

spring 2015



GO OUTSIDE AND PLAY!

*Montana Audubon Center
to offer Billings' first
nature preschool*

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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,

Audubon's grassroots structure is a powerful force for conservation in Montana. Our network of local chapters work with Montana Audubon to achieve our statewide mission of wildlife conservation—we are truly greater than the sum of our parts!

I sincerely appreciate the important conservation work each chapter does in their local communities, both independently and in partnership with Montana Audubon. This point was well-illustrated at the Flathead chapter board meeting I recently attended.

For many years, the Flathead chapter has played a pivotal role in the Important Bird Area (IBA) program. Their devoted stewardship of the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area IBA is legendary. A few years ago Montana Audubon and the chapter worked together to designate the North Shore Flathead Lake IBA, greatly assisting local efforts to protect this critical, highly threatened habitat.

At the meeting, we discussed the potential for future collaborative efforts to designate and protect additional IBAs. The chapter was enthusiastic about working with Montana Audubon to nominate additional IBAs, especially key wetlands critical to rare and declining migratory birds. These wetland sites are already a strong conservation focus for the Flathead Land Trust (FLT); the potential to achieve on-the-ground conservation of these sites is profound. IBA designation can serve to further emphasize the conservation value of these lands, and may help FLT and others secure much-needed funding to permanently protect these critical habitats.

Although the IBA program is voluntary and nonbinding, it has a strong scientific foundation, a 30-year track record, and worldwide credibility. Montana Audubon looks forward to working with each of our local chapters, as well as land trusts and others to continue to advance the IBA conservation program throughout the region.

Please know that Montana Audubon is most appreciative of your ongoing generosity and activism—thank you for responding to our periodic Action Alerts and for participating actively in the legislative process at the local, state, and federal levels—you are making a tremendous difference for conservation. Montana Audubon can only achieve our ambitious conservation goals with your support!

Yours in conservation,

Steve Hoffman, Executive Director



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STRUCTURING SOME UNSTRUCTURED PLAY

This fall, the Montana Audubon Center will offer Billings' first nature preschool, called Fledglings.



It's a brisk, slightly foggy morning as my five-year-old self grabs her jacket and runs out the door to "help" my father cut wood. Really, I am just heading straight for the ankle-deep stream that flows through the eight acres of forest behind my home.

I sit at my favorite spot next to the stream and feel the soft moss between my fingers, imagining myself a deer, curled up and sleeping soundly until dawn breaks. After the sun warms my face, I decide it is time to cross the stream. I have spent days trying to balance myself on the log that spans the stream, but so far can only accomplish it with the aid of a large walking stick. I am determined to do it on my own today. For the next 20 minutes I try, falling into the shallow water and soaking my boots each time.

As I stand in the water, frustrated, I notice two water beetles swimming in front of me, and squat down to watch them swim in circles around each other, making patterns in the water that I trace with my finger in the air. As I am about to catch them I hear my father call me. I jump up, yelling, "coming!" and head toward his voice, knowing I will be back soon to conquer the log crossing.

How many of you spent the majority of your childhood exploring the outdoors as I did? My guess is, most of you. My outdoor experience growing up was a key factor in my cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development. In the example above, I tested my balance, coordination, and endurance.

I learned about disappointment and how to manage frustration with my failings. My experience helped me develop my imagination, observation skills, and manage

risk. Finally, because I spent my childhood outside, I found a connection to nature that in turn developed my understanding of conservation.

A 2006 Cornell University study demonstrated that children under the age of 11 who have positive experiences in wild nature, tend to develop a strong conservation ethic as adults. Playing outdoors helps create the next generation of conservation leaders.

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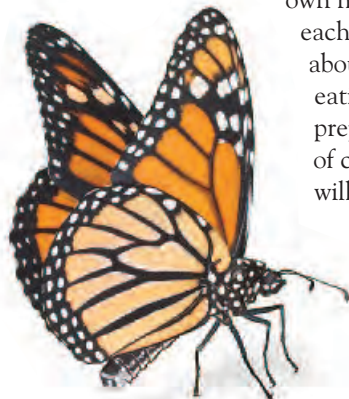
A 2006 Cornell University study demonstrated that children under the age of 11 who have positive experiences in wild nature tend to develop a strong conservation ethic as adults.

