



## A Story of Grouse, Sagebrush, Grasslands— and a Long-billed Bird

**O**ur native grasslands and sagebrush lands are not always the flashiest places to work, but they, along with wetlands and riparian areas, are focus habitats for Montana Audubon. Why? Much of the wildlife tied to these habitats:

- ◆ Occupy large territorial ranges,
- ◆ Are vulnerable to human disturbances, and
- ◆ Disappear from the landscape if habitat patches become too small or fragmented.

These habitats face significant threats *and* are critical for species of conservation concern. Where the birds sing in peril, we tune our ears! Here are two of our timely efforts.

### Under the Sage-Grouse Umbrella

**M**ontana's sagebrush country is rugged and wild. Montana Audubon has been working for several years on Greater Sage-Grouse through our Adopt-a-Lek program (see sidebar, right). However, last year we stepped things up a notch, becoming a key player on the Montana governor's 12-member Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Conservation Advisory Council. Janet Ellis, Audubon's program director, was appointed to the council in April. What ensued after that was—well—a crash course on sage-grouse conservation.

The good news about all this is that Janet likes learning new things, she's able to understand the implications of policy decisions on wildlife, and she's a hard worker. The not-so-good news? The intense time involved: sage-grouse ruled council members' lives, every day, for nine months.

The main charge for the governor's council was to figure out how to protect this native bird that needs large, undisturbed landscapes—the poster bird for Big Sky Country. They do not like noise, towers, or changes in their landscape. The challenge? Montana



Montana Audubon and other partners view curlew habitat in the Mission Valley.

is a natural resource-based state, with proposals in sagebrush country to develop coal and other mines, wind farms, and oil and gas wells, not to mention proposals to plow new cropland, erect new cell towers and power lines, and build pipelines. Layered on top are wildfire, spreading non-native grasses (e.g., cheatgrass), concern over predators, grazing practices, and climate change issues.

*(continued on page 3)*

### Adopt-a-Lek



Photo by Bob Martinka

Spring at Montana Audubon means Ben Deeble and his cadre of volunteers will once again hit the dirt roads at all hours of the day and night to position themselves to count Greater Sage-Grouse displaying at breeding leks. This year, 34 volunteers will aim to survey about 70 leks across our sage-dominated lands. Let's hope they have fun and find grouse. Thanks to all who "Adopt-a-Lek." We'll report their findings in our next newsletter.



# From the Executive Director: The View From Above



Greetings and Happy Spring!

Montana Audubon is striving to make a lasting impact on the birds, people, and wild landscapes across Montana. I am excited to report that we've recently submitted two Important Bird Area (IBA) nomination packages (the middle/lower Yellowstone River Corridor, and the Warm Springs Wetland Complex) to Montana's IBA Technical Committee for their review and consideration. And, after nine months of hard work and public input, Montana's Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Conservation Strategy is on Governor Bullock's desk. It is especially noteworthy that Montana Audubon's leadership contributed substantially to the solid conservation measures incorporated into this plan.

As you may know, Michele Crist was newly elected to National Audubon's Board of Directors, serving as Montana's (part of the North-central Flyway) Regional Representative. Michele is a landscape ecologist living in Boise, Idaho. She is also president of the local Boise chapter, Golden Eagle Audubon. I recently had the pleasure of visiting with Michele by phone. She is incredibly knowledgeable and passionate about birds and bird conservation, which will serve her well in her new Audubon role! I hope each of you will have the opportunity to meet her soon, perhaps at one of our upcoming Montana bird festivals.

We are thrilled to bring our *Wings Across the Big Sky* Bird Festival to Bozeman this year (June 6-8). With unwavering support from our Bozeman chapter (Sacajawea Audubon), we have lined up a plethora of exciting field trips for you, as well as many knowledgeable, entertaining speakers—I look forward to seeing you there.

THANK YOU for your ongoing support of our conservation work. Together, we can strengthen Montana Audubon's important efforts to engage people in conserving Montana's 429 bird species and the vast, intact ecosystems that support them.

Yours in conservation,

Steve Hoffman, Executive Director

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## Captivated by Curlews

A few years ago, Montana Audubon attended a retreat with many of the best avian conservationists around—members of the Montana Bird Conservation Partnership—to figure out how we could all work together to “move the needle” on grassland habitat conservation. After much brain-wrangling, we decided we needed a mascot: a bird that lives throughout the state, is charismatic and recognizable, and, of course, needs grasslands. Not a “little brown job” like the Grasshopper Sparrow, but someone loud and flashy.

We landed on the Long-billed Curlew. Then we began making plans for a collaborative effort to use this bird, North America’s largest shorebird, to conserve specific grasslands.

Fast forward to spring 2014. Bird Conservation Director Amy Cilimburg

has just returned from a meeting that she, with the help of partners, organized in the Mission Valley. It’s a long story how this project landed in the Mission Valley, but suffice it to say that there are grasslands urgently in need of our help in western Montana, and opportunities abound.

