

fall 2014

MONTANA
AUDUBON

*Birds Threatened
by Climate Change*

WAKE UP CALL

page 4



**LESSER SCAUP
AT RED ROCK LAKES**

Conservation Briefs, page 10



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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On the cover:

The Red-naped Sapsucker is among the Montana bird species significantly imperiled by climate change. See the full list on page 7. *Photo by Bob Martinka*

THE VIEW FROM ABOVE

Greetings,

Once numbering in the billions, the last Passenger Pigeon died 100 years ago last month. These birds once darkened the skies for hours at a time as they migrated over the vast, unbroken forests of the eastern U.S. This dramatic and irreparable loss a century ago was, at the time, a notable example of our collective indifference toward the welfare of birds. Of course today is a new era and we have an unprecedented opportunity to ensure the past is NOT repeated.



The recently released *2014 State of the Birds Report* provides considerable hope, demonstrating clearly how much progress we've made in bird conservation during the last few decades, and offering a clear road map for keeping common birds common, as well as bringing those species threatened with extinction back from the brink. The report's hopeful theme is: "When we have the will to conserve, we can make a better future: for birds, for ecosystems, for everyone... Conservation works!" To read the entire report go to www.stateofthebirds.org.

Our lead article in this issue summarizes the greatest long-term threat to birds in Montana and worldwide: climate change. Most scientists agree there is still time to avoid this potential crisis if we all work together NOW to reduce our carbon footprint, and protect the most critical, most resilient habitats. National Audubon's message to everyone echoes the *State of the Birds Report*—we can and must take action now, individually and collectively, to ensure our beloved birds and all living things (including humans!) have a hopeful future.

Each day, Montana Audubon continues to advance bird habitat conservation in Big Sky Country. This work is possible only because of your consistent and profound generosity. Thank you!

Yours in conservation,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Steve Hoffman".

Steve Hoffman, Executive Director

Where's the magpie? *A wise person said, "Change is the only thing that brings progress." At Montana Audubon we celebrate the progress of our work and appreciate the path that lies ahead. We're retiring the name and format of our newsletter, The Magpie Muse. With a respectful nod to our past, we look forward to rolling out this fresh look. What are your thoughts? Let us know at mtaudubon@mtaudubon.org.*



WAKE U

Bob Marinka



Fully Half of Montana's Birds Threatened by Climate Change

While you're out enjoying the beautiful days of fall, keep your ears open for the sounds of our local birds. With the summer migrants gone, it's our familiar siskins, nuthatches, and chickadees whose calls ring through Montana's forests and backyards. These year-round residents carry us through the winter months. We take their subtle calls and daily routines at our feeders for granted, but they're a big part of what sustains this landscape.

How would it feel if they disappeared?



Bob Martinka

UP CALL

John Lambing

Species in Montana that are the most imperiled include: (left to right) American Avocet, Barrow's Goldeneye, and Trumpeter Swan. See full list on the next page.

That's the question raised by a sobering new National Audubon Society study of birds and global warming. Combining more than 40 years of bird data with the latest climate models, researchers created maps of where each species is likely to find the climatic conditions they need to survive 60 years from now. Call it "a field guide to the future."

Unfortunately, the bird book our grandchildren will take into the woods in the year 2080 could be a much slimmer volume. Of 588 North American species studied, more than half of the birds in Canada and the U.S.—including Montana— will be threatened by global warming, and many could go extinct, if we do not act.

What Montana birds are at risk? From our smallest hummingbirds to Bald and Golden Eagles, from many ducks to Trumpeter Swans,

from Mountain Chickadees to birds of open spaces, like the Long-billed Curlew—plus iconic Montana species, including the Osprey. It's a surprisingly long list.

Could nuthatches and chickadees really disappear from Montana this century? What about Trumpeter Swans and American Avocets? And how will our grassland birds like Chestnut-collared Longspur survive?