Learn more
about the Fledglings
Preschool at
www.mtacec.org.

Every day, the Montana Audubon Center's school and public programs provide outdoor experiences for children. This fall, the Center will offer Billings' first nature preschool, called Fledglings.

Combining early childhood education and conservation education is an effective method to prepare children for school and life. Close and constant contact with nature contributes to young childrens' motor, sensory, social, emotional, moral, and cognitive development, adding to the child's physical and mental well-being. Our Fledglings will spend three hours of their four-hour day outdoors, regardless of the weather. The season and the interests of the children will drive the curriculum.

Students will make their own healthy snack each day, learning about healthy eating and preparation. And, of course, there will be plenty of unstructured outdoor play!



Unstructured outdoor play is when the magic happens. Children learn to work together as they fill a wagon with rocks, they develop cognitive skills by finding a solution to building the best fort, assess risk as they try to scale a log, and develop observation skills by studying an insect. Many of the unstructured play times will happen at the Montana Audubon Center's nearly constructed (estimated completion May 16, 2015) Shepard Nature Play Space. This is not a playground, it is a place of natural obstacles. Children will be able to explore dens and tunnels, hop along a "tree-cookie" pathway, climb a dirt pile, balance on logs, pump water from a hand pump, build forts, play music with natural objects, and even have a quiet place to read or observe. In addition to the nature play space, we are fortunate to have acres of parkland along the Yellowstone River, adjacent to the Center. By the end of the school year, our Fledglings will have an intimate connection to the Yellowstone watershed.

We may never return to a time when kids roam freely, exploring the natural world on their own, but we can provide similar experiences to our children within today's social parameters. The Fledglings program will accomplish just that while nurturing our future conservation leaders.

Our Fledglings will spend three hours of their four-hour day outdoors, regardless of the weather.



GO, FLY, WIN!

MONTANA AUDUBON
AT THE MONTANA
64TH LEGISLATURE



Bob Mortinka

Bruce Capdeville

The 2015 legislative session has been a bit wacky, a little bright, and thankfully somewhat less destructive for wildlife than the past few sessions. We wish we could say the same for climate and clean energy bills.

Our rookie lobbying team of Bird Conservation Associate Amy Seaman and her assistant, Jill Feldhusen, are surely thankful this session is entering the home stretch. With great advice from Jake Troyer of Sleeping Giant Communications, the Audubon team is flying around to ensure programs and laws adequately protect our wildlife and their treasured habitats, and promote smart energy and environmental policy. Following in the footsteps of Janet Ellis, our veteran lobbyist-turned-legislator, is not easy—and now we know that, yes, it does take three people to fill Janet’s shoes!

Montana Audubon’s biggest effort is moving the Sage-Grouse Stewardship Act, SB261, through the legislative process. We’ve made it through the Senate and, as of press time, still need to pass the House Appropriations Committee and the entire House before hitting Governor Bullock’s desk. SB261 creates a framework for implementing the Governor’s Executive Order by establishing the Montana Sage-Grouse Oversight Team (MSGOT) and a process to manage the stewardship fund. Once passed, it will set in motion strong sage-grouse conservation. Audubon will play an important role,

lending our expertise to MSGOT while the sage-grouse stewardship plan is enacted and improved over time.

In other wildlife-related news, we’re working closely with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) to pass a hunting and fishing license fee bill, strengthen penalties for hunter transgressions, and retain management of any (potentially) relocated bison. Most importantly, the fee structure bill allows FWP to continue many programs required for managing our state’s wildlife. Major reductions in FWP funding would jeopardize the conservation of birds and other non-game wildlife in Montana.

Fighting for clean energy and greater energy industry transparency has been an uphill battle this legislative session. Within the first 45 days most bipartisan, widely supported “net metering” bills were tabled in committee. These bills would have made local solar power more accessible and included allowing aggregate net metering, extending the time a solar household can “roll over” energy credits, and allowing community net metering. Also tabled were proactive bills requiring the oil and gas industry to secure third-party groundwater testing within one mile of proposed oil or gas

wells, bills that would have prohibited earthen pits or ponds during oil and gas development, and a bill requiring disclosure of hydraulic fracturing chemicals—all common-sense bills that will have to wait another year.