Our work is bringing together those who live, work, and bird in this valley, from folks who write grazing plans for landowners to biologists from the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes to friends from Audubon and local land trusts. We’ve pored over maps and data to draw circles around the best areas, created curlew brochures and Best Management Practices to help landowners who want to improve habitat, all the time creating ways to build enthusiasm for our mascot, the *cool* curlew.



Photo by Bob Martinka

This year we’re passing out postcards so people can let us know if they find a Mission Valley curlew. And we’re excited about a new online mapping tool created by Janene Lichtenberg, who is developing the Salish and Kootenai College’s new Wildlife and Fisheries Program and is also working part-time for Audubon.

Anyone who finds a Long-billed Curlew in the Mission Valley can let us know where. Check out the new curlew mapping tool by going to [www.mtaudubon.org](http://www.mtaudubon.org) and clicking on the curlew on the right.

Our work may not be as flashy as our mascot, but together we’re getting conservation done. And we hope this pilot project can be extended to other grassland valleys across Montana.

### Why all these efforts?

Montana has the most extensive grasslands in the northern Great Plains, comprising 26 percent of our state. Grassland birds show the most declines of any suite of birds monitored by Breeding Bird Surveys, with 70 percent of the species showing declines.

## A Story of Grouse (cont. from p. 1)

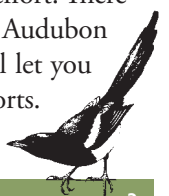
Because of all the pressures on sagebrush landscapes, you won’t be surprised to learn that sage-grouse have been declining because of habitat loss in Montana and throughout the birds’ range. This decline has prompted federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) litigation that seeks protection for this bird. The governor’s council was tasked with developing specific science-based recommendations for the state, to head off the need for ESA protection.

This work took council members to public hearings held from Dillon to Glasgow and Baker to Malta. They read stacks of scientific articles; attended meetings almost every other week with numerous experts; and discussed, wrote, voted on, discussed, and re-wrote. In January 2014 they finalized recommendations for the governor, whose job it is to implement a Montana strategy that will avoid the need to protect these birds under the ESA.

Of course this work was not all about one bird. Janet persevered, not because she’s a glutton for punishment, but because:

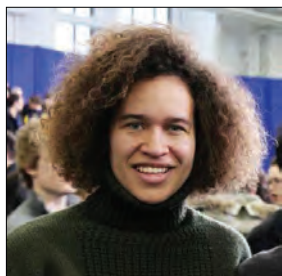
- ◆ Montana has a significant amount of the best remaining sagebrush habitats in the West, comprising 19 percent of the state,
- ◆ Sagebrush-dependent birds show consistent population declines over the last 30 years, with decreasing populations found in 63 percent of these species,
- ◆ Conserving sagebrush habitats can help sustain the Greater Sage-Grouse and myriad other wildlife species (including seven species of birds) that fit under the grouse umbrella.

Sage-Grouse conservation in Montana is an ongoing effort. There will be many more long meetings—with Montana Audubon advocating for our sagebrush-dependent birds. We’ll let you know when you can best add your voice to these efforts.





# Comings and Goings at the Audubon Center



## Hello From Trinity Pierce, Our New Land Stewardship Coordinator!

**S**alutations! I am greatly looking forward to joining the team at the Montana Audubon Conservation Education Center. I am an avid gardener and enjoy all kinds of outdoor DIY projects. I like reading sci-fi and fantasy, and delving into the history of our relationship with the land in terms of design values, conservation, and restoration.

Having grown up a Midwesterner, I am eager to live in and explore the incredible ecosystems of Montana. Thank you for this opportunity to work with you to restore and celebrate the environment through the activities and mission of the Education Center.

## Goodbye to Mihail

**M**ihail Kennedy, the Audubon Center's Land Stewardship Coordinator, recently moved on to new challenges. Over the last 2-1/2 years while at the Center, Mihail worked on restoration and

management of the Audubon property, planting thousands of new trees, shrubs, and other plants; managing the irrigation system; working with numerous volunteers; and developing a new master plan for the property. We wish Mihail great success with his new endeavor!

## Get Outside Montana, June 1-Aug. 10

**T**his free back-to-nature family event kick-off is at the Audubon Center on June 1, 2014, from 1-4 p.m. For more information and registration, please go to [www.getoutsidemontana.org](http://www.getoutsidemontana.org).



## Audubon Center in need of a truck

**D**o you have an old but functional truck sitting in your yard? Please consider donating it to the Audubon Center to use for our restoration efforts. Call Darcie at 406-294-5099 for more details.

# Darcie Howard Receives Toyota TogetherGreen Fellowship



**Toyota  
TogetherGreen**  
by Audubon



**T**ogether, Audubon and Toyota select 40 high-potential conservation leaders to receive Toyota TogetherGreen Fellowships each year. With their \$10,000 grants, these fellows conduct community projects to engage diverse audiences in habitat, water, or energy conservation. In addition to support to help launch their conservation initiatives, Toyota TogetherGreen Fellows also benefit from specialized training and membership in a diverse national network of conservation professionals.

