

fall 2015

MONTANA
AUDUBON

CHANGE AND ADAPTATION

*Finding solutions in an
ever-changing landscape*

page 4



**CITIZEN SCIENCE KEY TO
CURLEW CONSERVATION**

Conservation Briefs, page 8

Our mission is to promote appreciation, knowledge and conservation of Montana's native birds, other wildlife, and natural ecosystems to safeguard biological diversity for current and future generations.

Founded in 1976, Montana Audubon has built effective programs in public policy, education, and bird conservation to serve its members and Montana's nine community-based Audubon Chapters.

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Montana Audubon is a proud member organization of Montana Shares.

THE VIEW FROM ABOVE

Greetings, Fellow Conservationists.

As I ponder recent efforts of Montana Audubon staffers, volunteers, and board members, I recall Margaret Mead's oft-quoted statement: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." I would like to highlight recent examples within the Montana Audubon family that demonstrate Ms. Mead's insightful truth.

Our 2015 annual Wings Across the Big Sky Bird Festival, convened in Helena in early June, was a resounding success. Attendees had fun, learned much, enjoyed an abundance and diversity of birds in the field, and left with a renewed commitment for taking bold action on behalf of our threatened avian populations. Much of the event's success was due to the teamwork of a great many selfless volunteers from Helena's local chapter, Last Chance Audubon. Two volunteers in particular, Janice Miller and Jo Lace, served as co-leaders with festival planning, keeping all the moving parts working together. Janice also served as our enthusiastic emcee throughout the weekend. THANKYOU, Janice and Jo and Last Chance Audubon!

This past spring, at our Montana Audubon Center in Billings, two key staffers left the organization within a short period. The timing was unfortunate, as we were fast approaching our summer camp season, the Center's busiest time. In response to this dilemma, Montana Audubon board member Rachel Van Wingen offered to serve as our full-time interim center director. Rachel provided steady, focused leadership all summer long. She and her staff did a superb job managing the hectic summer camp season and as a result, the number of camps increased 20 percent, with a record total of 245 participants. Feedback from participating children and parents was overwhelmingly positive. THANKYOU, Rachel and all Center staff.

Departing staffer Amy Cilimburg, director of bird conservation and climate policy for Montana Audubon for the past seven years, made a great many lasting contributions to bird habitat conservation during her tenure. She will be deeply missed. One particularly successful project she spearheaded and led during the past two years is the Mission Valley Conservation Partnership. Amy brought together 15 partners (including many state and federal agencies, local land trusts, Audubon chapters, Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribe, and Salish Kootenai College) to develop strategies, plans, and priorities for conserving critical, highly threatened grassland and wetland habitats before they are lost to development. Thus far this partnership is working well, and meaningful, on-the-ground conservation throughout the valley is now underway. THANKYOU, Amy! (Stay tuned for future updates regarding this exciting conservation initiative.)

And, thanks to all of you for your ongoing support—we could not possibly achieve our ambitious statewide bird conservation goals and aspirations without your consistent generosity.

Yours in conservation,

Steve Hoffman, Executive Director



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Change and Adaptation
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On the cover:

Fall comes to the Rocky Mountain Front near Augusta
Photo by John Lambing
Inset: Long-billed Curlew
Photo by Bob Martinka

CHANGE AND ADAPTATION

A quiet story is unfolding near a waterfall somewhere in the remote high country of Glacier National Park. No person has ever been to this particular spot, but it has been a nesting site for countless generations of black swifts since the last ice age. In this otherworldly zone of continual mist and twilight, birds that spend most of their lives on the wing come briefly to earth to rear their young.



Black swifts use mosses to build nests in some of the most remote places left in our world. Alas, one feature that makes this fragile habitat what it is—a constant supply of glacial meltwater—is itself at risk. As mountain ice continues to recede, this and other nesting sites that have been used for millenia may finally be abandoned. If black swifts cannot nest, the future of the species is in question.

These are the sort of thoughts that keep conservationists awake at night. The fate of a nearly “invisible” species, the black swift, is tied to the cool temperatures and abundant water of a specific habitat that is threatened because of global forces (climate warming) seemingly beyond our control. And this can lead us to despair. How many birds and other creatures out there, species we might not even know to exist, are affected by human activity?

continued...

