**A New Memorial Fund for Montana Audubon**  By Gail Engler

The ***George and Laurene Engler Montana Audubon Conservation Fund*** has been created as a memorial for two very special people-George and Laurene Engler. All proceeds will go to Montana Audubon, and the Montana Community Foundation will administer the fund. The purpose of the fund is to provide sustainable funding to monitor, study and conserve Montana’s birds, including preservation, enhancement and restoration of Montana’s avian habitats, and to promote land use policies and legislation consistent with these conservation goals. Although they are no longer with us, George and Laurene’s legacy of supporting and furthering conservation in Montana will live on through the creation of this permanent endowment named in their memory, allowing others to give to a cause they both believed in very strongly.

Our Dad (George) was deeply involved in conservation issues, not only on the local level, but throughout Montana. After Dad retired as Supervisor of the Lewis & Clark National Forest in 1976, he became much more involved with conservation organizations. As Supervisor of the Lewis & Clark National Forest he successfully resisted unrestrained clear-cutting and helped facilitate the protection of the Rocky Mountain Front. He co-founded the Great Falls Chapter of Audubon-Upper Missouri Breaks Audubon (UMBA) along with Margaret Adams, a retired school principal. George also founded the Great Falls Conservation Council, which has been meeting regularly now since 1983. It is made up of representatives of local conservation organizations, such as UMBA and the Montana Wilderness Society, as well as government agencies including Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the US Forest Service. It is an informal group that meets to discuss, collaborate and take appropriate action on various issues of conservation concern.

George received a number of awards recognizing his dedication to conservation. These included Montana Audubon’s *Conservationist of the Year* and *Lifetime Achievement awards* in 2009. In 1993 he was honored by the Great Falls Conservation Council, for “providing leadership, inspiration and wisdom and his continuing dedication and service to the cause of conservation.” The Council also has an annual conservation award named after George. Sigurd Olson, past president of the Wilderness Society and primary drafter of the Wilderness Act of 1964, accurately describes Dad’s own feelings and viewpoint toward conservation: “Only with a deep and inherent feeling for the land can there be dedication in preserving it.”

Laurene was also dedicated to supporting the conservation cause. Her support was more behind the scenes, but she was no less enthusiastic about the importance of preserving the land and keeping it accessible to the public for current and future generations. She and her sister, nephew and Dad once hiked to the Chinese Wall in the Bob Marshall Wilderness, and Mom insisted on hiking this rugged terrain in her Keds tennis shoes! Talk about dedication! Mom was also chief gourmet chef when our family went camping.

Our parents have many friends who are active with the local conservation-minded organizations mentioned above. It is our hope that these friends and organizations will also want to honor George and Laurene’s memory, and help continue their legacy of supporting conservation issues and causes by contributing to this endowment. The Engler family thanks you in advance for your contributions.

To donate to this fund you can use this link which will take you to the Montana Community Foundation: <https://www.mtcf.org/Giving/Give-Now?fn=George+%26+Laurene+Engler+Montana+Audubon+Conservation+Fund>. Or, you may write a check, payable to: Montana Community Foundation (write on memo line: “Engler Audubon Fund”). Please send to: Montana Community Foundation, 1N Last Chance Gulch, Ste 1, Helena, MT 59601.

As Dad once said,” Now, at the holiday season, is an appropriate time to count our blessings and to give thanks for what we have. I hope we have the wisdom and the will to maintain it for our grandkids.”