

BITTERROOT BIRD ALLIANCE



SEPTEMBER 2024

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 39, NO. 1



Miss your Bitterroot Bird Alliance Friends over the summer? Want to learn more about our group?

Reconnect or Make New Connections

September Social/Meeting

September 16

5:30-7:30+

Victor Park

170 5th Ave (5th and Tudor, near the Weed District)

BYOB and Pot Luck

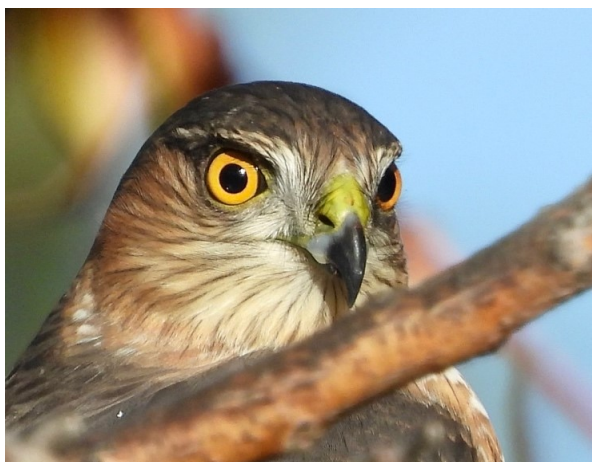
Letter from the President

By Micki Long, BAS President

I'm writing this letter on Labor Day, a day I have, in the past, hiked and maybe gone on a picnic. But with today's Air Quality Index (AQI) in the "Unhealthy" range, I will stay indoors until the wind shifts. I live across the valley from St. Mary's Peak and the Sharrott Creek fire. Fingers crossed that by the time you read this, the fire will be at least partially contained. While a mountainside dotted with flames visible for miles instills fear for the animals and people close to the fire, I take some comfort (and maybe you will too) in University of Montana Professor Emeritus Dr. Richard Hutto's 2023 article about wildfires and safety:

https://missoulain.com/opinion/column/richard-hutto-the-truth-about-forest-fires-and-safety/article_c3f7c9fa-0ec7-11ee-84a1-c70d05176b94.html

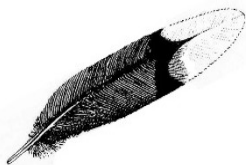
And that's all I'm going to write about the difficult summer we've just experienced. Instead, I'm turning to autumn, my favorite season.



Sharp-shinned Hawk

Photo by Micki Long

I looked back at photos I've taken in previous Septembers, and, no surprise, most of my photos are of birds that look pretty much the same all year: Clark's Nutcrackers, Steller's Jays, Great Horn Owls, Pileated Woodpeckers, and Sharp-shinned Hawks, among others. Last September, I was lucky enough to have a Blue Jay and a Lewis's Woodpecker (but I took no good photos of those two). Black-capped Chickadees, another species that looks the same all year, are also regular visitors. It's possible that real experts may see subtle differences in the fall plumage of these birds, but I cannot!



Of course, this leads me to the birds who don't look the same all year. Many of us struggle to identify birds in autumn plumage. And because most birds don't sing in autumn, the Merlin app is not as helpful as it is during the spring and summer (and when it comes to flycatchers, I usually need Merlin's help). Frank Izaguirre, on the American Birding Association's website, offers a few reasons why birders can love fall migration: "there are more birds because it's after breeding season, migration lasts longer than in spring, and the birds themselves move more slowly, often lingering for longer in desirable habitat and sometimes affording twitchers a little extra time to catch up to rarities"

(<https://www.aba.org/no-8-birds-and-fall-winter-plumage/>). National Audubon offers tips to identify a few common birds in their fall plumage: <https://www.audubon.org/news/learn-fall-and-winter-colors-these-common-bird-species>.



Photo by Micki Long

Steller's Jay

In addition to fall migration, Audubon and others offer help for another challenge posed by autumn--yard chores. I like these ideas: save the seeds, leave the leaves, build a brush pile, skip the chemicals, and visit the nursery. For details, see:

<https://www.audubon.org/news/to-help-birds-winter-go-easy-fall-yard-work>

Just like last year, a Social is replacing our September meeting. See the flyer elsewhere in this newsletter. I hope to see you in Victor on September 16th!

AWESOME HIGHWAY CLEANUP

By Skip Horner

Our semi-annual highway cleanup will take place on Tuesday, October 22nd, at 4PM. We'll meet and park on the west side of Bell Crossing and clean miles 60 to 62 north and south from there. Bitterroot Audubon's name is on those big highway signs, even though we're Bitterroot Bird Alliance now, so come out and help us and the highway look good. Bring your own gloves. We'll supply high-visibility vests and stout plastic bags.

Questions? Call Skip at 406-369-5367.

Your Help Needed: Volunteers for Bitterroot Bird Alliance Apple Days Booth

By Becky Peters

We will have a presence at Apple Days on **Saturday, Oct 5th, from 9am-2pm**. I have always enjoyed having a booth during this event. It's known as the Biggest Bake Sale Under the Big Sky. There will be arts, crafts, food, live music, everything apples, apples, apples! This will be a vibrant, social, fun-filled time! AND we will have our *Bitterroot Bird Alliance* booth there!! We will have bird games for kids to play (and their parents too!), merchandise to sell, bird books to look at, answers to their "I've seen this bird" questions (you don't have to know the answer, we'll have reference books and our Merlin apps!), lots of flyers and handouts about our birds and how to keep them healthy and safe, and lots more!

