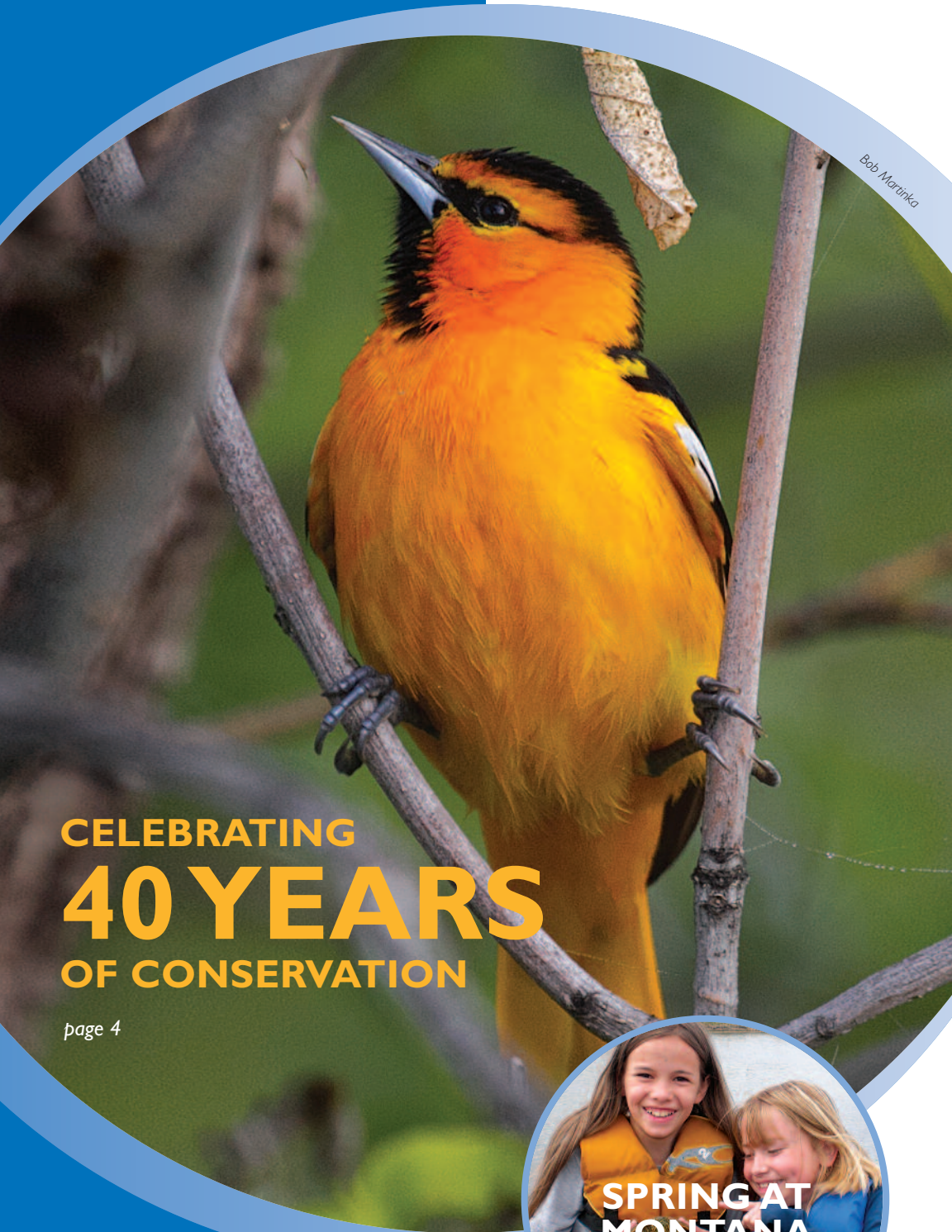


spring 2016



Bob Martinka

**CELEBRATING
40 YEARS
OF CONSERVATION**

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**SPRING AT
MONTANA
AUDUBON
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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.

Montana Audubon

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Montana Audubon is a proud member organization of Montana Shares.

THE VIEW FROM ABOVE

Greetings, Fellow Conservationists.

2016 is a milestone year for us; we are proud to announce Montana Audubon's 40th birthday! It has been an honor for me to serve as Executive Director for nearly a quarter of Montana Audubon's four decades of effective conservation work. We have much to celebrate since our 1976 founding; from our pivotal role (1983) in establishing the "Nongame Checkoff" on Montana's tax return forms, to our launch of Montana's Important Bird Area program in 1999 (a science-driven, global effort to protect the most important places on earth for conserving birds), and in 2014–15, our sustained effort as a key member of the Governor's Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Advisory Council to secure the strongest possible protections for this beleaguered species. Please join us in Helena this fall for our 40th Anniversary Celebration—stay tuned for the details of this grand affair!

We look forward to the next 40 years of conservation success, engaging with our many partners (especially local Audubon chapters, which came together 40 years ago to create Montana Audubon) to strengthen and expand our strong conservation voice for birds and their threatened habitats, especially our riverbottom forests, wetlands, and vast, unbroken prairies and sagelands. In the coming years, we must all work even more effectively to ensure a bright future for our native birds.

As always, we welcome your feedback and suggestions. The organization's founders, former and current staff and board members, chapter leaders and volunteers, and the thousands of members/donors deserve our deepest thanks for their profound contributions over the past 40 years—THANK YOU!

I look forward to seeing all of you at our annual Bird Festival in Missoula in early June!