With increasing oil and gas development, and two recent spills into the Yellowstone River, water quality bills are hard to ignore. We’ve worked to defeat bills attempting to lower water quality requirements for streams and rivers, and we supported a bill protecting the Smith River from harmful effects of the proposed copper mine. One good bill we’re supporting will mandate collection and availability of pipeline-river crossing data in Montana, of which there are more than 3,000.

Finally, the February 16 rally of more than 500 Montanans—including Audubon Board members and friends—showing their support for public lands made it obvious how unpopular those proposals to transfer public lands are. We’ve worked alongside our partners to table a handful of bills focused on using taxpayer money to study transfer options, prohibiting the sale of state land, and more.

Through April, we will continue to advocate for Montana’s wildlife, habitats, clean water, air and public lands in the halls of the capitol. The conservation of our priceless outdoor heritage depends on it.

Left, our lobbying team of Amy Seaman and Jill Feldhusen, along with Amy Cilimborg. Our biggest effort is moving the Sage-grouse Stewardship Act through the legislative process. Below, more than 500 Montanans rallied to support public lands.





Bob Martinka



WFO Conference in Billings, June 10–14, 2015

Here's a first for Montana: the Western Field Ornithologists (WFO) will be in Billings for their 40th annual conference. Field trips will tour a variety of habitats from the high mountains (Black Rosy-Finch) to grasslands (Sprague's Pipits). One could see courting McCown's and Chestnut-collared Longspurs in their finest plumage, along with **Upland Sandpipers** and Lark Buntings. History buffs will delight in viewing the Little Bighorn Battlefield where Custer saw his last Sharp-tailed Grouse.

Workshops include field identification of sparrows (Jon Dunn) and flycatchers (Dan Casey), natural history of owls (Denver Holt), bird sound identification

(Nathan Pieplow), raptors (Steve Hoffman), and more. Friday and Saturday afternoon science sessions will provide updates on the most current avian research from the region. The Saturday evening banquet will feature Stephen Dinsmore's keynote address on Mountain Plovers. Ed Harper and Nathan Pieplow will again offer their ever-popular sessions on bird ID by sight and sound.

If you are not currently on the WFO email list, please email: erpfromca@aol.com, include your full name, city, and state of residence. WFO members attend its conferences at a reduced rate and enjoy early registration. If you are not currently a WFO member, join at www.westernfieldornithologists.org/join.php.



Great Finds Funded

Audubon Wildlife Fund of Montana, our permanent endowment, funds annual grants that support research and education projects directed toward wildlife and wildlife habitat. Congratulations to the following 2015 awardees.

Salish Kootenai College (SKC).

SKC, a tribal college located in the Mission Valley on the Flathead Indian Reservation, is expanding their Wildlife and Fisheries Program. Funds will be used to purchase wildlife skulls and replicas, tracks, and field guides for use in wildlife-related courses and community outreach (awarded \$200).

Montana Audubon. Loose fishing line harms wildlife, including fish, turtles, waterfowl, Osprey, songbirds, and Bald Eagles. This pilot project will build, place, and monitor one monofilament recycling tube (MRT)—a modified PVC pipe—at the fishing access site associated with Missouri Headwaters State Park Important Bird Area (IBA). If successful, we hope to install more MRTs at other IBAs around Montana (awarded \$300). (See related story on page 12.)

Janene Lichtenberg, the new department head of the Wildlife and Fisheries Program at Salish Kootenai College, was awarded a program grant from our Wildlife Fund. She is also involved in the Confederated Salish & Kootenai's annual Bird Day Festival.

Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes.

The third annual community Bird Day Festival is coming up on May 9, bringing together a mixture of art, science, and tribal culture related to birds and conservation. SKC and Montana Audubon are involved—it's great fun and grows annually (awarded \$490).

Florence-Carlton High School and MPG Ranch.

