

spring 2017



# MONTANA AUDUBON CENTER: LINKING PEOPLE AND PLACE

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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, a partnership of Montana-based nonprofits devoted to improving the quality of life in the Big Sky state.

## THE VIEW FROM ABOVE

As greenup continues across Montana's forests and prairies, a great number of familiar birds will pass through our state; some barely stopping on their annual northward migration, while others will take up temporary residence here, to raise their precious young. Nature teaches us that change, like seasons, is a constant force, one that pushes species to shift, make adjustments and otherwise adapt to survive.

Over Montana Audubon's four decades as a leading wildlife organization, we've witnessed many transitions in the world, both nationally and here at home. It goes without saying that we are currently living in challenging times for conservation of every type. Yet, with the benefit of longevity and hindsight, we also know that there are many opportunities on the horizon to protect nature.

One such opportunity exists by forging a new path for our organization with the vision and energy of new leadership. We're presently in the midst of an exhaustive search for a new Executive Director; under the capable direction of Kittleman and Associates, a national firm exclusively dedicated to recruiting executive directors for nonprofit organizations. We have an active Board search committee engaged at multiple levels, from development of a "position guide" boasting the successes of Montana Audubon and the opportunity this leadership transition presents, to coordination of this 4-6 month process, to brainstorming potential candidates. Our partnership with Kittleman is a blending of their familiarity, expertise and access to the professional job market with our knowledge and passion for Montana Audubon's conservation work as well as the vision for what will be our highest-profile representative.

Montana Audubon is at a critical and energizing juncture as the new Executive Director will be provided the opportunity to substantially shape the long-term future of our statewide conservation organization. Our trusted 40-year reputation, dedicated staff, engaged Board of Directors and solid financial resources made possible by your steadfast commitment to Montana Audubon will ensure our success. We are confident this process will reach a successful conclusion in the coming months.

It is greenup time in Montana; the season of energy and renewal. Thank you for supporting our work into this next exciting phase of our long conservation journey!

Warm Regards,

*Members of the Executive Committee of Montana Audubon Board of Directors*  
*Fred Weisbecker, President*  
*Rachel Van Wingen, Vice President*  
*Cary Lund, Secretary*  
*Ron Farmer, Treasurer*



Bob Martinka

*Your steadfast commitment to Montana Audubon will ensure our success.*

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On the cover: Students of all ages visit the Montana Audubon Center to learn about and engage with the natural world.



# Linking People and Place

Being connected  
with a place means one  
identifies with the setting  
and that the landscape  
strongly shapes that  
person's life and  
decisions.

file photo

Curious students explore  
a bunchgrass prairie.

## at the Montana Audubon Center



**D**uring a native plant walk last fall at the Center, the students stopped at a large Wood's Rose bush to explore and learn about its properties and uses. One read aloud from Alma Hogan Snell's book *Taste of Heritage*, a passage where Alma tells that "Assiniboine kids know them as 'itchberry' because they make your bottom itch if you eat too many fresh ones." While all of the kids smiled and giggled, one girl seemed especially taken by the story, as she was when the class learned the word for "chokecherry" in the Crow language (*baachuua*) later that day.

After the field trip, her teacher explained that the girl had just moved to Billings from Fort Peck and was herself Assiniboine. As with many new students, she had been shy and reserved and struggled to make connections with her new community. According to her teacher, the girl already knew the word for chokecherry in her native language and was delighted to hear her own culture referenced during school and to learn the name of a plant in a different tribal language. She was, according to her teacher, more engaged that day than any other before.

*continued...*





In 2018, the Montana Audubon Center will celebrate its 10th year of providing nature-based education programming to Billings and the surrounding area.

In our Audubon Naturalists in the Schools (ANTS) program, as in all of what we do at the Montana Audubon Center, the focus is to provide education and experiences that connect people with the natural world: to link people with place.

Being connected with a place means one identifies with the setting and that the landscape strongly shapes that person's life and decisions. There is a certain reciprocity that develops with this relationship as well: a responsibility to treat the place with both wonder and respect.

Located adjacent to the largest metropolitan area in Montana but only a quarter mile by foot trail from the wild and undammed Yellowstone River, the Center is ideally situated to help foster this connection, which we do for more than 4,000 individuals every year.