Yours in conservation,

Steve Hoffman, Executive Director

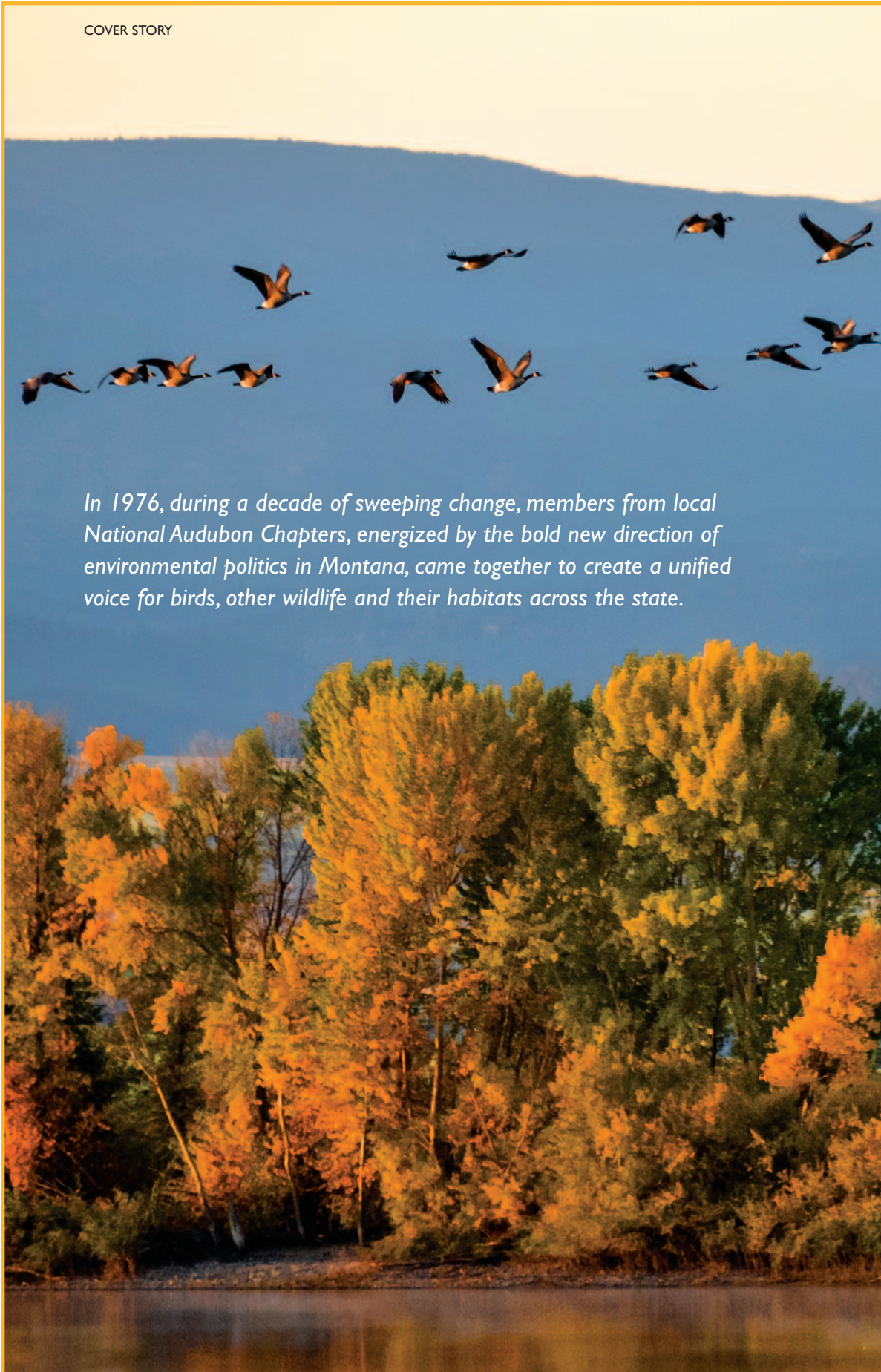


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Celebrating 40 Years
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On the cover:

Bullock's Oriole
Photo by Bob Martinka



In 1976, during a decade of sweeping change, members from local National Audubon Chapters, energized by the bold new direction of environmental politics in Montana, came together to create a unified voice for birds, other wildlife and their habitats across the state.

BIRDS AND BEYOND:

40

years of
conservation

Montana in the 1970s was in many ways a different world from the place we now know. Its distinctive landscapes of mountain, river and prairie would certainly have looked as devastatingly beautiful as they do today. However, the human sphere of technology, culture, politics and demographics was notably different. This was a time with no internet or cell service and a substantially lower population, with about 300,000 fewer full-time residents than present day. In 1970, the state was in the midst of an economic boom and began the somewhat revolutionary process of adopting a new constitution (passed in 1972), thereby freeing itself from an outdated and unwieldy nineteenth-century document. In the conservation realm, progressive environmental laws were being passed by the legislature to safeguard the land, its wildlife and people, but much remained to be done.

It was in this decade of sweeping change that members from local National Audubon Chapters, energized by the bold new direction of environmental politics in Montana, came together to create a unified voice for birds, other wildlife and their habitats across the state. In 1976, an independent organization called the “Montana Audubon Council” was born and its role as a quiet but effective leader to protect Montana’s rich birdlife had just begun. The original focus of this nascent group was to develop a strong conservation presence in the state legislature. At the time, there were many well-organized advocates for big game animal species, but no real support existed for

continued...



“nongame wildlife”, which accounts for a large number of the songbirds and other, less charismatic creatures that accompany our lives each day.