This Bitterroot Valley high school offers a unique course focused on birds and bird ecology. We will fund autonomous recording units (ARUs) to document bird migration phenomena. MPG will work with students to evaluate the potential for large-scale deployment of ARUs and the ability of citizen scientists to assist. It will also allow the first comparisons of nocturnal flight calls from different locations in this valley (awarded \$750).



Help Fill the Silent Auction's Treasure Chest!

Think fun, think good-natured bidding wars, and think treasures. We're looking for choice items for a good cause: please donate your treasures to the silent auction at Montana Audubon's Bird Festival, June 5-7, in Helena.

In the past, people have donated art, pottery, bird feeders and houses, and delicious homemade cookies, preserves, and more. This year's auction will benefit our public policy program and the Last Chance Audubon Society.

Donations may be delivered to a Montana Audubon office, Last Chance Audubon Board members, or brought with you to the bird festival. Thanks for your generous help!



Reel It In!

Attention all you fishing, floating, boating, birding, wildlife enthusiasts. This summer we will launch a monofilament recycling project at a luscious, riparian, Important Bird Area: Missouri Headwaters State Park. We will build, place, and monitor a recycling tube at a fishing access site in the park.

Monofilament is clear, single-strand nylon line preferred by anglers and used with most fishing reels and nets. As many know, Montana's residents and visitors flock to fish our state's mighty rivers each season for a trophy catch. In 2011, 267,000 people fished Montana waters, spending more than \$10 million on line, leader, and other tackle. Some line and tackle is inevitably lost through breakage on snags, a weighty catch, or improper disposal. Any time loose monofilament finds its way off the reel and into riparian habitat it becomes an immediate, chronic, and occasionally toxic hazard that may entangle or entrap wildlife. Regional biologists describe gruesome incidents with Grebes, Pelicans, Orioles, Robins, River Otters, Steelhead, and even Sandhill Cranes. Riparian-dependent birds (33 state species of concern)—particularly



Gathering and containing hazardous monofilament in a modified PVC pipe will directly reduce entanglement threats at Missouri Headwaters State Park.

those reliant on fishing (e.g., Bald Eagle, Osprey, Belted Kingfisher, Mergansers)—are especially threatened.

Gathering and containing this hazardous material in a modified PVC pipe will directly reduce entanglement threats along the river, will increase public awareness, and draw connections between responsible stewardship and wildlife values. As a bonus, we'll recycle the monofilament. Our goal is to educate and engage volunteers to remove fishing line from areas close to Missouri Headwaters State Park to reduce harmful effects to priority species.



Well-Deserved Preening!

Do you know someone who deserves recognition for their conservation achievements? We are seeking nominations for our annual awards:

- **LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT** For a volunteer who has shaped an Audubon Chapter and/or Montana Audubon.
- **EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR** For outstanding teaching programs about birds, other wildlife, and habitat.
- **CONSERVATIONIST OF THE YEAR** For significant wildlife conservation achievement.
- **CITIZEN SCIENTIST OF THE YEAR** For contributing significantly to our understanding of birds through monitoring/observations.
- **SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT** For extraordinary commitment to birds and habitat on a special project or activity.

Nominations must be received by May 15, 2015; the award ceremony will be during our Bird Festival, June 5–7, in Helena. Send us an email (mtaudubon@mtaudubon.org) and we'll send you a nomination form. Questions? Contact the Montana Audubon office.



Avian Adoption Alternatives Abound

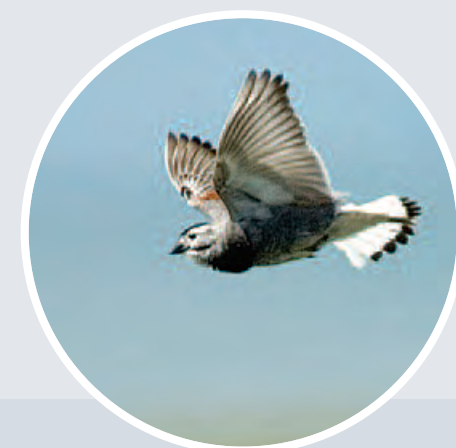
Ah, spring—the birds return, and we start counting. Our Audubon Adopt-a-Lek volunteers are already afield, for which we and our Greater Sage-grouse populations are grateful. And the hummingbirds are heading this way; we hope you will consider joining hummingbirdsathome.org and adopt a backyard or neighborhood patch, tracking just when these migrants arrive and what they do.