Bob Martinka



American
Avocets



Montana is home to many beautiful and diverse habitats, each with conservation challenges for the myriad wildlife they support. For just shy of forty years, Montana Audubon has been closely involved with the changing landscapes of our state and the many issues affecting them. Change is universal and happens on many scales. Each season, wildfire plays its role in reshaping prairie and forest across the region, favoring some organisms and displacing others for a time. Rivers flood violently, carving new channels and allowing others to dry and eventually become meadows. A windstorm topples a single, centuries-old ponderosa pine, creating a new opening in the woodland and new opportunities within its community of life.

While change is a constant on the landscape, so too, is adaptation. Organisms survive by adjusting their behavior to accommodate changes in the environment. In fact, it isn't an understatement to

suggest that adaptation is survival. For decades, Montana Audubon has worked to help ensure that the birds and other wildlife of Montana have what they need to survive and thrive into the future. Some threats are large and looming with many unknowns, like those related to climate change, but others are more predictable, such as energy development, sprawl, and encroaching invasive species. These problems require continual adaptation in our strategies and actions to address them.

Our Conservation Policy program, for example, deals with threats to Montana's birds and habitats at the regulatory and legislative level. We make significant impacts wherever we can influence how people and agencies interact with landscapes to favor conservation. A case in point is Montana Audubon's recent work to help develop Governor Bullock's Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan. Our close involvement in the process helped produce

a balanced, science-based program to conserve Greater Sage-Grouse populations and thus, many other sage-dependent species throughout Montana. The program has been approved and funded, and is set to be implemented in the coming months.

To conserve wildlife, it is critical to understand what is happening on the ground. We prioritize habitats that are particularly vulnerable to disturbance in Montana, including wetlands, shrub-steppe areas, and grasslands. Long-billed Curlews are identified by ecologists as species representative of healthy grasslands in our region, so during the past several seasons Montana Audubon has spearheaded curlew surveys in key

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geographic regions in the state, including the Mission and Helena valleys. We've engaged citizen-scientist volunteers from our local chapters to collect breeding information that can be used to understand how these graceful birds respond and adapt to changes in their habitat over time. This data will ultimately be used to help inform landowners about steps they can take to develop stewardship plans with the curlew and other grassland species in mind. This is another way to create circumstances for wildlife to adapt and sustain themselves into the future.

Change is a universal constant. The black swift nest high on the mountain is there today; how this bird will respond to dramatic changes to its alpine environment is not known. At Montana Audubon, we're adapting to address difficult questions like this. Our attractive, useful new website will make us more visible, accessible, and provide our conservation message a greater reach. We're engaged in important policy and bird science work fueled by the commitment and enthusiasm of supporters from nine Audubon chapters around the state. And we're reaching into the future with educational events and programs at our Billings center and elsewhere, designed for the next generation of conservationists.

While it is too early to know the black swift's fate, Montana Audubon and our volunteers are out in that lofty alpine world, and in many other places, looking for answers and solutions... and perhaps making a better night's sleep for some.



Bob Martinka



The Curlews have news for you!

Range-wide breeding bird surveys and focused Montana efforts show that our state's vast native grasslands are a stronghold for the Long-billed Curlew, supporting nearly 20 percent of the global breeding population. With this knowledge, Montana Audubon and its many partners are focusing conservation efforts on two major landscapes that contribute substantially to the curlew's success in western Montana: the Mission and Helena valleys.

Citizen science has played a key role in these survey efforts. Since 2013, we have organized a small army of citizen scientists, generating hundreds of curlew observations. In just two years, these efforts and your support have helped us

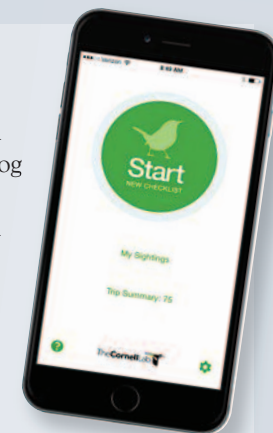
reach the next step in our conservation journey. Our findings will allow the Montana Natural Heritage Program to improve the accuracy of its habitat suitability models, refining what we know about curlews and Montana's best grasslands habitats. These data are helping to develop best management practices and identify priority areas for conservation. As a testament to the usefulness of these and similar data, nearly half of the nation's land trusts put land under conservation easement specifically for birds, and nearly two-thirds of them consider the needs of rare and declining bird species in their management plans. It seems that citizen scientists are making a huge contribution to the conservation of critical avian habitats!