Since 1979 Montana Audubon has maintained a lobbyist to promote our conservation mission during the state legislative session. As testimony to our early effectiveness, in 1983 we helped pass into law the “Nongame Checkoff” option (see sidebar) which appears on Montana state tax forms, enabling taxpayers to make a quick and easy contribution each tax season to support the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks’ nongame conservation efforts. Our policy program remains the foundation upon which Montana Audubon was built, and has yielded some of our most important, lasting achievements. In addition to blocking scores of anti-conservation bills and defending core environmental laws over our 40-year history, we’ve also helped pass important legislation to regulate subdivisions, manage invasive species, protect riparian habitat and much more.

Conservation science too, has been an important facet of our work. Montana Audubon has always used the best available bird research to guide our programs. From monitoring Black Swift nests high in the Glacier backcountry to protecting sensitive raptor populations threatened by wind farms, wildlife and habitat protection is best achieved when we use solid data to understand what is happening on the ground.

With a long-term perspective, we also recognize that for conservation to have a future, Montana Audubon would have to take an active role in exposing young people and their families to the wonders of nature. By the early 2000s, discussions with educators and conservationists in the Billings area eventually developed into a partnership that evolved into the construction and launch of the Montana Audubon Center in 2009. Today, the Center has a robust presence in the community, reaching thousands of people of all ages and backgrounds each year with a diverse pallet of experiential, science-based education programs.

Of course, this sustained 40-year conservation effort would not have been possible without the steadfast commitment of many people including staff, local Audubon chapters, board members, volunteers, funders and supporters.

To learn more about our upcoming anniversary, be sure to attend our 17th annual *Wings Across the Big Sky* bird festival in Missoula on June 3–5; we’ll share more about our rich history and accomplishments as well as celebrate the remarkable beauty of Montana’s birds and landscapes. We hope to see you there!

Thanks to Montana Audubon, Wildlife Benefits from Tax Form Donations

As Montana Audubon enters its 40th year, we’re tallying our accomplishments. One victory we’re especially proud of is the Nongame Wildlife Check-off, which allows people to contribute to an important wildlife program through their tax form.

The nongame check-off was the first piece of legislation we spearheaded at the Montana Legislature. As a young conservation organization, we faced a steep learning curve and a rocky road on our way to success. How rocky? The check-off failed in both the 1979 and 1981 Legislatures. And although it succeeded in 1983, it did so after briefly being killed, before ultimately passing unanimously.

Our hard work and stick-to-it attitude paid off! To date, the check-off has raised more than \$870,500 for the state’s nongame wildlife program (about \$27,000 per year).

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks uses the money raised through the check-off to support research and education programs for nongame wildlife. What are Montana’s 500 + nongame wildlife species? They include eagles, hawks, flying squirrels, loons, and songbirds. Osprey, bluebirds and the rare spotted frog also benefit from this program.

If you didn’t contribute to the nongame check-off already, please contribute when filing your tax return next year! Your donation provides critical support for numerous species of Montana wildlife.



Mike Chapman



Fred Tilly



Keeping an Eye on Montana's Colonial Waterbirds

Eighteen species of colonial waterbirds, such as Double-crested Cormorants and Franklin's Gulls, breed in Montana, where they nest in marsh vegetation and trees and on sandbars and islands. Their specific wetland and riparian habitats are particularly vulnerable to drought, altered hydrology and climate change. Waterbird populations respond rapidly to annual fluctuations in precipitation and often alter breeding locations or abandon sites all together as environmental conditions change. Evidence of these patterns come from statewide monitoring by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Wildlife Refuges (NWR), Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), Tribal Lands, Bureau of Land Management, and Montana Audubon, via the hard work of Fred Tilly and others since 2009. Nearly 300 sites have been surveyed, half of which supported at least one colonial species. Nine of these sites are currently Important

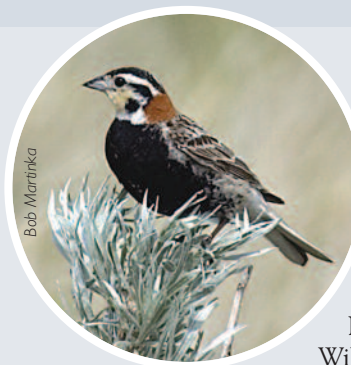
Bird Areas (IBAs). Three of these IBAs are globally recognized for supporting large colonies of American White Pelicans. There are also highly diverse sites; Bowdoin NWR supports more than 5000 breeding pairs composed of 14 species. Long-term data help managers understand waterbird trends and responses to landscape changes. We are excited to be able to continue building this effort over the next three years through a renewed grant and partnership with FWP. These volunteer-based survey efforts will also bolster our database for 'Species of Concern' such as Black Rosy-Finches, Long-billed Curlews, Burrowing Owls, Black Swifts, Peregrine Falcons, and Golden Eagles.

To read more about these efforts and see our latest waterbird report, visit www.mtaudubon.org and use the searchword "waterbirds."



Climate 'strongholds'

When data on the distribution and abundance of birds are modeled to investigate the potential effects of climate, the results are disturbing. Analyses by the National Audubon Society (NAS) predict that 314 North American species (233 in Montana) are directly threatened from climate-induced habitat loss. How well will our 42 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) buffer species in the face of increasing temperatures and generally decreasing precipitation? NAS modeling produced species 'stronghold' maps that allow a regional glimpse into the predicted stability of species' ranges. We used these maps to visualize predicted changes for three species groups: 12 forest species, focusing on Olive-sided Flycatcher and Red-naped Sapsucker; 16 grassland-shrubsteppe species, focusing on Chestnut-collared Longspur and Sprague's Pipit; and



Chestnut-collared Longspur,
American Birding
Association Bird of
the Year

12 wetland/riparian species, focusing on Franklin's Gull and Willow Flycatcher.