And now, there's one more adoption possibility open to savvy birders. We are part of an effort to enhance the North American Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), which monitors the status and trends of bird populations. Thousands of dedicated participants survey a 25 mile route (once each early summer) along established routes across the continent. This year we're adding 42 new routes (to our existing 65) to increase survey density,

McCown's Longspurs are one of the species we hope to learn more about with additional Breeding Bird Surveys in the grasslands of Montana.

particularly in grassland areas of Montana. These new routes will add to the existing database, providing additional information to land managers, researchers, and conservationists alike.

We'd love you to adopt a route, lending your eyes, ears, and expertise to this citizen science effort. We are now actively recruiting volunteers for new routes, and we hope to offer mileage assistance. If you're talented with bird identification, especially vocalizations, please contact Amy Seaman; aseaman@mtaudubon.org.



Bob Marinka



Wake Up and Jump In: Birds and Climate, Part 2

Remember our fall newsletter? A beautiful Red-naped Sapsucker gracing the cover, headlined "Wake Up Call", led to the feature article on Audubon's "Birds and Climate" report. This study models future climatic distributions for North American birds, identifying more than 300 imperiled species as we move through this century. Montana Audubon has been crisscrossing the state to get this Wake Up Call to Montanans, sharing the implications for Montana birds as well as what each of us can do. Hundreds of Auduboners have explored climate solutions and discussed hopeful activities happening right now in our local communities. Personal actions abound. Beyond that, it's a mixed bag—community solutions are coming forward, yet we're less than hopeful for climate action from this Montana legislative session (see page 8) or in Washington D.C..

Internationally, there are positives and negatives, despair and hope.

To be hopeful means to be uncertain about the future, to be tender toward the possibilities, to be dedicated to change all the way down to the bottom of your heart.

—Rebecca Solnit, Author

We are optimistic that, starting this spring, we can enhance our on-the-ground conservation work utilizing the "Birds and Climate" report. We'll take the detailed maps that predict future "climate envelopes" for each species, and overlay these with ecologically sensitive habitat maps. Peering into the future with maps and modeling can help us plan our habitat projects and efforts toward protecting priority bird species in Important Bird Areas and other critical spots. This will be a focus of our work in 2015 and beyond, enhancing conservation so that spring always remains a season of color, song, and hope.



Butterflies & Moths & Bees, Oh My!

An incredible 80 percent of all crop plants require pollinators to ensure survival into the future. The bees of North America—4,000 native species—are the primary pollinators of our crop plants and wildflowers. Despite their crucial role, native bees have suffered devastating losses due to extensive habitat encroachment and pollution.

In an effort to educate the community about pollinators, we have developed a new **Pollinator Garden Program** focused on empowering children to create and maintain wildflower habitat for our soon-to-be-installed beekeeping area. As our project progresses, children will have the chance to become Junior Bee

Keepers and earn field study badges, including counting bees, determining bee health,



South-side & Self-driven

“We get to choose what we want to learn about?” asked a student from Ponderosa Elementary at the first meeting of the new **Montana Audubon Nature Club**. “Well, I want to learn about the stars!” This exclamation started a waterfall of ideas as the 28 first- to sixth-grade students shouted out their interests. “I want to catch frogs.” “I want to learn how to plant a garden.” “I want to find animal tracks.” Chaos quickly turned into consensus as club members agreed on their final topics for the spring session. “We want to engage these students to experience what interests them. A student-led program ensures that the students will immerse themselves in the activity,” said Education Director Frances Boyens.

estimating amount of honey produced, and assessing the health of wildflowers. Children will also have the opportunity to create and maintain natural nest sites, such as nesting blocks and stem bundles, in the wildflower garden. This project is made possible by the generous funding of the Captain Planet Foundation.



In addition, an **Indoor Growing Corner** seed station will ensure that the growing aspect of pollinator restoration work is transparent and accessible to the children. The station will allow students to start seeds and monitor their progress, learning to distinguish how certain plants attract various pollinators.