Updates to our favorite eBird platform

With changes in bird names like Mindanao Brown-Dove and Tawitawi Brown-Dove, it seems this year's taxonomic changes (at least at the species level) are not an issue for Montana birders. However, considering the recent split of the now Bell's and Sage Sparrow, you may want to pay more attention to this dynamic field. Every August, to ensure accurate data collection and recording, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology updates avian nomenclature changes worldwide. All eBird data—personal lists, range maps, bar charts, regional and hotspot lists, and data entry forms—are revised as necessary. In

addition, Cornell has launched a new “eBird app” to replace “BirdLog North America.” BirdLog will be phased out over time, so it's important to begin using the newer eBird application which has options to report hybrids, unidentified species, and rarities. To learn more about these updates go to: http://ebird.org/content/ebird/news/ebird_mobile_ios1/. If you run into trouble, just email Cornell for assistance: eBird@cornell.edu. They are remarkably responsive.



Legislative Overview

When the 64th Montana Legislature adjourned last April, Montana Audubon had testified on 68 bills, opposing 24 and supporting 44. Of these, we helped defeat 10 anti-conservation/anti-wildlife bills, while seven passed and seven were vetoed. We helped to pass 20 bills that strengthened our conservation/wildlife laws, while 24 favorable bills failed.

Our most significant effort was helping to move the Sage-Grouse Stewardship Act to the governor's desk, which he signed May 7, 2015 (see Sage-Grouse article on page

11). We also worked closely with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks to pass hunting and fishing license fee increases, strengthen penalties for hunter transgressions, make importing and possessing feral swine illegal, and most importantly, to keep our valuable Habitat Montana programs funded.

Unfortunately, working for clean energy, energy industry transparency, and strong water protections was an uphill battle. However, will be ready again in 2017 for the 65th Montana Legislature! Please visit our website to learn how your legislators voted on important conservation issues,

and help us continue being a strong voice for birds and all wildlife this fall by joining our action network through our new website.



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2015 Bridger Raptor Count Underway

Montana Audubon has begun the 25th season of monitoring raptor migration along the crest of the Bridger Mountains 15 miles northeast of Bozeman. The count is conducted daily from September 1 through November 5. Nature enthusiasts are welcome at the observation station above Bridger Bowl Ski Area. Two expert observers systematically count all raptors making their annual southern migration. Andrew Eberly and Bridget Bradshaw are Montana Audubon's official counters this season. The data we collect in the Bridgers help scientists assess long-term raptor population trends. This count is also useful for understanding environmental changes

by using these apex predators as barometers of ecological health.

Come join the fun! Visit the Birds of Prey section of our website, www.mtaudubon.org. Many thanks to Gallatin National Forest, Sacajawea Audubon Society, NaturEner USA, and Bridger Bowl Ski Area for their support of the 2015 Bridger Raptor Count.

Golden eagle



Bob Martinka



Newly Defined Waters of the United States

Montana Audubon has worked on clean water issues for decades. That's why we were pleased when the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released new rules to better define "Waters of the United States."

Since clean water is important to everyone, a permit system was set up for development of projects which could introduce sediment into clean water.

These "404" projects, named for Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, protect streams and wetlands—some of the best wildlife habitat in Montana.

The new EPA rules set up three categories of projects:

- Projects impacting rivers, streams, and other traditional waters (projects affecting these need to be closely examined every time)
- Projects in areas that won't impact drinking water (these projects will NEVER be examined), and
- Projects that will be considered on a case-by-case basis because they could impact clean water.

For more information please visit the Streams & Wetlands section of our website, www.mtaudubon.org.

Montana's rich prairie pothole habitat.



A Clean Power Plan for Montana

Coal-fired power plants are responsible for 40 percent of the carbon dioxide (CO2) released into the atmosphere in the United States, a significant greenhouse gas. As a result, in August the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requested that all states develop a Clean Power Plan to address clean air, clean energy, and global climate change (the goal is a 32 percent national reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by 2030) which is great news! This important issue is critical for the health of Montana's citizens and wildlife.

The EPA's Clean Power Plan provides an unprecedented opportunity for Montana to transition to clean electricity, creating thousands of new jobs in the state. In order to do this, Montana Audubon will support the development of our state's Clean Power Plan.

For more information on this important effort, please visit the Conservation Policy page on our website, www.mtaudubon.org.

Birds of Montana Book Project

We are pleased to announce that *Birds of Montana* has entered production stage with a publisher, Buteo Books. The book, co-authored by Jeff Marks, Dan Casey, and Paul Hendricks, should appear in early spring 2016. Please watch for a special pre-publication offer later this fall, which will be your chance to obtain a copy at a 20% discount.