Chestnut-collared Longspur, with 32% of their population in MT, and Sprague's Pipit, are highly threatened. Although NAS modeling predicts range-wide habitat loss for these two species, on a regional scale Montana's grassland/shrubsteppe IBAs may offer some protection and population stability to these prairie residents. Wetland and large river IBAs, however, are predicted to change drastically. For example, only two waterbird species we have monitored the past seven years (see waterbird brief) have ranges predicted to remain stable under climate change scenarios.



Breeding Bird Survey

Does watching a June sunrise immersed in the deafening cacophony of singing insects, frogs, and birds appeal to you? How about knowing you have nearly five hours of focused birding to complete before having time to eat a mid-morning 'lunch'? If you answered yes and care about birds, you might consider conducting a Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) route.

The BBS is a continent-scale effort to monitor the status and trends of bird populations. Nearly 600 survey routes were covered in the inaugural year of 1966, and today over 3,000 are surveyed annually by 2,000 dedicated volunteers. Surveyors drive the 25 miles of their routes, stopping every half mile to count birds seen or heard within a quarter mile radius for three minutes. Routes are run once a summer, and locations and stops remain the same each year. This protocol standardizes data collection across vastly different habitat types ranging from deserts to forests to coasts, thereby allowing

researchers to estimate bird population trends across all of North America.

The National Audubon 'State of the Birds' reports relied heavily on analyses of BBS data to report general increases in wetland birds and severe decreases in grassland and arid land birds. These trends are also evident for Montana birds. For example, populations of chestnut-collared longspurs, bobolinks, and horned lark have experienced precipitous declines whereas there are more Canada geese now than ever before.

BBS routes are located throughout the state but routes in eastern Montana need more volunteers to bolster data on the trends of grassland and sagebrush species. If you can identify birds by sight and song and are able to lend one morning of your time to survey birds, please contact Dan Sullivan, coordinator of the BBS in Montana (ddsullivan001@gmail.com), or Marco Restani (restani@mtaudubon.org), Director of Conservation.



New Day for Sage-Grouse Conservation

As sage-grouse gather on their breeding leks this spring, it is worth reviewing the goals of Montana's newly created program to protect these birds.

Although Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) has been conserving sage-grouse for a century, the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) only became involved in September 2015. DNRC's role is to coordinate all state agency actions to minimize impacts on declining sage-grouse habitat. Using a small staff and an oversight committee, DNRC has begun to review individual development projects in designated sage-grouse habitat for potential impacts.

While FWP still manages the bird, DNRC is working toward minimizing impacts to sage-grouse habitat from future road projects, gravel pits, mines, wind farms (see Sometimes Birds and Wind Farms Shouldn't Mix), oil & gas wells, water projects, pipelines, and more.

As a reminder, Montana wants to prevent sage-grouse from being listed as a protected species under the federal Endangered Species Act. The state's designated habitat primarily consists of Core Areas, where approximately 76% of the birds can be found on 10 million acres, and General Habitat, where 24% of the birds can be found on 24 million acres.

The state's development restrictions are greatest in Core Areas. The biggest challenge to DNRC is how to review development projects in a timely way, while avoiding or minimizing detrimental impacts to habitat.

In May, the final aspect of DNRC's program will launch: stewardship grants for on-the-ground projects that will protect, enhance, or restore sage-grouse habitat. With \$10 million available, these projects will be critical to sage-grouse habitat conservation long-term.

Montana Audubon is actively involved in sage-grouse conservation. If you are interested in getting involved or learning more about this issue, visit the Conservation Policy section of our website: www.mtaudubon.org.



Bob Martinka



Surveys during spring 2015 found 13 sage-grouse breeding leks within four miles of a proposed wind farm in a Sage-Grouse Core Area.



Sometimes Birds and Wind Farms Shouldn't Mix

In an ideal world, wind farm developers would conduct wildlife surveys before determining facility locations. However, because Montana has no wind farm regulations, companies have great latitude to develop where and how they choose.

Currently, a 120-turbine wind farm is proposed in a Sage-Grouse Core Area (see New Day for Sage-Grouse Conservation) about 25-miles east of Red Lodge.

Because government agencies knew the location was significant, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks conducted surveys during spring 2015, finding 18 active Golden Eagle nests within 10 miles of the project and 13 sage-grouse breeding leks within four miles—all unknown to the developer. Unfortunately, because the project began before Montana's sage-grouse habitat conservation program launched, the developer can ignore the issue of sage-grouse impacts entirely.

Remarkably, Pennsylvania's EverPower Wind Holdings, which owns Mud Springs Wind Farm, wants to push ahead with development in spite of threats to wildlife—a project that could affect up to 30% of the area's sage-grouse.

Montana Audubon is currently determining what, if anything, can be done about this project. After investing hundreds of thousands of dollars, EverPower is not likely to drop facility development. If you have ideas—or want to help—contact Janet Ellis at 406.443.3949 or via email jellis@mtaudubon.org.

Join us on social media for photos, articles, blogs, and more Facebook, Twitter, and now Instagram!

Help us celebrate the conservation of Montana's birds and other wildlife! Start by visiting and "liking" our Facebook page and follow us on Instagram using your tablet, smartphone or desktop by searching "MontanaAudubon."

Our Twitter handle is @MontanaAudubon; we use this platform to regularly provide the latest on Montana bird conservation efforts and more. Get involved and learn more about Montana Audubon as we continue our mission into 2016 and beyond.



Nominate a Conservation Hero for a 2016 Montana Audubon Award

Nominations are being accepted for Montana Audubon's 2016 awards. Consider nominating a hero for Conservationist of the Year, Environmental Educator of the Year, Special Achievement, Citizen Scientist of the Year, or Lifetime Achievement Award!

