | |
| 219 | AMERICAN WIGEON | 2 | 624 | CLARK'S NUTCRACKER | 11 |
| 224 | RING-NECKED DUCK | 90 | 625 | BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE | 457 |
| 227 | LESSER SCAUP | 4 | 628 | AMERICAN CROW | 30 |
| 241 | COMMON GOLDENEYE | 23 | 634 | COMMON RAVEN | 182 |
| 242 | BARROW'S GOLDENEYE | | 636 | BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE | 351 |
| 244 | BUFFLEHEAD | 7 | 639 | MOUNTAIN CHICKADEE | 5 |
| 246 | HOODED MERGANSER | 24 | 649 | RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH | 54 |
| 247 | COMMON MERGANSER | 6 | 650 | WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH | 28 |
| 250 | RUDDY DUCK | 2 | 651 | PYGMY NUTHATCH | 47 |
| 262 | BALD EAGLE | 61 Adult 37 Imm. 24 | 653 | BROWN CREEPER | 4 |
| 264 | NORTHERN HARRIER | 13 | 661 | PACIFIC WREN | 2 |
| 265 | SHARP-SHINNED HAWK | 5 | 663 | MARSH WREN | 1 |
| 266 | COOPER'S HAWK | 5+ | 665 | AMERICAN DIPPER | 5 |
| 267 | NORTHERN GOSHAWK | 5 | 666 | GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET | 41 |
| 279 | RED-TAILED HAWK | 129** (2 Harlan's race) | 676 | TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE | 31 |
| 282 | ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK | 43 | 684 | AMERICAN ROBIN | 15+ |
| 284 | GOLDEN EAGLE | Adult 2 Imm. | 700 | BOHEMIAN WAXWING | 196 |
| 287 | AMERICAN KESTREL | 15 | 701 | CEDAR WAXWING | 114 |
| 288 | MERLIN | 2 | 704 | NORTHERN SHRIKE | 4 |
| 292 | PRAIRIE FALCON | 2 | 707 | EUROPEAN STARLING | 1308** |
| 296 | GRAY PARTRIDGE | 5 | 808 | AMERICAN TREE SPARROW | 25 |
| 300 | RING-NECKED PHEASANT | 124 | 832 | SONG SPARROW | 66 |
| 309 | RUFFED GROUSE | | 839 | JUNCO, SLATE-COLORED race | 30 |
| 314 | WILD TURKEY | 91 | 846 | JUNCO, OREGON race | 174 |
| 319 | CALIFORNIA QUAIL | 1216 | 857 | RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD | 794 |
| 331 | AMERICAN COOT | 9 | 860 | WESTERN MEADOWLARK | |
| 343 | KILLDEER | 8 | 864 | BREWER'S BLACKBIRD | 51 |
| 386 | WILSON'S SNIPE | 6 | 884 | PINE GROSBEAK | 8 |
| 464 | ROCK PIGEON | 970* | 886 | CASSIN'S FINCH | 8 |
| 468 | EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE | 1133** | 887 | HOUSE FINCH | 593 |
| 471 | MOURNING DOVE | 337 | 889 | RED CROSSBILL | 110 |
| 499 | GREAT HORNED OWL | 16 | 891 | COMMON REDPOLL | |
| 502 | NORTHERN PYGMY-OWL | 2 | 894 | PINE SISKIN | 13 |
| 509 | LONG-EARRED OWL | | 897 | AMERICAN GOLDFINCH | 64 |
| 510 | SHORT-EARRED OWL | | 898 | EVENING GROSBEAK | |
| 514 | N. SAW-WHET OWL | | 899 | HOUSE SPARROW | 1684* |

OTHER Trumpeter Swan 9, Northern Shoveler 1, Virginia Rail 4+ Buteo spp. 4, Wren spp. 1, Blackbird spp. 27
 BIRD Great Gray Owl 1+, Western Screech-Owl 2*, Lewis's Woodpecker 1 Chipping Sparrow cw
 SPECIES: Harris's Sparrow 1+, White-winged Crossbill 1, Brown-headed Cowbird 5 Total # Species Seen 86 Total # Birds Seen 13,729

* = New Count Record ** = New Count Record, large % increase over previous record + = tied existing Count record cw = Count Week only, not Count Day

Compiler: Dave Lockman: stevicb@gmail.com or at 577 El Capitan Loop, Stevi MT 59870. Phone: 381-7679(c) or 777-7426(w). Thanks for participating!

Winter Raptor Identification Workshop Registration

Paypal payment preferred, but if paying via check, please register online and then send this form with payment to: Becky Peters, 244 Katie Luise Lane, Hamilton, MT 59840.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address, including city and state: _____

Email: _____

Member(s): _____ x \$20 = _____

Non-member(s): _____ x \$25 = _____ Total: _____

Paypal payment preferred, but if paying via check, please register online and then send this form with payment to: Becky Peters, 244 Katie Luise Lane, Hamilton, MT 59840.