The results of this work can be seen each day: when students excitedly point out the Goldeneyes on the nearly-frozen river, when they dip a paddle into water to maneuver a canoe for the first time, and when they touch the tracks left behind by a deer or pheasants in a snowy field. In addition to learning about the territory in which they live, these students are feeling this place, forming the strands of connection and story that make a spot on the map, a home.

*Above: Students learning about Osprey biology.*

*Left: Pond ecology and canoeing!*



**The continuing story** of our landscape embodies connection to place in a deeply tangible way. For twenty years, thousands of hours have been given directly to the land, restoring it from a gravel mine to an expanse of cottonwood groves, wildflower gardens, ponds, and wetlands for humans and other species to inhabit. Without the investment of human energy, there would be far fewer places for the muskrats, turtles, osprey, herons, dragonflies, and migrating shorebirds who share the Center grounds with us. The inspirational power of our restoration story draws people to continue giving back which is a welcome outcome in a world often dominated by disconnect and despair.

In 2018, the Montana Audubon Center will celebrate its 10th year of providing nature-based education programming to Billings and the surrounding area, and the 20th year of work by the Yellowstone River Parks Association to restore the landscape. In that time we have grown, along with the willows and cottonwoods, into a robust education site known for quality programming, from ANTS and restoration to our Fledglings Nature Preschool and Summer Camps.

**Our next steps** are to share our story more widely. We recently hired a Community Outreach Specialist (sidebar) to help direct this effort, building upon our decade of program success and engaging with a broader audience. Our goal is to become as well-known and relevant to the greater community as a library or ballpark or art museum. We intend to make connecting with nature as much a part of the identity of a place as the cultural and social life of the community. The Center helps each person understand nature and their place in it, whether they've lived here for decades or, as the 4th grade student on that field trip, are just beginning to find their new home.

## MEET OUR NEW COMMUNITY OUTREACH SPECIALIST

**Annabelle Britton** recently joined the Montana Audubon Center as its Community Outreach Specialist. She has a Certificate in Hospitality Operations and Event Coordination and is currently completing a degree in Business Communication and Marketing from MSU-Billings. She first encountered the Center shortly after moving to Billings nine years ago as a partner and volunteer.

Her passion for the outdoors began at a very young age when she was taught the importance of connection to her environment by learning to harvest seaweed from the beach, growing a flower garden, and finding the awe within nature's smallest details. She has lived and traveled in a variety of places including Bend, Oregon, throughout South America and New York City. She brings a wealth of professional experience to her position at the Center, including work in sales, marketing, photography, event coordination, and retail management.

The Community Outreach Specialist position is a new one for the Center, a role dedicated to expanding our visibility and public presence. Annabelle is excited to promote our vision by engaging with the community, strengthening relationships, and building on the success of the Center's programs as we prepare for our second decade.





## Spring Field Trips Underway, Summer Camps Coming Soon

The Montana Audubon Center is fully into our Spring field trip season, and we're looking forward to summer camps!

Our primary educational initiative is Audubon Naturalists in the Schools (ANTS). We are excited to offer new curricula in our first year of a revised program more closely aligned with academic standards and Montana's Indian Education for All program. The kids still go canoeing, but we now structure paddling around the topics of wave energy and wave forms, first doing demonstrations of waves in an aquarium and then testing wave action on the pond. Who knew that dropping things into a puddle of water could be so much fun? The program also includes our ever-popular weed pulling/restoration activities as well as a walk to the Yellowstone and playing Native American games along the way.

*A new pre-K program will be modeled after our popular school-year preschool and provide plenty of learning opportunities in the great outdoors.*



We're also gearing up for summer camp, offering 33 camps, a growth of more than 20% from last year, as well as adding on a special Fledglings Preschool Summer Session. This new pre-K program will be modeled after our popular school-year preschool, offered for ages 3–5, and provide plenty of learning opportunities in the great outdoors.

Restoration is also entering its busiest season, with two new focus projects. The Preschool Urban Learning Lab will be built in the space behind the building and directly visible through the window of the preschool. Adding to our suite of demonstration garden spaces, this lab will be managed primarily by the preschool students themselves, growing habitat and food for humans and other species alike. We are also looking forward to a cleanup of the "boneyard" on the west end of the property, turning it into a prairie plant community demonstration site full of native grasses and wildflowers.