Nomination forms can be found on our website: mtaudubon.org/about/award/, with a submittal deadline of May 19, 2016. Submit your nomination to jellis@mtaudubon.org (preferred) or to Montana Audubon, PO Box 595, Helena, MT 59624. Contact Janet Ellis at the email above with any questions.



Spring Season Reflects Fresh Ideas, Change at the Montana Audubon Center

For the first time since May 2015 the Montana Audubon Center is fully staffed. The successful recruitment of a new Center Director and Education Coordinator strengthen Montana Audubon's continuing efforts to restore the landscape and offer high-quality environmental education programs at the Billings site. The entire Center staff is eagerly anticipating the arrival of migratory birds and the emergence of wildflowers, which signal a shift from winter to summer activities.

Spring restoration activity is already underway. The Land Stewardship program is benefitting from the addition of a brand-new Grassland Greenhouse, made possible by a generous grant from the Montana-Dakota Utilities Company. In the coming months, aspiring land stewards will assist Land Stewardship Coordinator, Trinity Pierce, with propagating native grassland species. Restoration activities will focus on enhancing the diversity of the grassland songbird habitats at the Center. The Grassland Greenhouse fans and grow lights will be powered in part by a solar photovoltaic system—a big step toward energy sustainability at the Center.

Maintaining relationships with local partners is critical to the success of the restoration program moving forward. The Center's primary local partnerships include the Yellowstone River Parks Association (YRPA) and the Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society (YVAS). Trinity Pierce continues to work closely with YRPA members to protect and enhance five distinct habitat zones surrounding the Center: Mixed-Grass Prairie, Woodland, Wooded Draw, Sagebrush Shrubland and Wetlands. Lead Naturalist, Laura Woodward, is helping support YVAS's social media efforts to reach a wider audience. Center Director, Jonathan Lutz, is dedicated to the maintenance of strong local partnerships for the long-term health and success of the Center and its programs.

Maintaining the Montana Audubon Center's statewide reputation for quality, place-based nature programming is a priority for all staff. Its programs are based on connecting children with nature in light of an increased awareness of how critical such connection is in developing an environmentally literate society. The Center shares this commitment with conservation and place-based education practitioners and programs in Montana and worldwide.

New Education Coordinator, Carolyn Sevier, is excited to connect the Center's education programs with this wider network, and to align programs with industry best-practices, including: recommendations from the Intergovernmental Conference on Environmental Education; the Guidelines for Excellence series from the North American Association for Environmental Education; and research vetted by the

Fledglings Nature Preschool is expanding to five days per week.



The Montana Audubon Center's programs are based on connecting children with nature in light of an increased awareness of how critical such connection is in developing an environmentally literate society.

Children and Nature Network. The latter is a nationwide movement started by author Richard Louv, whose 2005 bestseller, *Last Child in the Woods*, has helped to galvanize the nature education community.

In addition to aligning with professional standards for conservation education, the Center's education team endeavors to structure programs in a way that supports the in-classroom curricula of formal educators. The flagship program, Audubon Naturalists in the Schools (ANTS), is Montana Audubon's primary interface with classroom teachers in and around Billings, with 38 fourth-grade classrooms participating in the ANTS program for the 2015-2016 school year. Center staff is engaged in connecting ANTS lesson plans with Montana's Common Core Standards, Montana's

Indian Education for All initiative, and pending changes to the state's science standards. Providing professional development opportunities related to all of these for all of the Center's education staff is a priority as the operation grows to serve even more students in Billings and surrounding communities.

The heart of all programming at the Center is to enhance the real, wonder-filled connection with nature that leads to the development of a meaningful ecological ethic in participants of all ages, whether as part of a restoration activity, a school field trip, or a guided walk on the Center campus. Placing the Center's programs and professional staff within a larger supportive community will help to ensure the sustainability of Montana Audubon's conservation impact.

Maintaining the Montana Audubon Center's statewide reputation for quality, place-based nature programming is a priority for all staff.



File photo

File photo

MONTANA AUDUBON CENTER

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

The Montana Audubon Center offers a year-long schedule of conservation education programs for children, families, and adults.

A complete calendar of programs and detail descriptions is available on the Montana Audubon website. Subscribe to the Center's Facebook page for additional information.

ONGOING PROGRAMS

Eco-Splorers afterschool program: 4–5:30 pm Tuesdays, 8-week block starts April 5.

School Break Camps: All-day nature camp during Billings School District 2 days off. See website for details.

Nature Nights: A Friday evening adventure just for kids! Every third Friday, 6–9 pm.

NightHawk Adventures: An evening family program with different themes each month. Every second Saturday.

Sundays at the Center: Open house hours to check out the Center and our slate of self-guided programming. Stop in for a visit! Every Sunday, 2–4 pm.

Fledglings Nature Preschool: Registration for 2016–2017 year opens in March. We're expanding to five days per week. See website for details.



File photo

SPECIAL EVENTS

Earth Day Celebration: Join us as we celebrate Earth Day by giving back to the planet, specifically the area that the Montana Audubon Center calls home. Participate in a variety of stewardship and educational programming and stay for a free BBQ lunch. April 23, 9 am–12:30 pm.

Global Big Day, May 14: This international citizen-science effort, led by Cornell Lab of Ornithology, is a single-day snapshot of birds at the height of spring migration. We'll be holding a Birding 101 class on Friday evening, May 13, to get people ready, and a Saturday evening Big Day Roundup and Bird Trivia Night to compare and submit results. Birding opportunities on Saturday include guided bird walks at Pompey's Pillar, Norm's Island, and other sites around town.