Join us in celebrating the amazing role of bees in our world. If you are interested in participating, volunteering or want to learn more, please contact Trinity Pierce at restoration@mtaudubon.org.

The Montana Audubon Nature Club meets once a month at each of the three south-side elementary schools (Orchard, Ponderosa, and Newman). More than 80 percent of the students attending these schools come from low-income families; there is no cost to the students thanks to a grant from the Charlotte Martin Foundation. Many students cannot attend our after-school programs at the Center because they lack transportation. Meeting at the school provides students the full experience of learning about the habitats found in their schoolyard. Driven by their interests, each club will establish an overall service project to accomplish by the end of the year—a recycling center at the school, or a pollinator garden, or more.



Adventure in Nature Summer Camps 2015

Looking for a camp that will provide your child with opportunities to explore, learn, challenge themselves, and make new friends? We offer camps for 4- to 14-year-olds, age-appropriate and filled with learning and fun! Some themes this year include: Where the Wild Things Are, CSI-Critter Scene Investigation, Gourmet Wild Chef, and Wildlife Biologist in Training. We also offer a Junior Naturalist-in-Training program for 9th and 10th graders and a paid stipend Naturalist-in-Training program for 11th and 12th graders. Learn more at www.mtacec.org.



Chrissy Webb



Get Outside, Montana—Again and Again!

Since 2011, the first Sunday in June has provided more than 1,485 children and adults a full day of outdoor activities, including archery, knot-tying, packing a backpack, wildflower scavenger hunt, and a visit from Smokey Bear. This June event is the official kick-off to the popular eight-week, back-to-nature Get Outside

Montana, a family-friendly competition. Each summer, more parks and activities are added to the teams' passport, providing unique opportunities to spend time outside with their families while competing for prizes. Register and find out more about this free program at www.getoutsidemontana.com.



Board Members Migrate, Too

Welcome two incoming Montana Audubon board members! **Donald Roberts**, a retired oral surgeon, represents the Montana Audubon Center. Donald will remain on the Center Advisory Council as well, where he has served since the Center's inception.



Longtime birder **Rose Leach** represents Five Valleys Audubon; she comes to us with a masters in wildlife biology and years of involvement with her local chapter.



We wish the best to departing board member **Pat Little**, who served as Five Valleys Audubon Chapter's representative since April 2012. We thank him for his dedicated service and support for the conservation cause in Montana.

Feathering Our Nest: David Cronenwett

We have hired our new Development Specialist! Many of you will recognize author David Cronenwett through his column, "On Birding," that appears in the monthly eNews, as well as in the *Helena Independent Record* each month. We have contracted with David for additional writing projects, such as spring and year-end appeals, as well as foundation research and proposal/report editing.



David has extensive experience identifying potential donors, cultivating and stewarding current donors, and creating fundraising materials. His work with The Nature Conservancy gave him a unique perspective on what motivates people to support conservation; he will help us implement our vision of a robust major gifts program. His strong organizational skills will be essential for establishing the structure of this endeavor.

David is a long-time conservationist and naturalist, an avid birder who strongly supports the Montana Audubon mission to protect native birds and their habitat. We appreciate his ability to hit the ground running, and are excited to welcome him to our team.

Board Spotlight: Ron Farmer

Ron has served capably on Montana Audubon's Board of Directors for nearly two years, working the past six months as treasurer and chair of the Finance Committee. Ron, a CPA, grew up near Houston, Texas. He received his MBA from the University of Colorado, and also graduated from Pacific Coast Banking School. Ron and Cheryl (his wife of 44 years) moved to Bozeman in 1983 so Ron could accept a position with First Security Bank. Ron was chosen as president of the bank in 2002, and retired in 2012.

Ron and Cheryl have been avid birders for 35 years. While living in Greeley, Colorado, they often visited a nearby wetland to observe the diverse and abundant waterbirds. Ron remembers being especially fascinated by the camouflaged appearance and unique behavior of the American Bittern. He is especially fond of birding Montana's unbroken prairie. He and Cheryl also enjoy birding farther afield, in Central and South America, Europe and throughout the United States (especially Texas).