Through her TogetherGreen Fellowship, Darcie Howard, Audubon Center's director, will launch a project to establish a citizen science program at the Center that integrates technology

to engage teens in nature and science. More specifically, she will have students use their smart phones and tablets to collect phenological data—information that tracks life phases such as migration and nesting in birds or flowering in plants. “I am honored to be part of an amazing group of fellows from across the country,” said Darcie. “I believe in my project and am excited to begin working with Senior and West High Environmental Science students.”

The Toyota TogetherGreen Fellowship Program invests in conservation leaders from all backgrounds, providing them resources, visibility, and a growing peer network to help them lead communities nationwide to a healthier environmental future. Since 2008, the 240 conservation leaders from across the country who were awarded these fellowships have engaged nearly 150,000 people in a wide variety of conservation efforts nationwide.

# Watershed Education Branches Out

## AmeriCorps Takes Audubon Center Classes to Afterschool Care

**L**ate last spring Michael Schmelzel learned about the Big Sky Watershed Corps (BSWC) from a college professor. The timing, location, and project were a perfect fit for Michael, who would graduate from Illinois State University with a bachelor of science in Earth and Space Science Education in December of 2013. His interest in exploring the Rocky Mountains had already been piqued by visits to Glacier National Park and the Absaroka-Beartooth Mountains. BSWC, an AmeriCorps program based in Montana, has members serving in 15 different communities across the state. A mere six months after learning about BSWC, degree in hand, Michael hit the road and landed at the Audubon Conservation Education Center in Billings.

In addition to teaching the regular lineup of school field trips, camps, and family programs at the Audubon Center, Michael is developing an outreach program to bring watershed education to afterschool childcare facilities. Oftentimes, transportation to the Center is the biggest barrier to participation; Michael's program will reach students who otherwise could not visit. He is piloting the program at the Boys and Girls Club of

Yellowstone County this spring, and hopes to expand to other venues in the fall.

Michael has become integrated into the community, skiing the first powder of his life, playing basketball at the YMCA, camping in the mountains, and networking with other VISTA members serving in Billings. Michael also wants to get out and explore Montana as much as possible while gaining valuable work experience. He hopes to get back up to Glacier, where he particularly enjoys the unique character of the mountains and surrounding communities.

We are glad to have Michael on board at the Center. He brings teaching experience, an easygoing attitude, and a solid science background to all of our programs. Stop by to welcome him!



AmeriCorp employee Michael Schmelzel.

## Memorial Gifts

**F**ew 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:



Lauren Brooks

Alan Nelson

Jane Ann Ellis

Dorothea Oesterreich

Willa and Bob Hall

Lisa Pena

Bob Morrison

Clara Phelps

Madeline Munoz

Chuck Wheeler

Mary Munsell

*You can ensure an abundant future for Montana's birds and other wildlife. Please remember Montana Audubon in your estate plans.*

## About to Fledge: Birds of Montana

The last of the 430 species accounts for *Birds of Montana* were completed by the end of 2013, and the first 40 (the waterfowl) have been formatted by a book designer and look great! Three of the four introductory chapters have been written, and Jeff Marks is more than halfway through the last one (history of Montana ornithology). We hope to have the entire manuscript in the hands of the reviewer for Oregon State University Press by the end of April!



Drawing by Shawneen Finnegan





# Conservation Notes



The 'new'  
Sagebrush Sparrow.

## Sagebrush Sparrow

In 2013, after 115 years of debate, the American Ornithological Union split Sage Sparrows into two species: Bell's Sparrow (coastal California) and Sagebrush Sparrow (Great Basin/ northwestern states). Morphological, ecological, and genetic analyses show them to be distinct, despite superficial similarities. 2014 is the "first time" Sagebrush Sparrows will breed in Montana's sagebrush steppe. Found in only three counties (Beaverhead, Carbon, and Meagher), it's a declining species

of concern, so keep an eye out for this "new" bird and be sure to report your findings!

## Window Safety

Ever rush outside—straight into a screened or glass door you didn't see? While usually humorous, this scenario injures more than ten thousand people annually. Yet that number pales in comparison to the annual global estimate of 1 billion birds fatally injured every year in similar, less humorous



Imprint of  
Mourning Dove  
strike. Photo by  
Jeanne Donaldson,  
Audubon Society  
of Portland.

collisions. This source of mortality is arguably one of humanity's largest impacts on avian populations and, contrary to effects of predation, disease, or natural selection, window collisions affect the most fit birds as well as the least.

Although bustling cities' glassy high-rises are obvious culprits, individual homes contribute significantly to the problem; clear or reflective glass /plastic panes are essentially invisible to birds. Windows are not barriers, but reflect a continuation of habitat as trees, clouds, indoor plants, or "approaching birds." Sometimes birds defensively attack the "competitor" they see, or use false images of a clear flight path created by windows on two sides of the house, to access habitat beyond.

Luckily, we can make our homes safer. Visit the Bird Conservation section of our website to learn about minimizing basic sources of mortality, from window impacts to cats. Look for the link to "backyards" on our home page.



## Linking eBird to Important Bird Areas

Citizen Science's increasingly beloved eBird platform, designed to streamline bird observation checklists, has morphed into an expanding collaborative network linking participants (you the vigilant observer) to researchers (analyzing and proofing data) to entities affecting policy (governmental and nonprofit organizations) to land managers making everyday decisions that directly impact conservation.