THREE "LEVELS" OF AUDUBON

There often a fair bit of confusion when the word "Audubon" is used in an organization's name like "National Audubon", "Audubon Chapter" or "Montana Audubon." With this in mind, we'd like to take a moment to explain and clarify the "three levels" of Audubon.

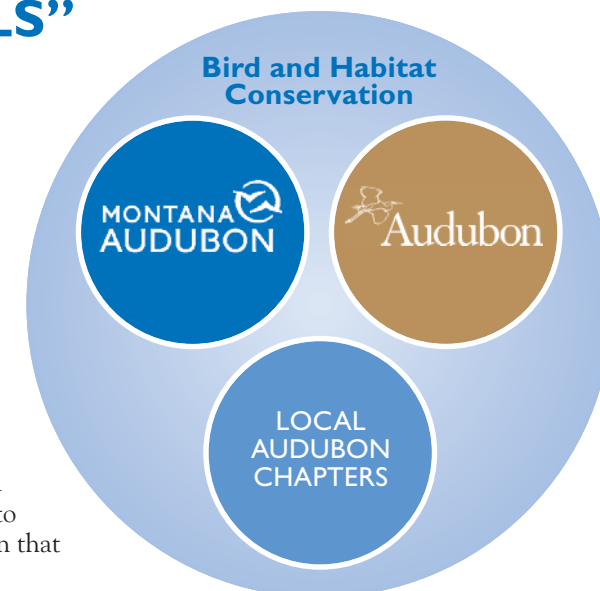
In 1976, the local National Audubon chapters in Montana came together to establish an independent organization that could deal directly with important conservation issues across the state. Perhaps this was done because of Montana's physical remoteness and cultural distance from the National Audubon office in New York City.

At the time, chapter leaders were especially interested in affecting policy change by lobbying the Montana Legislature. Thus, Montana Audubon, an independent entity from both National Audubon and its local chapters, was born.

While each "Audubon" shares nearly identical mission statements, they play different roles on the broader conservation stage. National Audubon frequently deals with issues on a continental, even global scale such as climate change and long-distance flyways. They also carry the heavy political clout one would expect from a big, century-old organization.

Local chapters of National Audubon tend to engage in very localized conservation projects as well as education and outreach efforts. Montana Audubon's niche in the "Audubon family" is somewhere in the middle; through our conservation policy, bird science and education programs, we seek to protect the wildlife and landscape qualities that we all cherish about our magnificent state.

In short, National Audubon, Montana Audubon and local chapters of National Audubon, while historically related, are each independent nonprofit organizations. That said, we often work



National Audubon, Montana Audubon and local chapters of National Audubon, while historically related, are each independent nonprofit organizations.

cooperatively, share data, information and occasionally even financial resources. Montana Audubon for example, in addition to other fundraising, receives a small percentage of membership dues from the chapters on a voluntary basis. It works in the other direction as well, with Montana Audubon contributing expertise and staff time to chapter-level projects.

Though a bit confusing, all three "levels" of Audubon fill important niches in working toward the goal of bird and habitat conservation.



Bob Martinka

Merlin

Welcome New Montana Audubon Staff

Montana Audubon welcomes three new staff who bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to our education and bird conservation programs.

The Billings-based Montana Audubon Center hired a new Director, **Jonathan Lutz**, who began in December 2015. Jonathan grew up exploring nature in the deserts of southern California, along the Niagara escarpment in upstate New York, and in the woods and streams of Michigan. He sharpened his birding



skills during a seven-year tenure as Executive Director of the Michigan Audubon Society, beginning in 2008. He chaired the Michigan Bird Conservation

Initiative from 2011 to 2015, and he holds a BS in Environmental Policy from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He hopes to bring a stronger focus on birds to the facility's suite of nature programs, while continuing to highlight the Yellowstone River ecosystem. Jonathan is eager to grow the membership program and to work with the Center's Advisory Council for the long-term financial health of the operation.

The Montana Audubon Center also recently hired an Education Coordinator, **Carolyn Sevier**. Carolyn spent her childhood roaming



the Snake River plain's sagebrush flats: finding fox holes, picking up rusty cans, and scaring up cattle with whom she shared the range. That grounding,

plus summers staffing Boy Scout camps near Teton National Forest, ensured she would make connecting with nature a lifelong priority. She has Environmental Studies and English degrees from Carroll College and has been active in the Environmental Education community of Montana since 2001, most recently as the Montana Environmental Education Association president. Since moving to Billings in 2007 she has connected in various ways with the Montana Audubon Center, as a partner, supporter, professional collaborator, and now is excited to be part of its staff.

Marco Restani joined us as Conservation Director in December after 15 years as a professor at St. Cloud State University in Minnesota. He has lived and worked throughout Montana since 1983, and has diverse research experiences studying



Peregrine Falcons and Common Ravens in Greenland, Tasmanian Devils in Australia, and has guided eco-tourists to the Falkland Islands, South Georgia

Island, and Antarctica. Since 2012, Marco has collaborated with Yellowstone Valley Audubon, monitoring nesting Ospreys along the Yellowstone River. He is an Elective Member of the American Ornithologists' Union and a Certified Wildlife Biologist with The Wildlife Society.

We are excited to welcome these three as we enter our 40th year of bird conservation!

Treasures Needed for Bird Festival Silent Auction

Please donate to the silent auction at our Bird Festival, June 3–5, in Missoula. We're looking for choice items: pottery, bird feeders and houses, art, homemade cookies, and more. This year's auction benefits our public policy work and Five Valleys Audubon.

Donations may be delivered to the Montana Audubon office in Helena, Five Valleys Audubon Board members, or brought with you to the Festival. Thanks for your generous help!