Amy Cilimburg, Montana Audubon's director of Bird Conservation and Climate Policy, stresses the urgency. "Many of our forest birds, such as the Western Tanager and Clark's Nutcracker, will not have the climate and associated habitats they need here in Montana and will need to search for new places to live. This is a wake-up call. We all share this challenge—let's find solutions together."

continued...

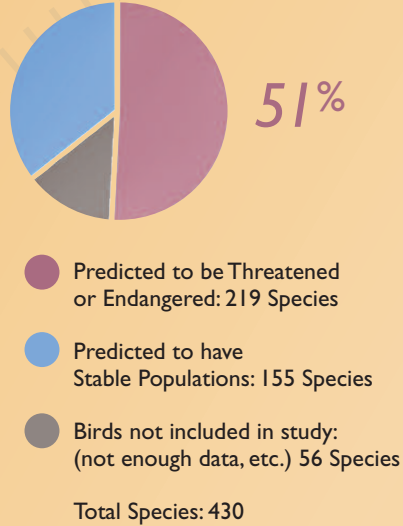


Bob Martinka

“This is a wake-up call. We all share this challenge—let’s find solutions together.”

—Amy Cilimburg, Montana Audubon’s director of Bird Conservation and Climate Policy

Birds in Montana predicted to be endangered, threatened, and stable by global warming



Wake Up Call, continued

Montana Audubon and its nine community chapters are working to build healthy, resilient habitats for many of these threatened species. Fred Weisbecker, Montana Audubon’s board president and vice president of Bitterroot Audubon, notes that, “The more we can prepare today and conserve what we have, the more of a fighting chance these birds will have tomorrow. The debate on the reality of climate change is over, and in addition to conserving critical habitat for everything from Rufous Hummingbirds to Osprey, it’s time to reduce carbon pollution and embrace solutions like rooftop solar.”

Those sentiments are echoed by Jim Brown of Five Valleys Audubon Society in Missoula. “Our wetlands, rivers, and streams are vital to many species such as the Trumpeter Swan and the Barrow’s Goldeneye duck,” said Brown. “Survival of those species and others will be threatened

by a warming climate that likely means reduced stream flow and smaller wetlands. It is essential for us to protect the already limited wetland and riparian areas in Montana to assure survival of many species. These birds are a treasure. We must reduce our voracious consumption of dirty fossil fuels, especially coal.”

Fortunately, there is hope. For example, right now both the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Montana’s Governor Bullock are working on solutions. In June, the EPA issued its Clean Power Plan, a draft rule to reduce carbon pollution from the nation’s dirtiest power plants. Earlier this fall, Gov. Bullock released the Montana Department of Environmental Quality’s (MT DEQ) Options for Montana’s Energy Future, a draft “whitepaper” describing possible ways we can reduce Montana’s carbon pollution by 21 percent by 2030—a good start.

To learn more about Audubon's new Birds and Climate Change Report, visit our website at www.mtaudubon.org

Montana's Most Imperiled Birds

American Avocet
Baird's Sparrow
Barrow's Goldeneye
Black Swift
Boreal Chickadee
Chestnut-collared Longspur
Ferruginous Hawk
Gadwall
Long-billed Curlew
McCown's Longspur
Sage Thrasher
Sprague's Pipit
Townsend's Solitaire
Trumpeter Swan
Western Grebe
Willet
Wilson's Phalarope

Other Montana Birds Significantly Imperiled

American Three-toed Woodpecker
Bald Eagle
Brewer's Sparrow
Burrowing Owl
California Gull
Cassin's Finch
Clark's Nutcracker
Golden Eagle
Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch
Greater Sage-Grouse

Lewis's Woodpecker
Mountain Bluebird
Mountain Chickadee
Mountain Plover
Northern Pygmy Owl
Northern Shoveler
Osprey
Red Crossbill
Redhead
Red-naped Sapsucker
Rufous Hummingbird
Ruffed Grouse
Sharp-tailed Grouse
Swainson's Hawk
Varied Thrush
Western Tanager
Wilson's Warbler



Long-billed Curlew

Bob Martinka

Get involved! We make it easy.