Do you know eBird's creators have added a new function, enabling users to search and submit data and checklists using an Important Bird Area-focused search? Here in Montana that means finding reliable data for our 40 IBAs—contributing as a citizen scientist just got a whole lot easier!

Monitoring species occurrences within our IBAs keeps the program viable. Only with credible scientific data are we able to ensure IBAs fulfill their goal of sustaining healthy bird populations. As a citizen scientist, reporting your complete list of bird observations every time you go out saves a lot of legwork for those reliant on the most basic information needed to inform conservation: location, habitat, and species abundance.



## Conservation Notes

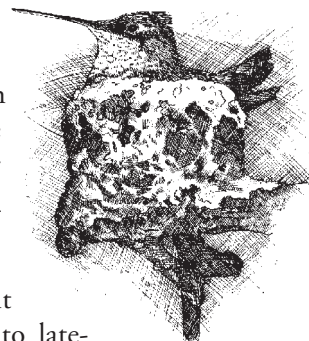
Whether you use eBird, or prefer the Montana Natural Heritage Project's Tracker (now improved as MapViewer), your observations are indispensable to our work. Visit our Citizen Science web page—linked from our home page—to learn how eBird can work for you. There you'll find more than a dozen citizen science opportunities, including the two highlighted below.

### Sweetly Humming Waterfalls

**HUMMINGBIRDS:** Many of us will have spotted our first hummingbird of the season before this newsletter hits the press. Building off last year's debut, National Audubon Society is once again poised to make meaning of our sightings, if we report them to *Hummingbirds at Home*.

**WHY?** As flowers bloom earlier because of climate change, the impact on hummingbirds—which rely on nectar—could be severe. This citizen science initiative will help scientists understand how climate change, flowering patterns, and feeding by people are

impacting hummingbirds. We hope it leads to improving our protection efforts. It's easy to participate online, and, in keeping with the times, there's a free app for your mobile phone. You can adopt a backyard patch or simply report as you go. Check out [www.hummingbirdsathome.org](http://www.hummingbirdsathome.org).



**BLACK SWIFTS:** A handful of us have caught the Swift Bug—we hike to waterfalls mid- to late-summer hoping to find this rare bird nesting behind a cascading waterfall. In the last three years, researchers and volunteers have found six new breeding falls across western Montana, bringing our state's total to a whopping nine! Folks in Glacier National Park found four new sites last summer. If you're feeling adventurous and have some hiking time, contact Amy Cilimburg to see if you can join the slightly crazed swift searchers this summer ([amy@mtaudubon.org](mailto:amy@mtaudubon.org)). More information is linked via our website.

## Visualizing Climate Change

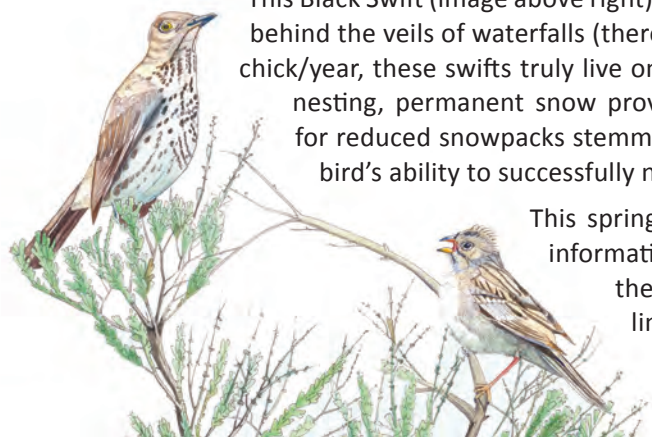
Here at Montana Audubon, we've embarked on a project to connect art and science to creatively tell the story about the effects of climate change on key Montana bird species and their habitats. We are working with Mara Menahan, a senior in the Environmental Studies program at the University of Montana and, coincidentally, Board Member Judy Tureck's granddaughter, to create images of three threatened habitats: alpine, forest, and sagebrush ecosystems. We hope that samples of Mara's artwork pique your interest to learn more.

As you may know, the Brewer's Sparrow and Sage Thrasher (image below) rely on healthy and abundant sagebrush habitat just like the Greater Sage-Grouse. Warming temperatures will likely bring more fire to the landscape, and invasive plants like cheatgrass can out-compete sage after such disturbance.

This Black Swift (image above right) is considered rare across its range. With nests situated behind the veils of waterfalls (thereby protected from predators) and a brood size of one chick/year, these swifts truly live on the edge. Late into the summer while swifts are still nesting, permanent snow provides vital water for their wet nest sites. Predictions for reduced snowpacks stemming from warmer winters has us concerned about this bird's ability to successfully nest in Montana.

This spring, this artwork will be featured on our website, with information on the climate change impacts on birds in each of these habitats. Visit our homepage [mtaudubon.org](http://mtaudubon.org) for links.