Welcome and Farewell to Board Members

We heartily welcome several new board members! **Lana Batts**, from Lakeside, brings a wealth of business experience to our organization and will be serving as an at-large board member. **Bernie McHugh**, from Wilson, Wyoming (also joining as an at-large member), has a long history of conservation organizational experience that will serve Montana Audubon well. Thanks to **Rachel Van Wingen**, an at-large board member, who has agreed to serve as the Vice-President, providing a full slate of board leadership. In addition, the following chapter delegates have stepped up to serve:

Allen Bone (Mission Mountain Audubon), **Mike Vivion** and **Rick Sanders** (Sacajawea Audubon), **Janice Miller** and Steve Turner (Last Chance Audubon).

Montana Audubon is appreciative of the exceptional volunteerism from the following people who have served on the Board of Directors as chapter delegates: **Bob Bushnell** (Mission Mountain Audubon), **Carolyn Goren** (Five Valleys Audubon), and **Sumner Sharpe** (Last Chance Audubon). We thank each one for their dedication and support for conservation in Montana.

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!

Montana Audubon

Kate Atkins
Brad Barth
Lisa Bates
Gael Bissell
Bob Bushnell
Chuck Carlson
Jim Court
Carla Dennison
Pete Fisher
Tom Forwood
Nora Gray
Craig Hohenberger
Cedron Jones
Donald Jones
Jack Kirkley
Rose Leach
Bob Lee
David Lockman
Rose Emily Longan
Harriet Marble
Jeff Marks
Bob Martinka
Woody Martyn
Sally McDonald
Jennifer Muscha
John Ormiston
John Parker
Deb Parry
Frtiz Prellwitz
Gene Reckin
Jim Rogers

Chuck Saxton
Kate Stone
Jay Sumner
Gary Swant
Larry Weeks
Catherine Wightman
Brian Williams
Linda Winnie
Robin Wolcott
Jody Wolff
Lewis Young

Montana Audubon Center

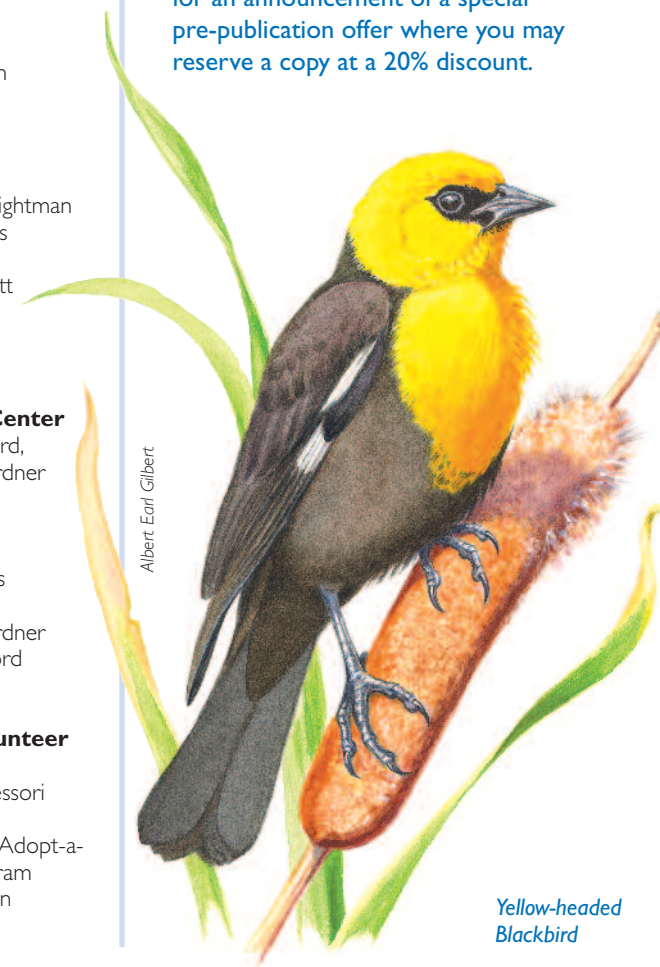
Sandy Bradford,
Master Gardner
Ben Clark
Lois Dalton
Jerry Dalton
Karen Grimes
Ann Jones,
Master Gardner
Martha Sanford
Chuck Ward

Center Volunteer Groups

Grace Montessori
Academy
MSU Billings, Adopt-a-
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Northwestern
Energy

Birds of Montana to appear this spring!

The long-awaited *Birds of Montana* book by Jeff Marks is on track for publication in May. Stay tuned for an announcement of a special pre-publication offer where you may reserve a copy at a 20% discount.



Albert Earl Gilbert

Yellow-headed
Blackbird

ANNUAL REPORT

2015

Thanks to you, Montana Audubon is 40 years old and thriving! Our expanding impact on the conservation of birds and their habitats across Montana is possible only because of generous, consistent support from a variety of sources—from individuals, foundations, agencies and businesses, to earned revenues from our tours and Montana Audubon Center’s educational programs. Thank you for your exceptional level of support for our vital conservation work!

We are fortunate to have permanent endowments at both the Montana Community Foundation (MCF) and Billings Community Foundation (BCF). MCF manages two endowment accounts with one benefiting statewide bird distribution information and special projects, and the other for general support of Montana Audubon’s conservation programs. BCF manages three separate endowment accounts—for the Montana Audubon Center, for our Public Policy program, and for general support of Montana Audubon. We invite you to consider this option of giving to help ensure the future of Montana’s native birds and wild places. For more information, please contact staff at the Helena office, 406-443-3949.