November is a great time to tell the EPA and MT DEQ you support strong climate action. Visit www.mtaudubon.org, click on "take action," and add your voice.

Another opportunity to act arrives in January with the 2015 Montana Legislature, which can improve our renewable energy options and decrease our reliance on dirty fossil fuels. Our lobbying team (see page 11) will need your help to be effective:

- Come to Helena for a lobby day
- Tell your legislators it's time our policies matched our values.

And, of course, you can act in your own home and business to shrink your carbon footprint and help conserve wildlife:

- Create and maintain bird-friendly habitat in your backyards and open spaces
- Continue to gather citizen science information via Christmas Bird Counts (see page 12) and Breeding Bird Surveys (see page 13).

Let's not use our backyard birds the way canaries were once used to show danger in mines. If we act now, our birds and our wildlife will be healthier and so, too, will our farms, rivers, economies, and the future for all.



It's time our policies matched our values

Bob Martinka



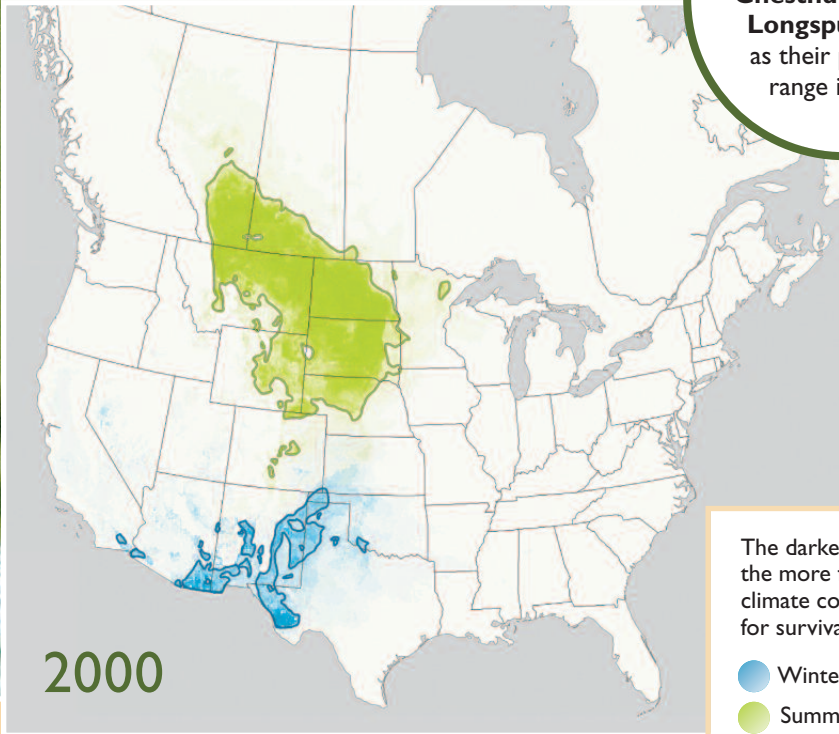
Climate Change Challenges for Grassland Birds

Climate change is predicted to cause many grassland birds to decline or disappear.

These birds can't simply move up a mountain to find suitable climate conditions and habitats. The result? Potential widespread disappearance of an entire ecosystem.

As an example, the Chestnut-collared Longspur currently has healthy populations in Montana. The Audubon Report makes a dire prediction: a loss of almost 75 percent of their current breeding range. Projected declines for Montana's longspurs are striking. Commensurate with the problem, we must continue to conserve grassland habitat and advocate for climate solutions.

Audubon maps show the current range of the **Chestnut-collared Longspur** as well as their predicted range in 2080.