Want to help? I will need help during set up, booth times, and take down. Here's the schedule:

- 1. 7:30 – 10:00:** Set up and then booth;
- 2. 10:00 -12:30:** Run the booth;
- 3. 12:30-3:00:** Run the booth time/take down.

Set up and take down involve dealing with the canopy, the tables, the handouts, the merchandise, etc. You will be on your feet during these shifts. Once I get a list of the volunteers I will send you more information about the day.

I would like 3-4 people on each shift. Let me know if you are willing to take a shift, and which shift.

You will have a great time telling the crowd about how fantastic our Bitterroot birds are. Email me at rpeters@montana.com and please put "Booth" in the subject line or I won't be able to find it.



Your Help Needed: Volunteers to help Weed needed Friday, September 20th

By Becky Peters

Bitter Root Land Trust will be having a get-together on Sunday, September 22nd, at Skalkaho Bend Park, and Bill and I would like to have it looking fantastic!! We can't do it alone! If you can help on the 20th, 9-11AM, please email rpeters@montana.com and put "weeds" in the subject line. I'll then give you more info about what we'll do. And if you've never been there you owe it to yourself to see what the BRLT, Bitter Root Water Partnership, and BAS - now Bitterroot Bird Alliance - have accomplished there for our insects and our birds!

The Aspiration Fund

By Skip Horner

After more than ten years of generosity, we have decided to discontinue our Byron Weber Memorial Scholarship. During that decade we awarded over \$15,000 in scholarships to top students across the Montana university system, but we will now redirect that money closer to home, in the Bitterroot. Our newly organized Aspiration Fund will award up to \$2000 a year for environmental and educational projects designed and implemented by local students, non-profits, and other organizations. This is an all-new concept for us, without precedent, so we encourage anyone to submit an idea in need of funding. We're eager to consider almost any project

in support of local students, Scouts, 4-H, school classes, non-profits, churches and environmental organizations. Send your questions or project requests to skip@cybernet1.com. We're looking forward to using our Aspiration Fund to help make the Bitterroot a healthier, happier and wiser place where we all thrive. Please spread the word!

Starting the Summer with Successful Black Swift Surveys

By Lauren Smith, Montana Audubon

At the beginning of July, the Montana Audubon Black Swift research team began surveys in the far northwest corner of Montana, near Troy and Yaak. Three of the four sites surveyed were occupied by nesting Black Swifts- a great start to the field season! The team was thrilled to get wonderful looks of these elusive birds that nest exclusively in the mossy and wet spray zone of waterfalls.



However, the path to Black Swifts isn't all sunshine and roses... more like pre-dawn darkness and devil's club, with a healthy mix of mountain lions

and steep, rocky terrain! In the latest post on the Montana Audubon website, the research team gives us a behind-the-scenes taste of what it's like to be in the field.

And, for a look at some of the photos the team took of nesting Black Swifts, be sure to check out the video at the bottom of the post!

Read the post & watch the video on the Montana Audubon website: [Montana Audubon Kicks Off Field Season with Successful Black Swift Surveys](#)

Calendar of Events

- Monthly:** Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, 3rd Saturday of each month, Stevensville, MT 10AM-12PM.
- Sep 16:** BBA Social/Potluck; Victor Park, 170 5th Ave, Victor, MT 5:30PM.
- Sep 20:** Volunteer Weeding; Skalkaho Bend Park, 9-11AM.
- Oct 5:** Apple Days Booth at Hamilton Farmer's Market; 9AM-2PM.
- Oct 21:** BBA Meeting/Program; details TBA, 7PM.
- Oct 22:** Highway Clean-up, 4PM, see announcement in this newsletter for details.
- Oct 26:** "Poets in the 'Root," Explore the Arts, 701 Main Street, Hamilton, MT at 1-3PM, See flyer in newsletter for details.
- Nov 18:** BBA Meeting/Program; details TBA, 7PM.

Please Excuse Our Mess! We are working to update all of our print and online materials to BITTERROOT BIRD ALLIANCE! And soon we will have a new logo!





Photo by Carol Babel

Tree Swallow in nest.



POETS IN THE 'ROOT

OCTOBER 26 1:00 - 3:00

This is a free event and refreshments will be served

Nature in nearly all its manifestations has inspired poets since there were poets! And at least since the Roman poet Horace wrote *Ars Poetica* or the Art of Poetry in 19 BC, literature, including poetry, has sought to both instruct and delight.

Poets in the 'Root combines two aims in an uncommon but simple way. One person reads a poem or part of a poem that uses an element of nature to convey its message.

Then, the same person or another person gives an explanation (5 min max) of some aspect of that nature element. The explanation focuses on nature interpretation, not literary interpretation. Listeners get a bit of poetry and a bit of natural history.

Anyone can volunteer to read poetry or offer nature interpretation. Most will read poems by others, but if you're a poet, we'd love to hear your own work.

Master Naturalists can earn credit towards their certification!

If you would like to read please register <https://www.explorethearts.art/teen-adult/poets>

Sponsored by Bitterroot Bird Alliance, Blue Heron Nature Tour,
the Natural History Museum and proudly hosted by



explore
the **ARTS**

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Chapter Only Membership

The Bitterroot Bird Alliance 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:

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