Drawings by Mara Menahan

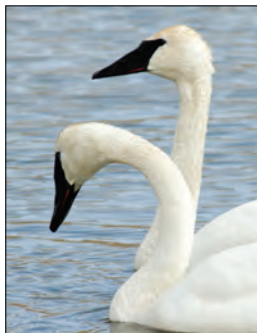




Welcome to a new feature of this spring's Magpie Muse, Montana Audubon's "Mini Annual Report" that includes audited financial information from our last fiscal year and donor listings from April 2013 through March 2014. We hope you enjoy it, as we plan to incorporate this format in future spring issues.

## Life's Essentials

Giving is a powerful force that encourages us to evaluate our place in the world. Consider the importance of abundant birds and other wildlife near your doorstep in Montana. Then, think about making a lasting investment to ensure future generations will have the same opportunities to hear the bugling Trumpeter Swans in the Centennial Valley or see Long-billed Curlews in the Mission Valley.



While it may be hard to place a personal monetary value on intact native habitats, we would agree they have intrinsic value. You already make monthly payments for phones, cable TV and other "essentials," yet if those were gone tomorrow, would your life be just fine? However, if there were no more areas where you can see an Osprey dive for fish or a Varied Thrush buzz its single tonal note in the forest, would your life still be fine?

A great way to provide Montana Audubon with a reliable source of support is the monthly giving program as a Montana Audubon Protector. It is easy

to set up and can automatically be included as one of your "life essentials." You can choose either monthly automatic bank withdrawals (contact [norane@mtaudubon.org](mailto:norane@mtaudubon.org)) or go to [mtaudubon.org](http://mtaudubon.org) and select Donate Now for monthly credit card charges.

Please consider this simple way of supporting the vital conservation work that only Montana Audubon provides. Your monthly support can ensure a prosperous future for our birds, wildlife, and the human spirit, leaving a rich legacy for future generations of Montanans.

### Thanks to our Montana Audubon Protectors!

Bev & Pat Clancey

Mila Cummins

Christine Ebeling

Daniel & Debra Fields

Lou Ann & John Harris

Annemarie Harrod

Linda Holding

Beth Hill

Beth & Lynn Kaeding

Theresa Keaveny

Harriet Marble

Roxanna McLaughlin

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Sumner Sharpe & Margaret Strachan

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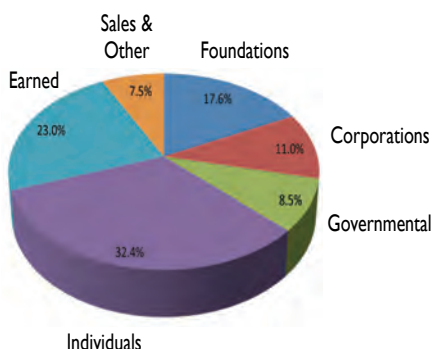
Linn Szenter

Elsie Tuss

## Montana Audubon Building on Success

Montana Audubon's expanding conservation successes are the result of generous support from a variety of sources. At the close of our most recent fiscal year (ending 6/30/13), we achieved another year of growth with the organization's fiscal health better than at any time in its 38-year history. We are also working hard to strengthen our permanent endowments at both the Montana Community Foundation and Billings Community Foundation where we have individual endowment funds for our Audubon Center, our Public Policy work, and for general support of Montana Audubon. Thank you for being our exceptional supporters in our conservation work!

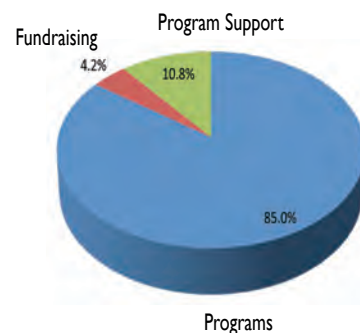
### 2013 Revenue



### Statement of Financial Position

Unrestricted	
Net Assets:	\$ 627,593
Board Designated	
Endowment:	\$ 338,224
Temporarily Restricted	
Net Assets:	\$ 108,113
Permanently Restricted	
Net Assets:	\$ 47,910
<b>Total Net Assets:</b>	<b>\$1,121,840</b>

### 2013 Expenses







# MONTANA AUDUBON 2013 ANNUAL REPORT

**W**e want to thank the following Audubon chapters, organizations, corporations and businesses, foundations, 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

## Foundations

Better Billings Foundation  
Brainerd Foundation  
Bullitt Foundation  
Burlington Northern Santa Fe Foundation  
Cadeau Foundation  
Captain Planet Foundation  
Cinnabar Foundation  
David F. and Sara K. Weston Fund  
Donald and Carol Roberts Foundation  
Drollinger Family Charitable Foundation  
Fanwood Foundation  
Harry L. Willett Foundation  
High Stakes Foundation  
Hope Christian Community Foundation  
Kendeda Fund  
L.E.A.W. Family Foundation  
Margaret V. Ping Foundation  
Mary Alice Fortin Foundation for Youth Enrichment  
My Good Fund Trust  
Whitmire Foundation