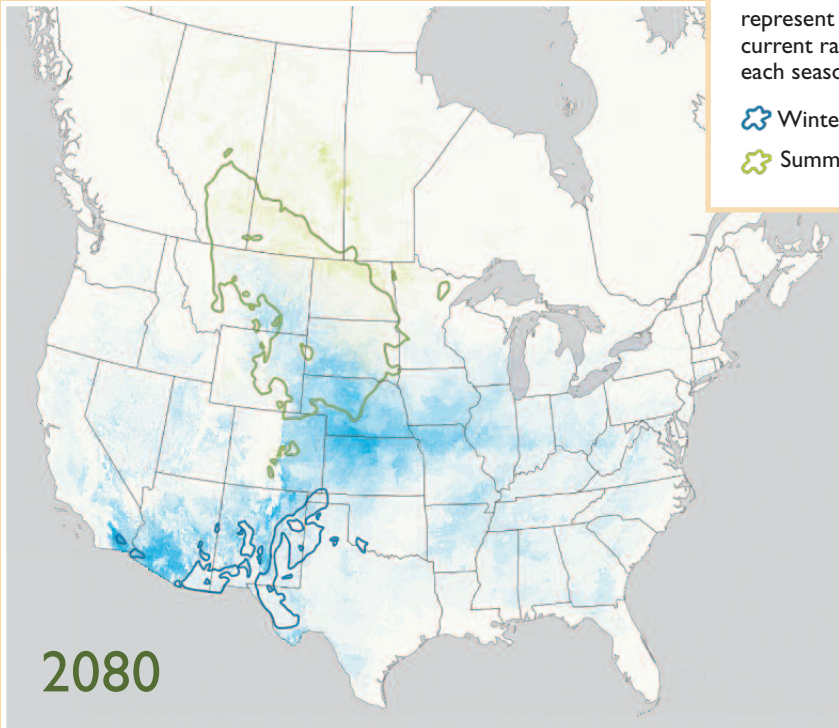


The darker the color, the more favorable the climate conditions are for survival.

- Winter
- Summer

The outlined areas represent approximate current range for each season.

- Winter Range
- Summer Range





Janice Miller



Lesser Scaup at Red Rock Lakes

Many of you may know southwestern Montana's Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife refuge for breeding Trumpeter Swans, sage-grouse, spectacular scenery, and hunting opportunities. What you may not know is that the area supports one of North America's highest breeding densities of Lesser Scaup. This makes Red Rock Lakes (one of 42 designated Montana Audubon Important Bird Areas), a great place to be a Lesser Scaup and a Lesser Scaup researcher.

Since 2005, refuge biologists and a dedicated slew of agency and citizen science volunteers have been trapping and tagging ducklings and hens during their annual molt to learn what makes this location so unique. Ten years into the project, more than 4,000 birds have

been marked, and there have been 300+ hunter recoveries and band sightings from all four flyways: the Atlantic, Mississippi, Central, and Pacific. We have learned that scaup breeding at Red Rocks experienced an astounding 40 percent annual nesting success from 2008–2013, compared to the less than 5 percent success rates in most nesting locations throughout the boreal forest, perhaps reflecting the intact nature of the largest wetlands in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

Today, following a slight uptick in production between 2006 and 2014, there are about 4 million Lesser Scaup in the continental population. The shallow waters and bulrush islands of Red Rock Lakes continue to be prime nesting habitat supporting many other waterfowl and nesting Trumpeter Swans. It is no wonder that Montana Audubon recognizes this site as an Important Bird Area and research site.



Bob Martinka



Montana Audubon at the 2015 Montana Legislature

Beginning in January, Montana Audubon's lobbyist will be on the front line at the Capitol in our efforts to protect birds, other wildlife, and their habitats. Long hours will be spent supporting wildlife programs, preventing the state from trying to take ownership of our federal lands, advocating for climate change solutions, and more.