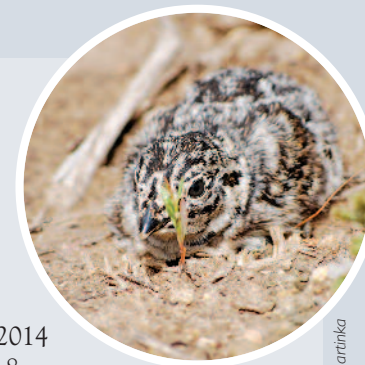
Montana Launches Sage-Grouse Conservation Program

In September the state of Montana launched a new conservation program aimed at protecting the declining Greater Sage-Grouse. Although the program's first staff person wasn't hired until September, this program represents the culmination of years of careful planning, meticulous scientific investigation, and considerable old-fashioned elbow grease. State programs such as Montana's, in large part, kept these spectacular dancing birds from being listed as a protected species under the federal Endangered Species Act.

Montana Audubon's staff first got involved in sage-grouse issues in April 2013, when Governor Steve Bullock appointed Senior Director of Policy Janet Ellis to a 12-person citizen Advisory Council. The Advisory Council set up a framework for the Montana Sage-Grouse Conservation Program, which the Governor has put

into law through two Executive Orders (September 9, 2014 and September 8, 2015). In addition, the 2015 Montana Legislature funded this program to the tune of over \$11 million. This conservation program is critical if Montana intends to continue to manage this iconic sagebrush-dependent bird.

Montana Audubon will continue to be actively involved in sage-grouse conservation. If you are interested in getting involved and/or for more information, please visit the Conservation Policy page on our website, www.mtaudubon.org.



Sage-Grouse chick

Bob Martinka



Change Happens: Moving Forward at the Center

Change happens, and the Montana Audubon Center is learning to embrace it. Our partners (and landowners, the Yellowstone River Parks Association) on this restored gravel pit have a motto, “Go with the flow.” And what better role model than the Yellowstone River, the longest free-flowing river in the lower 48 states. The Yellowstone is at our front door and we incorporate observations and lessons from the river into the Center’s teaching, planning, and conservation.

The river’s first lesson is unpredictability. We do not know what to expect in terms of water levels, turbidity, or temperatures from one season or one year to the next. Nor do we know what effects those factors will have on the fish, birds, and other living creatures in and around the river. But we can observe, record, and analyze our observations. The Center’s programs have some of the same unpredictability—either over- or under-attended for reasons we seek to discern.

The Shepard Nature Play Space, which opened this spring, has been wildly popular, providing a free, accessible, and creative outdoor space for children. On any given



day, kids can be seen making use of the natural materials in their own imaginative ways. But who could have predicted that our new Fledglings Nature Preschool would be all boys? How would the dynamics change if one or more girls were in that class?

The second lesson is about changing course. By their nature, rivers change course (when not unnaturally restrained). By flooding and seeking new levels, the waterway carries nutrients that will fertilize a new area. The Center is changing too with a new logo and name change; from “Audubon Conservation and Education Center” to “Montana Audubon Center.” We care about both conservation and education, but the name now emphasizes our identity as Montana Audubon and our overall commitment to its mission.

Leadership changes have also happened—bidding farewell to the first Center Director and welcoming the next, allowing for new ideas and new areas for growth. While the Center has a very solid beginning in elementary and preschool curricula, expanded programs could include high school, college and adult education. More conservation models and practice may be in our future as well.

The third lesson is the possibility of accidents, such as the oil spill into the Yellowstone not far upriver from us in 2011. When accidents happen, the best defense is to mitigate the damage and protect from further harm. Of course, the best defense is

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Farewell to Darcie Howard and Frances Boyens

Just as global and climatic shifts prompt adaptation, the Montana Audubon Center current staff transitions will result in changes. After a 5-year tenure, Center Director Darcie Howard has stepped down and moved on to other ventures. Under her leadership, the Audubon Center experienced exponential growth in our program offerings to children and youth of the Billings area. She sincerely believed the only chance we have to pass on a lasting legacy of conservation is to get kids and families outside, observing and exploring in the natural world. Her passion for this mission was the driving force for the expansion of programs such as Audubon Naturalists in the Schools, summer and after-school camps, Naturalist-in-Training, and most recently, the establishment of Montana’s first

Nature Play Space. Her fine administrative and fundraising skills enabled her to successfully guide the Center’s first years in the permanent structure, the Norm Schoenthal Lab. We thank Darcie for her dedication and service in securing the Audubon Center as a permanent fixture of the Billings community, and wish her the very best in her future endeavors.