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

*The 2017 legislative session was a wild few months to work on conservation issues at the Montana Capitol.*



It remains to be seen what changes are unfolding in Washington D.C., but as Montana's session draws to a close, we stood firm with our partners in defending Montana's wildlife, conservation programs, and environmental laws. As this newsletter goes to press, we are proud of these accomplishments and hopeful, despite changes at federal level, that support for native birds, wildlife and a healthy environment remains strong in Montana.

We focused our work this session on defending past gains, like ensuring funding for our state's Greater Sage-grouse Stewardship Act in addition to Habitat Montana programs. We also kept bad bills, including a state program allowing wetlands to be filled for development, and one legalizing pet foxes, from becoming law. To that extent, we are celebrating! Montana Audubon supported numerous bills to

expand solar energy, promote climate policy, and safeguard places like the Smith River from new hardrock mines but the political climate was not conducive to passing such legislation. While we can develop great policy, pack committee hearing rooms, and generate thousands of public comments (which we did in 2017), sometimes there are simply not enough votes to carry new, proactive conservation bills into law. This is a firm reminder that elections matter!

Despite this session's challenges, we are fortunate that many of our most important wildlife programs and environmental laws emerged unscathed. Our lobbying team was inspired and motivated by the commitment to activism of Montana Audubon members and fellow Montanans, demonstrated by hundreds of individuals packing the Capitol rotunda to a support renewable energy, public lands and other issues important to us. We look forward to providing you with a comprehensive voting summary in a future eNews, but please visit our conservation policy webpages for more 2017 Legislative Session details.

Thanks to all of you that heeded our calls to action!



Bob Martinka

*We focused our work this session on defending past gains, which included ensuring future funding for our state's Greater Sage-grouse Stewardship Act.*

*Amy Seaman and Dan Roper served as Montana Audubon's full-time lobbyists during the 2017 Legislative Session.*







Amy Seaman

## Proposed budget cuts would impact Montana's wildlife

In March, the White House released its preliminary budget recommendations for fiscal year 2018. Conservation and wildlife groups across the board reacted to the potential impacts of the budget on wildlife, habitat conservation, clean air and clean water. National Audubon responded with a press release outlining vital conservation programs that would be completely eliminated or drastically reduced. "Whether it's cranes migrating through Nebraska, shorebirds nesting along our coasts or any of the 314 North American species threatened by a changing climate, birds all across the United States benefit from federal investment through conservation programs and now find themselves on the chopping block", says president and CEO David Yarnold.

Impacts to birds and wildlife may be severe as cuts to the Departments of Agriculture, Energy, Interior, as well as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) would negatively affect birds and habitat at home and nationwide. Here are two examples of important, bipartisan programs slated for drastic cuts:

### National Wildlife Refuge Fund

\$480 million in funding is eliminated for national wildlife refuges, the only federal lands system where wildlife conservation is the top priority. Montana contains 21 refuges, many which are Important Bird Areas, including well-known places like Red Rock Lakes and Charles M. Russell wildlife refuges. The Bowdoin NWR is home to 260 bird species. Medicine Lake is recognized by the American Bird Conservancy as a globally important area for avian wildlife, including Sprague's pipits and chestnut-collared longspurs.

### Land and Water Conservation Fund

For over 50 years LWCF has been a nationally successful conservation program by utilizing a portion of federal offshore oil and gas leasing revenue to protect crucial wildlife habitat, fund land conservation projects, and improve access to public lands and waterways. Montana has received over \$400 million. Major budget cuts to the LWCF would be devastating for conservation in Montana.

Please visit our website to learn more about important conservation programs at risk and how to take action!



## Berkeley Pitfalls

November 2016's rapid ice-up of Freezeout Lake and abundant grain resources in Canada are each partially blamed for the second major white goose mortality incident in just over 20 years at the Berkeley Pit Superfund Site, near Butte. A low cloud ceiling, stormy conditions, and a generally late migration made the night of November 28th a deadly trap for passing waterfowl. In the end, after days of stormy weather and tireless efforts of Montana Resources and ARCO employees, approximately 3,000–4,000 birds are

thought to have perished from heavy metal poisoning in the mine's waters. The weight of the situation was felt throughout the Butte community, but waves of reaction also came from around the country as evidenced by headlines nationwide. In response, Montana Resources has convened a panel of advisors to help re-envision the site's migratory bird mitigation plan. Montana Audubon has accepted an invitation to share our expertise with the group as a new plan is adopted to protect snow geese and other migrating species.