This year, long-time Montana Audubon lobbyist Janet Ellis will likely play a new role at the Capitol, as a legislator.* To ensure our lobbying effort remains strong, Amy Seaman, our Bird Conservation Associate, is training to lobby. Our main emphasis this session is defending Montana's current environmental laws and advocating for wildlife conservation programs and issues, including

championing funding for key wildlife programs such as sage-grouse conservation (see below). Support our legislative work in two easy ways:

- Donate to Montana Audubon to help support face-to-face time with legislators, send action alerts at critical times, and defend Montana's natural heritage
- Sign up for our action alert network so you can contact your legislators!

This session the stakes are high with much to gain—and so much to possibly lose. Let us know if you have questions about this important Montana Audubon program.

**Janet is preparing to take a four-month leave of absence from Montana Audubon, returning in May.*



Governor Bullock Establishes Sage-Grouse Conservation Program

On September 9, Gov. Steve Bullock released an Executive Order (EO) establishing a program to conserve Greater Sage-Grouse.

Montana Audubon Program Director Janet Ellis stated, "We are proud to be in a state where our governor has exhibited such forward-thinking leadership. Science shows that business-as-usual will have devastating effects on sage-grouse. This is a critical step, and we all need to work together to conserve a species that is so tied to our western landscapes." Janet served on the Governor's 2013 Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Conservation Advisory Council.

Sage-grouse once numbered in the millions across the western U.S. They now face innumerable threats, including energy development, climate change, and poor land management practices. Montana is one of the few remaining stronghold states for sage-grouse.

A recent poll found that 79% of our state's voters recognize the importance of protecting sage-grouse habitat. Janet continued, "Montanans love our outdoors and these birds are helping us keep our landscapes wild. They are so closely tied to healthy sagebrush habitat. Improving management of this ecosystem will benefit other species, including elk, mule deer, and a large number of bird species that make their homes only in healthy sagebrush lands—including Golden Eagles and declining songbirds such as Sage Thrasher and Brewer's Sparrow."

Montana Audubon will continue to advocate for using a science-based approach to guide sage-grouse management and conservation actions.



Bob Martinika



24 & Counting! 2014 Bridger Raptor Count

This fall's raptor migration project marks the 24th consecutive year of season-long counts atop the Bridger Mountains northeast of Bozeman. This is the largest autumn Golden Eagle migration flyway known in the lower 48 states!

From Sept. 1 to Nov. 5 two skilled observers (Bret Davis and Mikaela Howie) recorded all migrating raptors during an eight-hour period each day. These counts are designed to assess long-term population trends of more than a dozen species of eagles, hawks, and other raptors flying along this amazing raptor highway. The Golden Eagle is the most abundant species counted along the Bridger ridge, with an average of 1,300 eagles each season. During the past 15 years, Golden



Mikaela Howie and Bret Davis scanning for migrating raptors

Eagle counts have declined by 40 percent, with other western sites showing a similar trend. As a result, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and others are now intensifying research efforts to learn more about Golden Eagles and what is causing this downward trend.

We thank the Gallatin National Forest, Sacajawea Audubon Society, Bridger Bowl Ski Area, and NaturEner USA for their ongoing financial support of this critically important long-term monitoring project.



This Winter Join a Bird Count Near You

Want to get outside and help count local birds? Join one of the 30+ Audubon Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) held throughout Montana. This year's CBCs will be conducted between December 14, 2014 and January 5, 2015. Details about where, when, and how to participate will be posted

December 1 or as soon as the information is available at www.mtaudubon.org, click on Birds & Science, Citizen Science.

The census information gathered by CBCs helps scientists understand our changing world. In fact, CBC data was significantly used in National Audubon's new report on birds and climate change (see story p. 4). Christmas Bird Counts are free. Count leaders put together teams of birders to survey different areas within an established 15-mile radius. Experienced birdwatchers are paired with less experienced birders, so everyone with an interest is welcome.

Last year 671 birdwatchers participated in 32 counts in Montana. Volunteers tallied 139 species and 229,442 birds. The most common birds were Mallards, Canada Geese, and **Bohemian Waxwings**.