Wolf Creek Charitable Foundation

## Corporate/Business Donations & Grants

Abbott Valley Homestead  
Absaroka River Adventure  
Allegra Print & Imaging  
Allegra--Billings  
AMB Group, LLC  
AR Industrial Services  
Audubon Wildlife Fund of Montana  
Base Camp  
Big Sky Resort  
Bikenet  
Birds & Beasleys  
Bridger Bowl Ski Area  
Broadway Deli & Cafe  
Cabela's  
CHS Refinery, Pipelines & Terminals  
Ciao Mambo  
City Brew  
Community Food Co-op of Bozeman  
Confluence Consulting, Inc.  
Cottonwood Log Cabins  
Creative Minds  
D.A. Davidson & Company  
Energy Laboratories, Inc  
EP Energy  
ExxonMobil Refining & Supply Company  
Fact and Fiction  
Family of Fabric  
First Interstate BancSystem Foundation  
General Mills Foundation  
Good Earth Market  
Hanson Chemical, Inc.  
HawkWatch International  
Holcim  
Kenco Security and Technology  
Kid Country Child Development Center

Kohl's  
Kountry Kare  
Madavor Media, LLC  
Main Street Booksellers  
McCall Development, Inc.  
Meier Family Chiropractic  
Montana Cycling and Ski  
Mosaic Threads  
Mothers Day Out Preschool  
Murray Floor & Window Coverings  
Mystery Ranch  
National Audubon Society, Sargent Endowment  
NaturEner USA, LLC  
Nicklin Earth & Water  
Northern Lights Trading Company  
Northwestern Energy  
Oasis Health Spa  
Owenhouse Hardware  
Patagonia Outlet Dillon  
Payne Financial Group  
Peaks to Plains Design  
Phillips 66 Refinery, Billings  
Pita Pit  
Planet 106.7  
Plum Creek Timber Company  
Pooh's Too Daycare  
Prudential Foundation  
RBC Wealth Management  
Rockjumper Birding Tours  
Sage Spa  
Scheels  
Sleeping Giant Communications, LLC  
Stockman Bank  
Stonefly Studio  
Sunburst Consulting, Inc.  
Sunshine Sports  
Sylvan Peak Mountain Shop  
The Bookstore

The Sanctuary  
The Spoke Shop  
Town Pump Inc.  
Toyota-Audubon, TogetherGreen Partnership  
Valley Bank of Helena  
West Rotary, Billings  
Westech Environmental Services  
Western Cafe of Bozeman  
Wild Birds Unlimited  
Wild Bryde Jewelry  
Wilderness Adventures Press, Inc.  
Yellowstone Track Systems  
Yellowstone Valley Brewing Company

## Agency Partners

City of Billings Parks & Recreation  
City of Lewistown  
Intermountain West Joint Venture  
MT Dept. of Justice, Title and Registration Bureau  
MT Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation  
MT Dept. of Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
Northern Great Plains Joint Venture  
U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Montana State Office  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, CM Russell National Wildlife Refuge  
U.S. Forest Service, Gallatin National Forest

## Organizations and Institutions

American Prairie Reserve  
Billings Catholic Schools  
Billings High School District #2  
Billings West Rotary Club

Bitterroot Elementary School  
Blue Creek Elementary School District #3  
Boys and Girls Clubs of Yellowstone County  
Canyon Creek School District #4  
Christ's Church  
Education Foundation  
Billings Public Schools  
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Friends of the Missouri Breaks Monument  
Friendship House of Christian Service  
Head Start, Inc.  
Huntley Project Cub Scout Pack 77  
Interfaith Hospitality Network of Yellowstone County  
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Owl Research Institute  
Pryor Public School  
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Seattle Audubon Society  
The Sunshine Academy  
United Way of Larimer County, Inc.  
Walleyes Forever, Inc.  
World Wildlife Fund  
Yellowstone River Parks Association  
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ZOE Bible Church





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# MONTANA AUDUBON 2013 ANNUAL REPORT

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Please note this list does not include tour fees or festival registration fees.*





## Volunteer Spotlight: Sherry Ritter

Sherry Ritter knows a lot about the Important Bird Areas (IBA) program: she has worked on this program for 15 years in Montana and Idaho, and currently serves as the IBA committee chair for Bitterroot Audubon. Since 2000, Sherry also has supported



the Bitterroot Chapter by preparing newsletters, leading field trips, serving as vice president, and even, yes, as president. The Audubon community will be pleased to hear that Sherry, now retired (congratulations!), has told us she plans to increase her focus on Bitterroot Audubon's two local IBAs: the Bitterroot River, and Blodgett Fire.

As if she doesn't do enough already! Her efforts to collect scientific data, lead outstanding field trips (such as the Big Hole River), and work to improve habitat in these

areas are stellar examples of how chapters can put the IBA program committee to work. But she wants us to make no mistake. She could not have done all this work alone. In conjunction with committee members Fred Weisbecker, Kate Stone, Skip Horner, and Kay Fulton, the Bitterroot River IBA committee has become a true force for obtaining data Montana Audubon needs to maintain the IBA program's integrity, getting riparian habitat conservation projects off the ground (such as vegetation fencing), and developing educational materials, including the *Our Birds Call This Home* booklet for folks living in the Bitterroot River IBA. As a resident there herself, Sherry has an intimate knowledge and appreciation for both the birds and the unique riparian habitat within the IBA.