## New projects to keep those citizens' eyes to the skies

Over the years, Montana Audubon has worked with citizen volunteers to monitor many species of concern in our state, from Flammulated Owls to Lewis's Woodpeckers, to the elusive Black Swift.

This year we are continuing work on Black Swifts, supported by a Fish, Wildlife, and Parks citizen science grant, and are adding Chimney Swifts as well as Black-crowned and Gray-crowned Rosy Finches as new target species. The change of focus is a good indication that our state's monitoring efforts aided by citizen volunteers are paying off. Many species we've worked on in the past were

"Species of Greatest Inventory Need" and later removed from the list because data we collected helped fill the knowledge gap. This year's effort include an in-person training for rosy-finches, recruitment for Breeding Bird Survey routes, a pilot project in eastern Montana surveying for Chimney Swifts, and two in-person trainings for Black Swifts. If you enjoy bird-adventures and these projects sound fun to you, contact Amy Seaman ([aseaman@mtaudubon.org](mailto:aseaman@mtaudubon.org)) or visit the citizen science pages on our website.

Beaver Medicine Falls in Glacier National Park

Black Swift



Amy Seaman



## THE GEORGE AND LAURENE ENGLER LEGACY ENDOWMENT



The George and Laurene Engler Montana Audubon Conservation Fund was created as a memorial endowment for two very special people.

All earnings benefit Montana Audubon, and the Montana Community Foundation administers the fund.

○

**Its purpose is to provide sustainable revenue to monitor, study and conserve Montana's birds, to enhance and restore Montana's avian habitats, and to promote land use policies consistent with these conservation goals.**

○

Although they are no longer with us, George and Laurene's legacy of furthering conservation in Montana will live on through this permanent endowment named in their memory, allowing others to give to a cause the Englers believed in so strongly. Many thanks to Gail Engler for establishing this enduring fund for conservation in Montana.

A very generous offer from Upper Missouri Breaks Audubon (UMBA) will match up to \$5,000 of all donations to the fund throughout calendar year 2017. Many thanks to the UMBA Board for generously supporting this important cause and providing further incentive to donate to the Engler Fund.

You can donate through the Montana Community Foundation website  
**[www.mtcf.org/Giving/Give-Now](http://www.mtcf.org/Giving/Give-Now)**  
type 'George and Laurene' in the Fund Search Bar.

Or you may send a check to:  
Montana Community Foundation (note Engler Fund in the memo)  
33 S Last Chance Gulch, Ste 2A, Helena, MT 59601



Bob Martinka

**Coming in early 2018:**

## !BIRDING IN CUBA!

**Join us on the adventure of a lifetime!**

Montana Audubon is planning a 10-day birding tour of Cuba in the early part of 2018 (January-February). Stay tuned to our website, eNews and social media feeds for updates in the coming weeks!



Cuban Tody

Adam Riley

### Nominate a Conservation Hero for a 40th Anniversary Year Montana Audubon Award

Nominations are being accepted for Montana Audubon's 2017 awards. Consider nominating a notable individual 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/](http://mtaudubon.org/about/award/). To be considered for this year's awards, nominations and all supporting material must be emailed (preferred) or postmarked no later than Friday, May 19, 2017. Please send to Janet Ellis at [jellis@mtaudubon.org](mailto:jellis@mtaudubon.org) or c/o Montana Audubon, Box 595, Helena, MT 59624.

The awards ceremony will take place on June 10 at Montana Audubon's Bird Festival in Great Falls.





John Lambing

Bob Martinka

## MONTANA AUDUBON RIVER INITIATIVE

*As part of our River Initiative we are convening a symposium of experts to discuss the state of invasive species in currently-infested river systems.*

Invasive species are a big topic this year in Montana due to the first positive detection of aquatic Zebra mussels in the state (Tiber Reservoir in November) and suspect samples in Canyon Ferry Reservoir. Minimizing their spread and impact is key to protecting the Columbia River system, the country's last uninfected river basin. Terrestrial invasive trees like Russian olive and tamarisk, or saltcedar, can also substantially affect Montana's most important wildlife habitat along waterways, and have plagued the state for a long time. Montana Audubon helped lead the charge that ultimately categorized Russian olive as a "Regulated Plant Species" in 2010. Saltcedar is formally defined as a "Noxious" shrub. As part of our River Initiative we are convening a symposium of experts to discuss the state of these species in currently-infested river systems.