We also say goodbye to Frances Boyens, our Education Director, in her career move from the Center. Her sunny disposition and genuine enthusiasm for kids was infectious and served her well in the expansion of programs such as the Nighthawk Adventure program for families, and the Fledglings pre-school program launched this fall. Frances excelled in fostering community

partnerships, deepening the Center’s niche in Billings. While her tenure at the Montana Audubon Center was not long, we appreciated her skills and wish her the very best.

Tree planting dedication at the Montana Audubon Center.



prevention, and we are vigilant about it; we train all our workers in safety and health procedures, and strive to provide a safe and stable environment for staff, volunteers and participants. This means ensuring that our policies and procedures are documented, up-to-date, and clearly communicated. It means ensuring that our buildings and vehicles are well maintained. It means developing a solid infrastructure for all future growth.

Change can be for the better. At present, we’re experiencing an expanded level of growth, developing a solid infrastructure and in the process of hiring a new director.

The Center staff are a dedicated group of professionals who love the place and the people, and believe in the mission. All of this requires the continued support of our grantors, individual donors, Friends of the Center, and Montana Audubon. Several members of our advisory council are retiring after years of service and we’re looking for new members who can carry on the vision and advocacy with renewed commitment. Please contact Interim Center Director Rachel Van Wingen, if you are interested in becoming a member of the Advisory Council: 406-294-5099 or centerdirector@mtaudubon.org.

Board Spotlight: Jack Kirkley

Jack has been a tremendous asset to Montana Audubon for nearly 30 years. He hails from Columbus, Ohio, and coincidentally grew up only a few blocks from Janet Ellis (our Senior Policy Director). Jack received his Ph.D. in biology from Utah State University, and began his professional career at the University of Montana-Western in Dillon where he continues to teach today.

Jack's interest in nature began at a very young age. A neighbor first introduced him to butterflies, and he later joined his older brother on local birding forays. While in college at Ohio Wesleyan University, Jack landed a summer position studying nesting raptors in Jackson Hole with the renowned Craighead brothers. His fascination with birds of prey continues to this day, as typified by his annual nesting studies of Northern Goshawks since 1993.

Jack has served as president of Montana Audubon and the local Pintler chapter. He also served as conservation committee chair, membership secretary, and program chair for Pintler Audubon. Jack leads many international birding tours to Mexico and Central America for Montana Audubon, and frequently shares his scientific expertise



Jack Kirkley

on critical wildlife issues at the Montana State Legislature. Last year, Montana Audubon awarded Jack its prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award.

Jack is especially proud of Montana Audubon's legislative work, as well as its growing nature-based programs at the Montana Audubon Center in Billings. We are equally proud of Jack's outstanding commitment to effective leadership and governance of Montana Audubon. Thank you, Jack!

Board Members Migrate, Too

Montana Audubon appreciates the exceptional volunteerism from the following people who are stepping down from the board of directors.

Lou Ann Harris first served as Sacajawea Audubon (SAS) chapter representative in 2009, moving into an at-large position in 2012, and rounding out her board career as vice president for the past two years. Her sound judgment in all three capacities has contributed greatly to our organization.

A fond adieu to **Heidi Youmans**, who joined our board in 2012 and brought a wealth of experience as a wildlife biologist and accomplished Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks administrator.

We wish the best to departing board member Sharon Hanton for contributing her time and energy as the SAS chapter representative for the past two years. Many thanks to each person for their dedication and support for the conservation cause in Montana.

A Plateful of Birds

You can make a meaningful impact for the birds of Montana by choosing the Bird Habitat license plate.

Sporting several favorite Montana bird species—American Avocet, Ruddy Duck, Lewis's Woodpecker, and a trio of Black-billed Magpies, we are pleased to boast over 1,000 Bird Habitat plates across Montana! The initial cost is \$40, which includes a \$20 donation that directly supports our work to ensure long-term protection for critical wildlife habitat.

For more information, visit the Support Us section of our website, www.mtaudubon.org.



Our volunteers make a difference!

Many of our friends volunteer their time and expertise to Montana Audubon projects.