Not long after his arrival, Ron became involved in Bozeman's Sacajawea Chapter, participating in field trips and serving as its treasurer for 12 years. He is excited about his current board work for Montana Audubon, and he is especially appreciative of the organization's strong focus on grassland and wetland habitat conservation. Ron's outstanding financial expertise, calm demeanor, and business-like approach make him an extremely valuable member of the Montana Audubon team. Thank you, Ron!



Star Volunteers

These Montana Audubon volunteers have offered time, expertise, passion, elbow grease, advice, and a sense of humor as they've helped with recent events, projects, programs, and more. Thank you!

Sabrina Ambrezewicz
Katrina Asbell
Jane Beasley
Glenda Bradshaw
Cindy Butler
Lois Dalton
Shari Dayton
Jan Donaldson
Ashley Drury
Richard Dykstra

Kalvin Eisenach
Emily Hannaman
Kate Hansen
Liz Hiltunen
Suzi Holt
Hannah Hostetter
Sue Jackson
Jeff Kitchens
Boris Krizek
Jo Lace

Jennifer Lyman
Marian Lyman-Kirst
Bob Mackin
Bob Martinka
Sheila McKay
Precious McKenzie-Stearns
Janice Miller
Shelby Miller
Lorna Milne-Motl

Gail Moser
Maryann Rainey
Donald Roberts
Brian Shovers
Spencer Shropshire
Sandy Shull
Don Skaar
Wyatt Stearns
Holly Walker
Chuck Ward

Volunteer Spotlight

Chuck Ward

Chuck Ward began volunteering at the Montana Audubon Center this past summer, working with Trinity Pierce on maintenance, infrastructure, and land restoration projects. He has helped Trinity get the riding mower back in operation, hung the new gate near the osprey nest, built stairs up to the storage area, and managed an Eagle Scout project painting the back room and building storage shelving. In the next few months he will construct the new kiosk at the Shepard Nature Play Space and manage the construction of a shed being built by another Eagle Scout.

Chuck's grandfather ran a small farm and his father was an aircraft mechanic, so he learned how to use tools at an early age. Since retiring from 35 years of federal land management, with over 20 years in law enforcement, he has been working on home improvement projects and volunteering with the Billings Police



Chuck uses his time, tools, and skills to improve the quality of life in the community.

Department. He has worked on trail and tool maintenance projects in the Beartooth Ranger District and tutored math and reading at Arrowhead Elementary School. Volunteering is a way for him to "pay forward" the time and effort people invested in him while he was growing up. Chuck said, "I have time, tools, and skills, and I get personal satisfaction from helping to improve the quality of life in my community."

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 details, visit www.mtaudubon.org/support/store.html#plate.



2014 ANNUAL REPORT

Another great year for Montana Audubon!

Our growing influence toward the appreciation and conservation of birds and their habitats across Montana is only possible because of generous, ongoing support from a diversity of sources. Many thanks to our steadfast contributors!

Our fiscal year recently changed (from 7/1–6/30 to 10/1–9/30). The following is Montana Audubon's financial information for the 15-month period ending 9/30/14.

We continue to build our permanent endowments at both the Montana Community Foundation and Billings Community Foundation (BCF). BCF manages three separate endowment accounts, for the Audubon Center, for our Public Policy program, and for general support of Montana Audubon.

Statement of Financial Position

Unrestricted Net Assets	\$ 460,334
Board Designated Endowment	\$ 632,103
Temporarily Restricted Net Assets	\$ 103,963
Permanently Restricted Net Assets	\$ 51,744
Total Net Assets	\$ 1,248,144

Revenue

Individuals	\$ 394,272
Grants & Contracts	\$ 391,952
Earned	\$ 368,291
Sales & Other	\$ 120,482
Total	\$ 1,274,997

Expenses

Programs	\$ 953,723
Administrative	\$ 120,987
Fundraising	\$ 43,367
Total	\$ 1,118,077

Montana Audubon is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization under 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code. This financial information is drawn from audited financial statements by the accounting firm Douglas Wilson & Company, PC.