Statement of Financial Position 12-month Fiscal Year Ending 9-30-15

Unrestricted Net Assets	\$ 287,094
Board Designated Endowment	\$ 698,638
Board Designated Program Funds	\$ 67,011
Temporarily Restricted Net Assets	\$ 44,192
Permanently Restricted Net Assets	\$ 51,744
Total Net Assets	\$ 1,148,679



Individuals	\$ 265,517
Grants & Contracts	\$ 358,241
Earned Income, Sales & Other	\$ 323,449
Total	\$ 947,207



Programs	\$ 776,105
Administrative	\$ 154,790
Fundraising	\$ 46,550
Total	\$ 977,445

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.

Thank You for Supporting Montana Audubon

Montana Audubon depends on generous gifts from individual donors. The following people contributed to a variety of projects from April 2015 through March 2016. Due to space constraints in this publication, we have listed donors with gifts totaling \$100 or more. We also express our deep appreciation to the additional 500 supporters who gave gifts under \$100 this year.

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Donor Profile

Susie Maclin

A passionate conservationist, birder and world traveler, Susie Maclin spent her formative years in Central Africa and grew up observing its remarkable wildlife and landscapes. Though Atlanta is now her base, Susie cherishes the portion of each year she spends in Montana at her home along the Missouri River near Craig. There, along a sweeping bend, she enjoys being surrounded by a diversity of birds in a dramatic, canyon setting. Every year on her May 19 birthday, she invites friends to join her in an all-day “Big Sit”—an annual quest to record as many species as possible from her backyard deck. In 2015 Susie &



Susie Maclin

“I support Montana Audubon because it does a great deal of important bird conservation with a relatively small, yet highly competent staff.”

friends achieved her longtime goal, identifying 60 species!

When asked recently if she had an especially favorite sighting Susie said, “I can get excited about *every* bird!” In Montana, she enjoys frequent trips to Freezeout Lake Wildlife Management Area and Benton Lake National Wildlife Refuge. And, she considers one particular autumn day watching migrating hawks atop Bull Mountain as one of her most memorable Montana birding experiences. She’s participated in Montana Audubon tours, including a rugged trek into the Centennial Valley—and knows firsthand

what it is like to be knee-deep in mud!

When not traveling the world chasing and photographing birds, Susie spends time visiting her family, scattered from Georgia to New Mexico to Oklahoma. She shared many years of her life with husband John Whitmire—an innovative and lifelong conservationist with a fine sense of philanthropy—who passed away in spring 2014. Those of us who knew John miss his quiet demeanor and dedication to conservation, but Susie carries forward that same commitment to Montana Audubon’s work with unequalled passion.

A longtime donor to Montana Audubon, Susie explains: “Birds are an invaluable bellwether for overall ecological health. I support Montana Audubon because it does a great deal of important bird conservation with a relatively small, yet highly competent staff.” Susie also emphasized the value of Montana Audubon’s work at our Audubon Center in Billings to connect youth and families with nature, creating the next generation of conservationists. Thank you, Susie, for your profound generosity and your ever-present smile!

*The Missouri River from
Susie’s backyard deck.*



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We try our best to track giving of all donors, but do let us know if there are inaccuracies. Please note this list does not include tour or festival registration fees, sales or auction purchases below fair market value.

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 have recently made a gift in memory of:

Bill Ballard
Juanita Cantrell
Roger Clawson
Floyd Dishman
Mary Goukas
Tom Herzig
Campbell Massey
Jean Smith

Honorariums
Special recognition to the following for recent gifts in their honor.

Jan Donaldson &
Mary Anne Guggenheim
Norane Freistadt
Steve Hoffman
John Maddox
Rachel Van Wingen

Bob Martinka

Special Thanks

We thank the following Audubon chapters, foundations, corporations, businesses, and agencies for their support and partnership over the past year. Their contributions make our work possible.

Montana-based Audubon Chapters

Bitterroot Audubon Society
Five Valleys Audubon Society
Flathead Audubon Society
Last Chance Audubon Society
Mission Mountain Audubon Society
Pintler Audubon Society
Sacajawea Audubon Society
Upper Missouri Breaks Audubon Society
Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society

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Organizations and Educational Institutions

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State Employees Combined Giving Campaign
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Will James Middle School

Loggerhead Shrike



Amy Seaman

wings across the big sky

MONTANA
AUDUBON

17th ANNUAL BIRD FESTIVAL
June 3-5, 2016 in Missoula

Montana Audubon's 17th Annual Bird Festival, set along the beautiful Clark Fork River in downtown Missoula, promises to be a rewarding event. Co-sponsored by Five Valleys Audubon in cooperation with Bitterroot Audubon, Wings Across the Big Sky offers a full range of activities.

Participants will be able to experience the birds and habitats of western Montana with 40 field trips, including some for non-birders. Local chapters are offering "pre" and "post" festival-trips to heighten your experience. Check registration information brochure or online for details.

Erick Greene will speak about bird warning systems and communication, as well as how ospreys give us information about the health of the Clark Fork River watershed; **Kate Davis** describes her organization and refuge for non-releasable and falconry birds and will "hoot up an owl;" come get a close-up look at the long-awaited *Birds of Montana* book, hear and meet the authors, and get your autographed copy; listen to a representative with **American Prairie Reserve** speak about their world-class wildlife reserve and what they are doing to protect Montana grasslands and birds.

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, a beautiful ceramic bird bath by Helena ceramic artist, or a birder's basket complete with binoculars and birding books? 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!

REGISTER NOW—
the field trips fill fast.
We make it easy: register
online at www.mtaudubon.org,
call Montana Audubon at
406-443-3949, or e-mail
mtaudubon@mtaudubon.org
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