Bob Martinka





Citizen Scientists Rock!

Without a cadre of dedicated citizen ornithologists, our understanding of the state of our birds would be, well, murkier. The basis of the summer maps for the Audubon Birds and Climate Change Report stem from the **North American Breeding Bird Survey**, or, simply, BBS. BBS is a cooperative effort to monitor the status and trends of North American bird populations. BBS data are collected by thousands of dedicated participants along established roadside routes throughout the continent. Surveyors stop 50(!) times, recording every bird seen or heard in three minutes, moving fast to finish before the morning warms up. Scanning a map of BBS routes in Montana, you'll notice many blank spots, especially in our sagebrush and grasslands habitats—these can be challenging places to recruit volunteers. But with grassland birds declining, we know we need more information to allow us to make decisions about priority areas and actions.

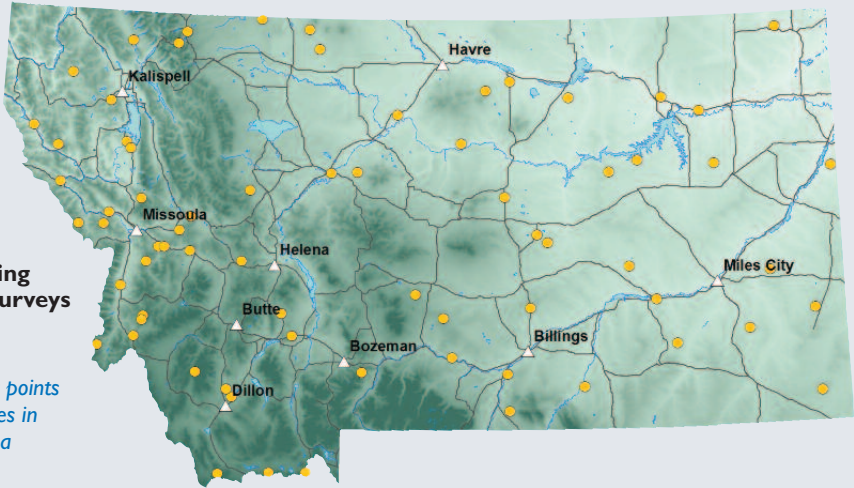
We are helping to recruit volunteers for additional BBS routes in 2015 and hope to offer mileage reimbursement. If you're talented with bird identification, especially vocalizations, contact Amy Cilimborg (amy@mtaudubon.org). Our declining birds of wide open spaces will thank you, and the next round of summer maps will be that much better!

On the flip side, winter maps for the Audubon report were based on the ever-popular Christmas Bird Count (CBC). This, the longest run citizen science project in the world, is open to birders of all abilities, and it's a hoot! (See page 12.)

Whether it's BBS or CBC, ducks at Red Rocks, or eBird everywhere, citizen science is the thread that weaves the science into conservation. It's never been easier and we've never needed you more.

Breeding Bird Surveys 2014

● Starting points for routes in Montana



New Bird for Montana

Montana's official bird list just got longer. The Montana Bird Records Committee recently added the **Western Gull** to the state list (first found by Chuck

Carlson near Fort Peck Reservoir), bringing Montana's grand total to 430 species. Find the state list, along with information about the Montana Bird Records Committee, at www.mtaudubon.org, click on Birds & Science, Bird Distribution.

New Threatened Bird for Montana

Yellow-billed Cuckoos were recently listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act. Only the subspecies found in western Montana was listed. The last sighting of this bird west of the divide was in 2012; before that it was seen in 1997 and 1988.





Restoring is Restorative

Take a moment, if you will, to imagine a summer day at the Montana Audubon Center. The wind rustles the cottonwood leaves as knees bend and hands paint tree trunks, peacefully deterring beaver damage. Easy giggles float above the ripples as tiny waterproof boots wade in and hands harvest algae, providing excellent fertilizer for upland seedlings. The soothing scent of sage calms minds and young, diligent hands translate sensory input into readable, cheerful maps.