We want to recognize the following individuals—and thank them for their important work:

Susan Allred
John Ashley
Lana & Joe Batts
Susan Beall-Spencer
Riley Bell
Sandy Bradford
Bridget Bradshaw
Glenda & Stan Bradshaw
Edie Cartright
Phil Cohea
Jonda Crosby
Jerry & Lois Dalton
Bret Davis
Jan Donaldson
Ronan Dugan
Terri Eastman
Andrew Eberly
Dan Ellison
Paulette & Andy Epple
David Ewer
Ron Farmer
Bruce Fillingner
Barry Foster
Jane Fournier
Christian Frazza
Leo Freeman
Liz Gans
Judy & Tom Glendenning
Mary Anne Guggenheim
Ruth Handley

Marilyn Hayes
Carl & Liz Hiltunen
Suzy Holt
Sue Jackson
Ann Jones
Cedron Jones
Matthew Keefer
Jo Lace
Janene Lichtenberg
Cary Lund
Bob Martinka
Jodi Mattson
Greg & Sue McCormick
Larry McEvoy
Janice Miller
John Parker
Bill & Mary Anne Rainey
Jim Rogers
Bill Schalk
Sumner Sharpe
Brian Shovers
Sandy Shull
Chad & Jean Sigafoos
Nancy Silver Ewer
Kari Smith
Brett Stevenson
Margaret Strachan
JoAnne Thun
Sara Toubman
Stephen & Patty Turner

Jeff Van Tine
Chuck Ward
Fred Weisbecker
Tom Whittinger
Linda Winnie
Jerry Wozniak

Thanks to these businesses and service groups for their work at the Montana Audubon Center:
Yellowstone Boys & Girls Club
Builders Club
Cub Scouts Pack 36
Eagle Cliff 5th graders
Get Outside Montana teams
Girl Scout Troop 2566
Jaycees Volunteers
Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd
Montana State University, Billings Service Projects
and Adopt-a-Floor volunteer projects
Phillips 66 employees
Rimrock Foundation

Rocky Mountain College
Day of Champions and Freshman Service Project
Royal Bank of Canada employees
West Rotary
Yellowstone Christian College
YMCA

And many thanks to our volunteers who participated in the following Audubon Center work projects:
Earth Day event
Shepard Nature Play Space creation
Restoration Volunteer Saturdays

We greatly appreciate the dedication, time, and support our volunteers give to Montana Audubon!

Volunteer Spotlight

Bob Martinka

Born and raised on the East Coast, Bob Martinka's first visit to Montana was during high school, and he knew immediately it would become his home. After moving here, he was employed by MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks for 30 years and earned a Ph.D. in Fish and Wildlife Management from MSU.

Bob volunteers with us because, in his words, "Montana Audubon mimics my thoughts on conservation and the protection of wild critters and the land." As a volunteer, Bob provides most of the bird photographs used in our publications, including this newsletter. Bob donates custom birding and dragonfly tours for our Bird Festival auction and is an enthusiastic leader of our popular Centennial Valley and southwest Montana lek tours. These excursions are his favorite volunteer activities. He is currently serving as an at-large member on our board of directors and sits on the finance and program committees.



Bob provides most of the bird photographs used in our publications, including this newsletter.

For Bob, volunteering gives something back. He has met remarkable people through Montana Audubon and credits chasing birds as the impetus for international travel, having done so on six continents (and the seventh in the works). Bob Martinka, birders across Montana appreciate all you have done, are doing, and will do!

Bird Festival Soared in Helena

The 16th Annual Wings Across the Big Sky Bird Festival was a complete success due to the tremendous support of Last Chance Audubon Society and its many members who worked enthusiastically and tirelessly. Held for the first time in Helena, we welcomed birders from across Montana as well as several out-of-state attendees. Participants enjoyed wonderful field trips, inspiring local speakers, and comfortable accommodations. We were entertained, enlightened, and informed by two exceptional presentations from our knowledgeable and articulate keynote speaker, Scott Weidensaul. Thanks to the generous raffle prize

Thanks to our Audubon Heroes

Montana Audubon recently recognized the following Montanans for their exemplary conservation work:

Brian Shovers and **Jo Lace** were honored with our *Lifetime Achievement Award* for their decades of serving as the “glue” that holds Helena’s Last Chance Audubon Chapter together—as well as being worker bees for many of the Chapter’s activities and programs.



Vince Yannone was chosen *Educator of the Year* in recognition of his 25 years at Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks as an educator and ambassador for wildlife. We applaud Vince

because he entertains us—and makes us marvel—at the natural world.