The time to act is now, as both species are likely to expand their range and density due to climate change, potentially out-competing native cottonwood gallery forests. However, work is being done to manage the problem. State-wide, scientists and resource managers

are trying to control these plants and restore native cottonwoods, a species crucial for supporting 150 of Montana's bird species during some portion of the year. Our symposium will help managers to network and begin developing short and longer-term state goals, while better understanding impacts to species, potential management options, and spread prevention techniques.

This collaboration will build on efforts like the Yellowstone River Conservation District Council's Cumulative Effects Analysis, to understand one of the nation's last free flowing rivers. The Yellowstone area in particular has great potential as a climate-resilient habitat in Montana, so understanding Russian Olive and tamarisk's potential impacts is imperative. Many of our state's bird species of concern, like Yellow and Black-billed Cuckoo, Red-headed Woodpecker, and Ovenbird could be negatively affected unless their habitat can be maintained. Our great waterways harbor the richest wildlife habitat in the state, so understanding how to prevent this unwelcome change is a critical step to preserve biodiversity and unite scientists, resource managers, universities, and conservation advocates throughout Montana.

*Above: a healthy section of native cottonwoods on the Marias River. Invasive plants could negatively affect many of the state's species of concern, like the Red-headed Woodpecker.*

## Grants Awarded for Research and Education Projects

Since 1996, the Montana Audubon Wildlife Fund has awarded grants to benefit research and educational projects that focus on nongame wildlife and their habitats. The purpose of this permanent endowment is to support the preservation and public appreciation of Montana's wildlife and natural communities. Montana Audubon is pleased to announce the 2017 awardees.



### Bitterroot Audubon – Bitterroot Valley Winter Eagle Project

In combined efforts with Bitterroot Audubon, Raptor View Research Institute, and MPG Ranch, a network of Citizen Science camera stations and eagle capture sites on private lands throughout the Bitterroot Valley will provide data on eagles in the area including winter distribution, age-class structure, behavioural observations, and re-sighting of marked eagles. (\$240 awarded)

### University of Montana Bird Ecology Lab – Winter Wings over Missoula

UMBEL will engage third-grade students at Lewis and Clark Elementary to place and maintain bird feeders in the school's Outdoor Discovery Core Habitat Area. UMBEL biologists will provide bird ecology curriculum as well as capture and band birds to aid student observations. Students will learn to identify bird species and collect data to submit to Project FeederWatch. (\$470 awarded)

### Montana Natural History Center – Wings over Water

Focusing on Ospreys, a multidisciplinary curriculum will be taught in middle schools across Montana. The goal of this project is to excite students' interest in ecology, conservation and physical sciences through classroom lessons, technology, demonstrations, and field trips. The program will also provide an intensive summer training institute for educators. (\$500 awarded)

### MPG Ranch and area schools – Acoustic Monitoring of Avian Nocturnal Migrants in Western Montana

Acoustic monitors will be placed at Seeley Lake High School and Salish Kootenai College. Expanding the existing project at other schools, all sites will record migrant bird calls during the spring and fall migration and students will be trained to extract the calls and classify the call to species. (\$500 awarded)

## Show Your Support for Montana's Birds!

You can make a positive impact on 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](http://www.mtaudubon.org).





## Board Profile

### Rachel Van Wingen

A descendent of Great Plains pioneers, Montana Audubon board member Rachel Van Wingen brings a unique set of experiences to the organization. She recently shared how her grandfather shaped her outlook toward nature; “Grandpa was born in Dakota Territory, and farmed most of his life near what became Freeman, South Dakota. He impressed upon us kids the importance of wildlife habitat and how once we lose something, it’s gone for good.” Those sentiments would influence Rachel throughout her life. She grew up in the small, prairie community of Buhler, Kansas, staying through high school before attending Bethel College to major in English and History. After a stint teaching in Japan, she migrated to Columbia University in New York where she earned a master’s degree in Library Science.