Come and meet the volunteer restorers who have dedicated time this summer to these excellent activities! Meet Dominick, known to his peers as the Master Weed Puller. When offered a shovel, Dominick politely declines and hunkers down to pull Houndstongue weeds' foot-long taproots with his bare hands. Over here sit our



Rocky Mountain College freshman workforce proudly standing near newly planted Medicinal Garden

mapmakers extraordinaire, Alexandra and Monti: enticing pollinators with wildflowers, imagining how to best restore soil health through composting and well-placed seedlings to slow erosion, creating helpful, observation-filled maps for future restoration projects.

The Medicinal Garden of herbs and native shrubs is thriving. A murky, cold, rainy Saturday was no match for the excellent work ethic and positive attitudes shown by the Rocky Mountain College Freshmen Service project team. Join us this fall for more great restoration projects!



Alexandra and Monti, mapmakers extraordinaire, and their restoration activities map.





Nature Play on Earth Day

Nature Play areas are outdoor spaces made of natural components such as logs, water, sand, mud, boulders, hills, and trees. These components represent the larger wild environment in a way that feels safe and manageable by young visitors. A few human-made components might also be carefully integrated to support creative play, encourage confident exploration, and help children develop long-lasting affinity for the natural world.

The Audubon Center's Nature Play Area will mimic the natural components that are found along the Yellowstone River Valley. Community members, parents, teachers, and funding partners developed the concept, and Peaks to Plains will design it. It will be freely open to the public.

After the site is prepared, volunteers will construct the nature play elements at our Earth Day Celebration, April 19, 2015. This event has averaged 150 volunteers of all ages for the past six years, including businesses and student building clubs. We hope to have a ribbon-cutting in May to promote the area.

Parks and open space within urban areas improve our physical and psychological health and strengthen our communities. Natural areas make urban neighborhoods



Focus group brainstorms ideas for the Audubon Center's Nature Play area

more attractive and livable; offer recreational opportunities for at-risk youth and low-income families; and provide places in low-income neighborhoods where people can develop a sense of community. Today's children are bombarded with electronic media, busy schedules, and extremely structured lives; an outdoor play space will give them a place to take a break, have fun, and freely experience being kids. It is a place of solace, imagination, creativity, mud pies, forts, and fun!

Interested in donating or want to be involved at the Earth Day event? Contact Darcie Howard, at 294-5099.



Success Under the Big Sky!

More than 150 people gathered for Evening Under the Big Sky to dine, dance, and donate upwards of \$23,000 to directly support the conservation education and restoration efforts of the Center. Thank you to all the guests and our sponsors, including: The Planet and My 105.9, NorthWestern Energy, Wild Birds Unlimited, Yellowstone Naturopathic Clinic, Intermountain Distributing, Yellowstone Valley Brewing Company, and Mackin Construction.

The Harry L. Willett Foundation received our first *Philanthropist of the Year Award* for being a generous, consistent annual contributor to our nature-based, hands-on outdoor environmental science education programs at the Audubon Center in Billings. We especially want to thank Ryan Willett, President, for the Foundation's generous support!



Nature is Mandatory!

“Grandma, this brings out the kid in you!” yelled a teen as his grandma tried hard not to tip the canoe. This family was participating in our new **Weekend Wonders** programs (2–4 p.m. every Sunday). In Richard Louv’s book *Last Child in the Woods* he states, “For every new generation, nature is more abstract than reality. Increasingly nature is something to watch, to consume—to ignore.” Weekend Wonders affords families hands-on opportunities for multiple generations to directly connect to the wondrous aspects of nature at the Montana Audubon Center.

The Montana Audubon Center offers programs for infants to adults. For instance, **Nature Nuts** (up to age 5) pretended to experience life as birds in September, and two-year-old Porter did his best to find worms in the logs.