Amy Cilimburg

was recognized as *Conservationist of the Year* for her incredible devotion and work for Montana Audubon during the last eight years, working tirelessly on climate change issues as well as overseeing much of our bird conservation work.



Mark Your Calendars!
June 3–4, 2016
in Missoula

wings MONTANA AUDUBON
across the big sky

Plan now to join us at the Holiday Inn—Downtown Missoula for three days of adventure, education, and fun! Five Valleys Audubon, with support from Bitterroot Audubon, is already planning some fabulous field trips, speakers, and activities to delight and educate.

contributors, including Abbott Valley Homestead, Birds and Beasleys, and Susie Maclin. The Last Chance Audubon volunteers gave so generously of their time and talents, making this one of the best festivals ever!

Harriet Marble

received our *Citizen Scientist of the Year Award* for her decades of bird observations and careful record keeping, including conducting 30 years of Breeding Bird Survey routes, undertaking annual raptor routes since 1977, serving on the Montana Bird Records Committee for decades, and contributing 14,279 observations for 267 bird species to the state’s bird database.



Jane Beasley merited a *Special Achievement Award* for being a source of information, inspiration, and a Helena community resource for its bird-loving citizens.

Jay Sumner

received a *Special Achievement Award* because of his life-long devotion to bird conservation. In particular, we recognized Jay’s coordination of intensive Peregrine Falcon monitoring in Montana, beginning in the late 1990s.



C’mon Out! Join a Christmas Bird Count Near You

Toss aside the winter blues and get outside to participate in one (or more!) of Montana Audubon’s 30+ Christmas Bird Counts (CBC). This year’s CBCs will take place between December 14, 2015 and January 5, 2016. Details about when and how to participate will be posted by December 1 on our website, www.mtaudubon.org.

Christmas Bird Counts are free half- or full-day events. Everyone is welcome—CBC leaders pair experienced birdwatchers with those less experienced, to survey different areas within an established 15-mile radius.

Annual CBC information helps scientists understand our changing world. In fact, the National Audubon report on birds and climate change relied heavily on CBC data. Last year, 771 birdwatchers tallied 142 species during 32 counts in

Montana. Bald Eagles were seen on almost every count; Canada Geese and **Mallard Ducks** were the most commonly seen species.



Amy Cilimburg Will Direct Missoula’s Climate Change Work

Eight short years ago, Montana Audubon hired a fresh new staff member to work part-time on global climate change issues: Amy Cilimburg. A few years later, we put Amy’s master’s degree to work when we made her full-time by adding bird conservation to her duties. Since her arrival at Montana Audubon, we can say without a doubt that Amy has been instrumental in our successful conservation work.

Unfortunately for us, Amy is moving on from Montana Audubon and will now work locally to help Missoula respond to global climate

change. Amy’s new job is director of Climate Smart Missoula. She will continue to talk to anyone who will listen about the need to act on this critical issue—and how each of us can take simple steps to make a difference.

Montana Audubon will miss Amy’s tireless work on climate change and bird conservation issues and projects, her insistence that we get much more work accomplished when we work collaboratively and with partners, and her sound, common-sense approach to problems in all shapes and sizes. We wish her much success in her new job!

FLY HIGH ON MONTANA AUDUBON’S SUMMER 2016 TOURS

Rocky Mountain Front

June 17–19, 2016

NEW THIS YEAR!

The Rocky Mountain Front is a spectacular, diverse region that supports the full complement of Montana’s wildlife, from grizzly bears to bobolinks. This tour will explore wetlands, native prairies, and forested habitats looking for the many bird species found on this landscape where prairie meets mountain.



Centennial Valley & Red Rock Lakes

May 27–29, 2016

This popular tour explores Montana’s Centennial Valley and Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. The remote, scenic, bird-rich area has optimal diversity of migrant and resident birds. In addition to Trumpeter Swans, we will see abundant shorebirds, waterfowl, grebes, songbirds, raptors, and more.



Each tour is 3-days/2-nights and costs \$520/person (includes lodging, meals, and group transportation from select Montana cities TBD; \$150/person deposit reserves your place).

For more information and reservations: Montana Audubon office 406-443-3949 or email mtaudubon@mtaudubon.org.