Donor Profile

Jean Setter



Each spring, high in the Little Belt Mountains, snowpack loosens and begins its trickle into quiet, unnamed streams. Many rivulets flow together here, gain momentum and coalesce, eventually becoming the Judith River. This waterway descends through dense forest, pine savanna and on to open prairie before joining the Missouri, many miles to the north. Herds of elk, mule deer and pronghorn share this wild landscape with a host of raptors and native songbirds.

The Judith country has always been rich in wildlife and natural wonder and it was here in 1922, that long-time Montana Audubon supporter Jean Setter was born. She vividly remembers the freedom of growing up on her family ranch southwest of Utica, and how the experience impressed upon her the power and beauty of nature.

"Some of my earliest memories are of the wildflowers and birds on our place, which my parents encouraged me to learn about as I grew." Theirs was a big, remote homestead with few people nearby; "Our nearest neighbor was a Forest Service ranger at the Judith Guard Station a few miles away who was very helpful with my nature-learning!"

After high school, Jean studied nursing at Montana State, a decision that would ultimately take her far from the family ranch. She became an Army nurse in 1945 and over the next three decades was stationed in California, Germany, Korea, Hawaii and elsewhere. After retiring in the mid-1970s, she decided to come home, settling in Great Falls. In 1980, Jean became an early supporter of a new conservation organization, Montana Audubon.

"I want to protect some of this planet for future generations and believe that supporting Montana Audubon is a very worthwhile way to do so!"

"I was bothered by the fact that so many people seemed to have little understanding of nature and its importance to us. I felt a need to become active in protecting wildlife and habitat in my own backyard." When asked why she consistently supports Montana Audubon, Jean replied, "It is one of the best organizations that aligns with my broad interests in conservation; I admire the science-based, collaborative approach they use to do their work."

Jean still visits the family ranch when she can, the place where she developed her strong conservation ethic. Today, it forms part of the Judith River Wildlife Management Area, the oldest such area in Montana. By including Montana Audubon in her estate plans, Jean feels she can leave a meaningful conservation legacy of her own; "I want to protect some of this planet for future generations and believe that supporting Montana Audubon is a very worthwhile way to do so!"

Judith River Guard Station circa 1920, the nearest neighbor to the Setter Ranch.



Thank You For Supporting Montana Audubon

Montana Audubon depends on generous gifts from many individual donors. The following individuals contributed to a variety of projects from April 2014 through March 2015. Due to space constraints in this publication, we have listed all donors with gifts totaling \$100 or more. Many thanks to 500 additional supporters who gave gifts under \$100 in the past year!

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Please consider including Montana Audubon in your estate plans to ensure a bright future for Montana's birds and other wildlife.

White-throated Sparrow

Bob Martinka



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Common Yellowthroat

Bob Martinka

wings across the big sky



16th ANNUAL BIRD FESTIVAL

June 5–7, 2015, Red Lion Colonial Hotel
Helena, Montana

Montana Audubon's 16th Annual Bird Festival promises a rewarding event. Set in the beautiful capital city of Helena and co-sponsored by Last Chance Audubon Society, Wings Across the Big Sky offers a full range of activities. Scott Weidensaul will kick off the event on Friday with a fascinating keynote about migration patterns. Saturday afternoon allows you the opportunity to hear local "Mr. Wildlife" Vince Yannone, plus Dan Ellison or Andrea Silverman of Prickly Pear Land Trust, culminating with our keynote offering a summary of studies on Snowy Owls and Saw-whet Owls.

Each year we bring Montana birders and conservationists to a different region of the state to visit birds in their natural habitats. This year's festivities include 42 field trips, including two on Saturday for non-birders.

Register now; the field trips fill fast. We make it easy: register online at www.mtaudubon.org, call the Montana Audubon office, 406-443-3949, or e-mail mtaudubon@mtaudubon.org to request a registration form.

Whether or not you attend the festival, take your chances on winning wonderful raffle prizes. How about a stay at Abbott Valley Homestead near Glacier National Park, or a beautiful 40x34 framed picture of a Cooper's Hawk, or a heated bird bath? Call Montana Audubon at 406-443-3949 to request raffle tickets. You do not have to be present to win—but we'd love it if you were.



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