Because of Sherry and the Bitterroot IBA committee's dedication, Montana Audubon is in a much better position to continue supporting the overarching goal of long-term conservation of birds and their habitats. For this continued support and dedication we give her a BIG THANKS!

## Board Member Spotlight: Cary Lund

One of Montana Audubon's longest-serving Board member, Cary Lund, currently serves as our board secretary, and is active on the executive and finance committees. Cary hails from Livingston, but currently resides in Helena with his family. He has worked as legal counsel for the Montana Dept. of Health and Human Services for the past 33 years.

Cary's interest in birds began when he was a young teenager growing up near the Yellowstone River. Today he is particularly fond of birding in Montana's mountain foothill forests, and in the lush cottonwood bottomlands of the Yellowstone River. He is also especially intrigued with the exceptional intelligence and sociality of corvids (crows, ravens, jays, etc.).

Cary's involvement in the Audubon cause began in Missoula in the late 1970s, when he joined the Five Valleys Chapter Board. After moving to Helena in 1980, he immediately became involved with Helena's Last Chance Audubon. Cary's valuable contributions to the development and growth of Montana Audubon over the years include his extensive institutional knowledge, his insightful counsel on legal matters, and his sharing of diverse perspectives drawn from his homegrown, Montana-based, political, legal, and cultural sensibilities.

THANK YOU, Cary, for lending your considerable expertise *over a span of more than three decades* to help Montana Audubon advance its statewide bird conservation mission!



# Audubon Chapters Reach Students

The following Montana Audubon chapters recently received a National Audubon Society grant:

- ◆ **FIVE VALLEYS AUDUBON OF MISSOULA** combines classroom lessons and field trips so 23 third graders at St. Joseph School can learn about fire ecology, with an emphasis on how trees, plants, wildlife, and fires interact.
- ◆ **FLATHEAD AUDUBON OF KALISPELL** supports an environmental educator who will reach 5,000 people through programs in local schools and libraries, and at events. In addition, the work features a conservation mentoring program, giving at-risk high school students the opportunity to mentor elementary children, while providing weed mitigation and conservation education at Owen Sowerwine Natural Area and Important Bird Area.

Good, local, conservation education programs are hard to beat!



## Grants Support Research on Birds and Wetlands

**E**ach year Montana Audubon awards grants from the Audubon Wildlife Fund of Montana, a permanent endowment. For the last 19 years, these grants have supported research and education projects directed toward wildlife and/or wildlife habitat. This year's grant projects:

- ◆ **CITIZEN SCIENTISTS AT SALISH KOOTENAI COLLEGE, PABLO.** The college will purchase three pairs of binoculars so students can contribute to citizen science projects on Long-billed Curlews and more.
- ◆ **MONTANA'S VULNERABLE WETLANDS.** Montana Audubon will develop a report describing our state's most vulnerable wetlands, targeted to decision-makers and conservation efforts.
- ◆ **NORTHERN HAWK OWL BREEDING IN MONTANA.** The Owl Research Institute will continue their long-term monitoring of Northern Hawk Owls nesting in Glacier National Park and the Flathead National Forest.



Janene Lichtenberg successfully received a grant to support Salish Kootenai College citizen science work.

## Hello & Good-bye to Board Members and Staff

**W**elcome, incoming Montana Audubon at-large board member Ron Farmer (Bozeman), Helena's Last Chance Audubon alternate Jennifer Stadum, and Billings' Yellowstone Valley Audubon representative Steve Regele.

Departing board members include Coburn Currier (Last Chance Audubon's alternate), Bill DeMeyer (Yellowstone Valley Audubon's representative), and Sheila McKay (Yellowstone Valley Audubon's alternate).

Everyone at Montana Audubon thanks each of them for their dedicated service and exceptional support for the Audubon conservation cause in Montana.

Staffers who have recently departed include Mihail Kennedy, land stewardship coordinator at the Audubon Center in Billings, and Abby Weimer, our office manager in Helena. We appreciate their hard work on behalf of Montana Audubon's conservation mission and wish them much success in their future endeavors!





## Goodbye—and Thank You Bob Ballou Remembered...

**M**ontana lost a friend on March 1, when Bob Ballou, of Missoula, passed away. Bob spent most of his career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's refuge system, retiring from Ninepipe National Wildlife Refuge in 1982. In retirement, Bob was active with Flathead Audubon, Five Valleys Audubon, and Montana Audubon, serving on the state board of directors for more than a decade, including as president.

Bob had a deep appreciation for conservation. He was an avid outdoorsman whose favorite pastimes included hunting, fishing, photography, birdwatching, and more. He was most passionate about population control and its effects on the outdoors.

We extend our condolences to Bob's wife, Nancy, and his children, grandchildren, and their families. Bob will be fondly remembered.