Rachel met her husband while there and, after a few years in London, ultimately moved to Washington, DC, where she raised a family, earned a master’s degree in Public Policy and was a longtime manager at Georgetown University library. While employed with the Environmental Protection Agency in 1989, Rachel was part of an effort to set up a regional environmental center in post-Soviet Hungary, where she helped develop geographic information systems. After 11 years with the agency, she made another career change, becoming vice president with an international software firm in the field of information management.



*“Grandpa impressed upon us kids the importance of wildlife habitat and how once we lose something, it’s gone for good.”*

Despite many years and life transitions separating Rachel from her early roots on the prairie, she eventually began to circle back, and again, had a family member for inspiration; her brother Stan. “His conservation work with National Audubon and the way he opened my eyes to the world of birds over time was such a gift to me.” On a wide-ranging hiking trip West in 2005, Rachel came upon the community of Ennis along the Madison River and decided to make it her home. “The grassland valley surrounded by mountains on all sides drew me right in,” and it wasn’t long after taking up residence there that she discovered Montana Audubon. Through connections with her brother, Rachel was encouraged to sit on the board where she now serves as vice president.

“At that time, I was really looking for a way to be involved in conservation, and the opportunity just fell in my lap. It is certainly a good fit!” We heartily agree!

## Welcome New Montana Audubon Staff

We are pleased to welcome **Janet Johnston** as our Office Manager. Janet’s friendly, service-oriented demeanour, attention to detail, and her keen insights are proving to be important assets for Montana Audubon. Through her experience as a small business owner, she has honed her skills in the multiple facets of office management and customer service. Added to her commitment to integrity and hard work, she brings strengths in organizing and problem solving. Originally from rural Eastern Oregon, Montana has her been home since 1993.

Janet has spent her life appreciating the rich landscapes and wildlife of the West. She, her husband, and three high school and college-aged daughters enjoy spending time together while hiking, fishing, hunting, skiing and especially picking huckleberries. We are delighted to have her join our team.



## 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!*

4H Club  
Amer Alghanmi  
Candace Beery  
Bill Bucher  
Builders Club  
Lucinda Butler  
Edie Cartwright  
Clariss Cerovski  
Ben Clark  
COR Enterprises  
Cub Scouts of Montana  
Jerry Dalton  
Lois Dalton  
Shari Dayton  
Earth Day Celebration!  
Educational Talent  
Search (ETS)  
Christian Frazza

Susan Gibertz  
Grace Montessori  
Nora Gray  
Karen Grimes  
Theodore Hampton  
Beth Hill  
Liz Hiltunen  
Lindsey James  
Michael Kirst  
Bruce Larsen  
Gordon Lemmel  
Marian Lyman-Kirst  
Bob Mackin  
Debbie Magilke  
Braedon Martinson  
Master Gardeners  
Sheila McKay  
John Miller

Heather Mitchell  
Montana State University, Billings  
Veronica Murtaugh  
Mystery Service Adventure  
James Pauley  
Megan Poulette  
Ken Reiter  
Rimrock Foundation  
Don Roberts  
Rocky Mountain College  
Susan Russell  
Martha Sanford  
Norm Schoenthal  
Donald Seibert  
Harrie Sherwood



Blue-gray Gnatcatcher

Kay Silk  
Corbin Smith  
Ron Smith  
John Spencer  
Umfrey family  
Chuck Ward  
Brock Warner  
West High Special Ed  
Anna Wilson  
Youth Rally  
Julie Zimmerman

Bob Martinika

VACATION RENTALS - GRASSFED BEEF

# J BAR L

## RANCH

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### 10 and 10

• PACKAGE •

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### 10% DISCOUNT & 10% DONATION

### LODGING PACKAGE AT J BAR L RANCH

Montana Audubon supporters receive a 10% discount on lodging for a three-or-more night stay at the J BAR L ranch between May 20 and October 1, 2017, and earn a 10% donation to Montana Audubon from the J Bar L Ranch.