Lou Ann Harris

The mountains and valleys of southwestern Montana hold great meaning for Bozeman native Lou Ann Harris; she grew up hiking and camping amongst them, taking in all their power and beauty from an early age. Her formative years exploring those landscapes would forever affect the trajectory of her life. Lou Ann graduated from Montana State University with a degree in film & television and stayed close to home for a long while before relocating to Bellevue, WA in 1992 to work in a family business. But the pull of Montana remained strong.

"It never failed, whenever we drove back to visit, seeing the Bridger Range in the distance was always really moving for me." Eventually, she returned to Bozeman with her husband in 2006, this time to stay for good. "It was time to come home; I was tired of the big city life and wanted to resettle in that beautiful landscape where I grew up." In 2007, Lou Ann became involved with Sacajawea Audubon, to continue fostering her decades-long love of birding and conservation. Through her involvement with the chapter, she discovered Montana Audubon.

The rest, as they say, is history. "I began with Montana Audubon as a chapter representative and joined the board in spring of 2009, eventually becoming vice president."



Lou Ann Harris

"I see Montana Audubon as the statewide voice for birds and non-game wildlife."

Among other accomplishments, Lou Ann used her communications experience to help organize and promote the highly successful 2014 Wings Across the Big Sky bird festival in Bozeman and spearheaded an extensive rebranding effort for Montana Audubon which has substantially elevated its visibility. While she will soon transition off the board, she remains a committed donor. "I see Montana Audubon as the statewide voice for birds and non-game wildlife. There are so many threats out there now, like energy development, climate change, and residential sprawl. Having a long-term presence in Helena and with chapters around the state makes Montana Audubon an important conservation player in Montana and one that I am pleased to support."

Grants for Wildlife Projects

Apply by December 11, 2015

Do you know of a school, organization, or researcher working on a project benefiting nongame wildlife? Montana Audubon is offering small grants (\$500 maximum/\$1,700 total) for wildlife research and education projects through our Audubon Wildlife Fund of Montana endowment. Funds can be used for mileage, equipment, printing, and communications, but not salaries, stipends, and personal equipment.



In 2015, grants supported the Community Bird Festival in Polson, purchase of equipment for wildlife-related courses at Salish Kootenai College, a monofilament recycling project at Missouri Headwaters State Park/Important Bird Area, and a bird migration acoustic monitoring project in the Bitterroot.

To apply for a grant, visit

www.mtaudubon.org/about/wildlifegrants/

Applications must be emailed (preferred) or postmarked by Friday, December 11, 2015. Grant recipients will be announced by February 1, 2016. For more information, contact Janet Ellis at jellis@mtaudubon.org.

IN MEMORY OF OUR FRIEND JEAN SMITH

Jean Smith was a long-time member of both Last Chance Audubon and Montana Audubon. As a biology professor at Carroll College, Jean taught ornithology classes. She also developed and maintained an extensive collection of bird skins that is still used today in birding workshops and at educational events such as International Migratory Bird Day. Jean loved the outdoors and brought her love of nature to Audubon through the creation and oversight of the local chapter's Habitat Protection grant program.

Jean traveled the world photographing nature and people. She shared her insights and bird sightings by giving many public programs, transporting us to the far corners of the globe. A field trip with Jean was a learning experience and so much fun! And, Jean was generous; her support of Montana Audubon was unprecedented—she made the single largest gift in our growing organization's history.

We'll miss Jean's passion for birds and bird conservation, as well as her invaluable knowledge, her energy, her humor, and her insight.



Memorial Gifts

Few tributes are as lasting as a gift that helps preserve Montana's birds and their habitats. We owe a special thanks to those of you who recently made a gift in memory of:

Bill Ballard
Floyd Dishman
Charles Edwards

Tom Herzig
Campbell Massey
Jean Smith



**Please remember
Montana Audubon in
your estate plans.**

Ready, Set... Launch!



Montana Audubon recently launched a stunning new website. It incorporates the vivid design and colors of our “sky-blue” branding, is easy to navigate, and features the latest conservation news and Montana Audubon program information at the click of a button. Gorgeous images of your favorite bird species and Montana landscapes are sprinkled throughout.

The new www.mtaudubon.org will allow us to interact and communicate with our supporters more easily, and substantially elevate Montana Audubon’s profile and presence on the web.

To celebrate the launch, we’re hosting a raffle for two spots on our popular Centennial Valley 2016 Birding Tour! Simply visit www.mtaudubon.org and enter your contact information on the home page for a chance to win. The drawing will occur November 30.

www.mtaudubon.org



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