## Recognize Your Peers!

**D**o you know someone special who deserves recognition? 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.

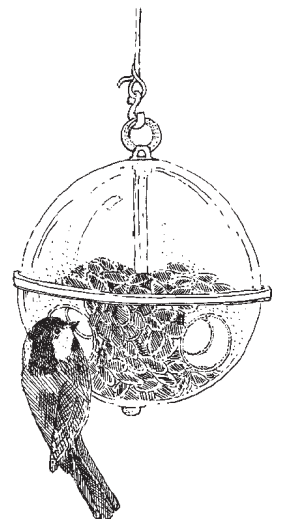
- ◆ **CITIZEN SCIENTIST OF THE YEAR**—for contributing significantly to our understanding of birds through monitoring/observations.
- ◆ **SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT**—for an extraordinary commitment to birds and habitat on a special project or activity.

Nominations must be received by May 23, 2014 for the award ceremony at our Bird Festival in Bozeman. Award nomination forms can be downloaded from our website ([mtaudubon.org/about/awards](http://mtaudubon.org/about/awards)). Questions? Contact Janet Ellis at the Audubon office.

## Help Fill the Silent Auction's Treasure Chest!

Think fun, think good-natured bidding wars, 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 6–8, in Bozeman. 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* Sacajawea Audubon.

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



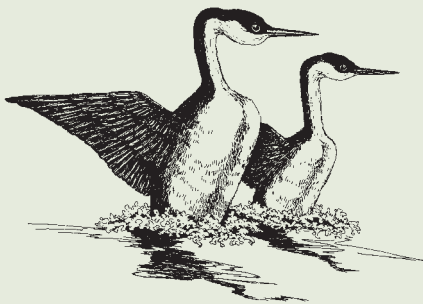


## A Round of Applause for Volunteers!

**T**HANK YOU volunteers, for donating your time and expertise to specific Montana Audubon projects, including working at the Audubon Center in Billings in any number of capacities, assisting with the Bird Festival, collecting bird data for Important Bird Areas, or helping with policy work. We applaud these contributions and appreciate your important work.

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Lou Ann Harris	Wyatt Sterns
Janne Hayward	Austin Stevens
Katy Hedtke	Gary Swant
Jeff Kitchens	Morgan Webber
Boris & Jane Krizek	Chuck Ward

We also want to thank all the many, many citizen scientists who help with the Christmas Bird Count, eBird, Great Backyard Bird Count, and more.



Drawing by Steven D'Amato

## Upcoming Montana Audubon Tours

### Centennial Valley & Red Rock Lakes, May 30–June 1

**H**urray! This tour is filled and we have a full list of folks waiting in the “wings” should anyone cancel. This is our most popular tour so we will be repeating it again in the future. Stay tuned so you can jump in at the first notice!

### Raptor Weekend Tour, Sept. 19–21

**J**oin Executive Director Steve Hoffman for an exciting weekend to observe and band migrating hawks and eagles! On Friday we will hike to Raptor View Research Institute’s raptor banding station near Lincoln



to observe the capture, banding, and release of migrant hawks and eagles. (These birds are following the Rocky Mountain Front en route to winter feeding grounds.) We will then drive through the spectacular Swan Valley to Bigfork to spend Friday and Saturday nights. To prepare everyone for Saturday’s spectacular raptor watching, Steve will present an evening raptor identification slideshow. We’ll depart early on Saturday morning and drive to beautiful Jewel Basin. From the trailhead, we’ll hike to the crest of the Swan Range for close-up, ridgetop viewing of migrant hawks, falcons, and eagles. On our return trip to Helena on Sunday, we will do some roadside raptor watching.

The cost for this trip is \$485/person, which includes double occupancy lodging (single supplement \$100), all meals, transportation, and guide service from Helena, Missoula, or possibly Bozeman. A \$150/person deposit reserves your place.

Check out the detailed itinerary for this fabulous tour: [mtaudubon.org/birdwatching/tours.html](http://mtaudubon.org/birdwatching/tours.html) For reservations call 406-443-3949 or email [norane@mtaudubon.org](mailto:norane@mtaudubon.org).

## Montana Audubon: A Proud Member of Montana Shares!



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## Final Reminder: *Wings Across the Big Sky*

Montana Audubon's Annual Bird Festival,  
June 6–8, 2014, Bozeman, Montana

**T**he 15th Annual Bird Festival promises to be an exciting time. Set in the beautiful Gallatin Valley and co-sponsored by Sacajawea Audubon, *Wings Across the Big Sky* offers a full range of activities. Attend the Saturday afternoon events to learn from an expert about crows, and hear from others about Montana's ospreys, sage-grouse, raptors, birds in a changing climate, and more. You'll even hear about bird migration in the Middle East.

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 39 field trips, allowing participants to view a great variety in and around the Bozeman area. Choose to visit the headwaters of the Missouri River, Paradise Valley, Milligan Canyon, and Ennis Lake. Perhaps a walking tour of historic Bozeman piques your interest. What about a workshop on digital bird photography?

Even if you are unable to attend the festival, there are some wonderful raffle prizes. How about an *all expense paid trip to Coastal Texas* for some guided birding, a stay at *Abbott Valley Homestead* near Glacier Nat'l Park, a beautiful *handmade quilt*, or a *beginner's birding basket*? Call Montana Audubon at (406) 443-3949 to request raffle tickets. You do NOT have to be present to win any one of these prizes.