To take advantage of this discount and earn a donation for Montana Audubon, contact the J Bar L Ranch at 406.596.0600 or [info@jbarl.com](mailto:info@jbarl.com)

[WWW.JBARL.COM](http://WWW.JBARL.COM)



# ANNUAL REPORT

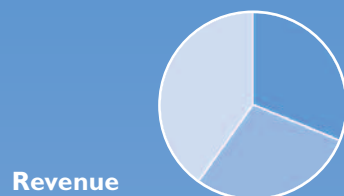
# 2016

Thanks to you and other generous supporters, Montana Audubon is now embarking on our fifth decade of expanding impact on the conservation of native birds, other wildlife and their habitats across Montana. Thank you for your exceptional level of support for our vital conservation work!

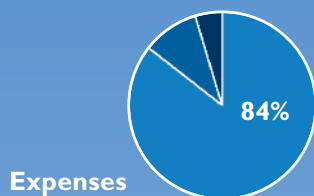
We are fortunate to have permanent endowments at both the Montana Community Foundation (MCF) and Billings Community Foundation (BCF). MCF manages three endowment accounts with one benefiting bird distribution information and special projects, one for general support of Montana Audubon's conservation programs, and a newly established endowment, the George and Laurene Engler Montana Audubon Conservation Fund, that provides support for all Montana Audubon programs. See article on page 12 for more information on this new fund. BCF manages three separate endowment accounts—for the Montana Audubon Center, our Public Policy program, and for general support of Montana Audubon. We invite you to consider these options of giving to help ensure the bright future of Montana's native birds and wild places. For more information, contact staff at the Helena office, 406-443-3949.

## Statement of Financial Position 12-month Fiscal Year Ending 9-30-16

Unrestricted Net Assets	\$ 187,452
Board Designated Endowment	\$ 754,500
Board Designated Program Funds	\$ 31,591
Temporarily Restricted Net Assets	\$ 35,001
Permanently Restricted Net Assets	\$ 51,744
Total Net Assets	\$ 1,060,288



Individuals	\$ 299,742
Grants & Contracts	\$ 278,317
Earned Income, Sales & Other	\$ 388,964
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 967,023</b>



Programs	\$ 883,538
Administrative	\$ 123,269
Fundraising	\$ 48,608
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,055,415</b>

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 the generous gifts of individual donors who support our mission to protect Montana's bird species, wildlife, and habitat. The following people contributed to a variety of projects from April 2016 through March 2017. Due to space constraints in this publication, we have listed donors with gifts totalling \$100 or more. We also express our sincere appreciation to the additional 500 supporters who gave gifts under \$100 this year.

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Upland Sandpiper

Bob Martinka



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Jo McGullam  
Rosemary & John  
McKinnon

## Donor Profile

# Jim Brown

Jim Brown and his wife Sue have lived in a quiet, wooded corner of the upper Rattlesnake Valley for years. It's the type of modest homestead, sitting just beyond the bustle of Missoula, where one might expect to find a contemplative, philosopher-outdoorsman. "I got excited about doing things outside when I was very young, including fishing, hunting, hiking and camping and I've been a regular birder since sophomore year in high school." Growing up in the Twin Cities, Jim had frequent exposure to nature and was especially affected by the forest and lake country of northern Minnesota.

Recalling an early Boy Scout trip, he remembers, "I woke at first light to the calling of a Barred Owl. I crawled out of the tent and discovered near it a Pileated Woodpecker and several Evening Grosbeaks. It may have been the first time I really paid attention to birds and from that point on, I was hooked." Unsurprisingly, a long career in forestry awaited him.

Shortly after graduating from the University of Minnesota, Yale and Michigan he and his high school sweetheart Sue made their way to Montana, where he took a job with the U.S. Forest Service Fire Sciences Laboratory in 1965. Jim has maintained an intense curiosity for nature throughout his life, particularly with birds, "I see deep meaning in birds, their evolution, the roles they play in the earth's ecosystems and how they're intertwined with humanity."



Jim Brown

*"I see deep meaning in birds, their evolution, the roles they play in the earth's ecosystems and how they're intertwined with humanity."*

His interests in natural history have led him to explore many landscapes around the planet, ranging from arctic Canada to tropical South America. In the mid-1990s, Jim became a board member with Montana Audubon serving a total of 15 years, five of those as the organization's president. "I think Montana Audubon's role is to promote the story of birds, and describe the many ways they are important. In telling that story, we encourage appreciation and conservation solutions." Although no longer involved with the organization's governance, Jim and his wife give generously to the work of Montana Audubon. As he describes it, "Birds have given us so much enjoyment and provide our world with innumerable, essential functions as part of the web of life. Supporting Montana Audubon is a way for me to give something back, a humble act of reciprocity."

Mike McKinstry  
Poody McLaughlin  
& Joseph Regan  
Kathryn Mercord  
Rosemary & John  
McKinnon

Marilynn Miller  
& David Craig  
Blake & Martha Mitchell  
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Margaret Perryman  
Eileen Pinkerton  
Roger & Leslie Piscitella

[more...](#)

## Common Loon



Bob Martinka



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Please note this list does not include festival, tour, or event registration fees, nor does it include sales, auction purchases below fair market value, or endowment giving.

## MEMORIAL GIFTS

We are deeply grateful to those of you who have made generous gifts and lasting tributes in memory of:

Jim Dayton  
Cliff Hilden  
Mary Munsell  
Gerald Navratil  
Mary Nikoloric  
Barbara Wilson Molen

## HONORARIUMS

Special recognition to the following for recent gifts in their honor:

Shari Dayton  
Simon Gratch  
Carol McAllister  
Judy Tureck  
Del Wilkinson  
Steve Hoffman  
Rachel Van Wingen

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

Rufous Hummingbird

## Special Thanks

With sincere gratitude, we thank the following Audubon chapters, foundations, corporations, businesses, agencies and organizations 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 Audubon Society

### Foundations

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Montana's Outdoor Legacy Foundation  
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### Corporate/Business Donations & Grants

Abott Valley Homestead  
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Dovetail Designs  
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Hanson Chemical, Inc.  
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### Agency Partners

City of Billings  
Intermountain West Joint Venture  
MT Dept. of Administration, Title and Registration Bureau  
MT Dept. of Fish, Wildlife, & Parks  
MT Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation  
U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Montana State Office  
U.S. Forest Service, Helena/Lewis & Clark National Forest  
U.S. Forest Service, Gallatin/Custer National Forest

### Organizations and Educational Institutions

Audubon Wildlife Fund of Montana  
Beartooth Elementary  
Beartooth Recreational Trails Association  
Billings Catholic Schools  
Billings Child Care Association  
Billings Junior Women's Club  
Billings School District  
Billings Unitarian Universalist Fellowship



Yellow-breasted Chat

Blue Creek Elementary School District #3  
Boys and Girls Clubs of Yellowstone County  
Broadwater School PTA  
Christ's Church  
Cornell University  
Ducks Unlimited, Inc.  
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University of Montana  
Wildlife Society, Montana Chapter  
Yellowstone County Home Educators  
Yellowstone River Parks Association  
Yellowstone Valley Medical Society Alliance

Bob Martinka

Bob Martinka



# wings across the big sky

MONTANA  
AUDUBON

18th ANNUAL BIRD FESTIVAL  
June 9–11, 2017 in Great Falls

Montana Audubon's 18th Annual Bird Festival, set along the majestic Missouri River in Great Falls, promises to be a fun, community event for bird and wildlife enthusiasts!

Co-sponsored by Upper Missouri Breaks Audubon, Wings Across the Big Sky offers a range of activities. Participants can experience the birds and habitats of central Montana with over 30 field trip offerings, many along the Missouri, in the mountain foothills and spectacular native prairies. Upper Missouri Breaks Audubon is offering "pre-" and "post-" festival trips to enrich your experience. Check the registration information brochure or our website for details.

The Great Falls festival will mark the conclusion of Montana Audubon's 40th year. We'll be celebrating with a Friday night BBQ, a bird calling contest and a special anniversary cake.

Our keynote address will be presented by **David Ringer**, Chief Network Officer of National Audubon who will speak on his experiences and projects relating to bird conservation around the country. Our Saturday afternoon presentations will highlight the past, present and future program work of Montana Audubon.

Whether or not you plan on attending the festival, take your chances on winning wonderful raffle prizes! We're offering a "Big Raffle" this year – a two-day vacation in and around Grand Teton National Park. How about a stay at Abbott Valley Homestead near Glacier National Park, or your choice from several birder- baskets complete with binoculars, quilts, and 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](http://www.mtaudubon.org),  
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[info@mtaudubon.org](mailto:info@mtaudubon.org) to  
request a registration  
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Russell Hill

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