“My son has had the best time and told me that he wished he could go there every day.”

“They loved it and came home exhausted!”

—Parents of a summer camp participants

Total nature immersion is so very important for all ages that the Center now offers monthly explorations called **Nighthawk Adventures** every third Saturday evening. We will learn about bats, owls, spiders, and how to enjoy nature at night in all weather. With 675 children having joined us for a lot of fun and nature exploration during our 2014 summer camps, we look forward to continuing our great programs into the fall and winter.

“Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts.” —Rachel Carson



*Look what I found!
Summer camper finds
her first earthworm*

*Porter Reinhart looking
for worms while pretending
to be a bird*



Connecting Teens with Nature

Last fall, Darcie Howard, director of the Montana Audubon Center, was awarded the Toyota TogetherGreen Fellowship to develop a citizen science project focused on using technology to connect high school teens with nature.

Thirty-seven percent of all teens have smart phones and use these or other devices 7.5 hours a day (cnet.com). The challenge for conservation education leaders is to get children connected with nature when their focus is elsewhere. Finding a way to work with this technology is essential.

Connecting Teens with Nature: Phenological Fun with Technology, allowed 54 students in three high school environmental science classes to use their smart phones to record phenological data at the Audubon Center, then connect that data with the USA National Phenological Network through an application called Nature's Notebook. Our partner, the USA Phenology Network, is a consortium of academic, government, and nonprofit institutions working with citizen science observers to collect comprehensive phenological data to be used at a global scale.

In fall 2013, a phenology trail was created at the Center. The trail, Will's Marsh, is now registered with the USA Phenology Network as a data-collecting site. The students spent the winter and



Gary Kirchmar Photography

Senior High student observing phenophases on a Ponderosa Pine.

spring learning about phenology, how to identify local plants and animals (51 species) and their phenophases, how to collect observation data, and how to input data into Nature's Notebook using the app on their smart phones. A total of seventeen days of data was collected for 17 species of plants and 34 species of birds.

"[This program] opens the potential for my students to become lifelong naturalists," remarked John Miller, West High Environmental Science teacher. One of the Senior High students added, "Before, I wasn't interested in nature—it was boring and I didn't care. The project really did pique my interest. I looked forward to going down to the Audubon Center and being outside. I really learned to love it a lot."

The success of the program last year means it will continue this school year; West and Senior high school students are collecting data now through May 2015.

Get Outside Montana

This year, 122 teams built trails, learned to canoe, hiked in the Beartooths, went on park scavenger hunts, fished, and even learned wilderness first aid. The grand prize of four brand new bikes from The Spoke Shop was awarded, plus many other outdoor prizes from Sylvan Peak Mountaineer Shoppe, Cabela's, SteepWorld, Patagonia, Scheels, and Par 3 were raffled off to participating teams.

Thank you to our partners for making this possible: Billings Parks and Recreation; BLM; Montana State Parks Lake Elmo, Cooney and Pictograph Cave; Pompey's Pillar; YRPA; Yellowstone Wildlife Sanctuary; Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness Foundation; BikeNet; Huntley Project Museum of Irrigated Agriculture; MSU-B Outdoor Adventure Leadership; Oasis Waterpark; City of Red Lodge and the USDA-Forest Service Red Lodge. Learn more about the upcoming 2015 season at www.getoutsidemontana.org.





Festival Success

What an exceptional Wings Across the Big Sky festival this past June in Bozeman!

Montana Audubon and Sacajawea Audubon set a new standard of excellence with over 400 attendees—a record high—enjoying field trips, delightful musings from keynote speaker John Marzluff, and presentations on bird conservation subjects. Our deepest appreciation and thanks go to **Sacajawea Audubon Society** and all those who contributed to a very successful 2014 Wings Across the Big Sky Festival!

We also want to thank those who contributed to our raffle: Abbott Valley Homestead, Linda Parker, Birds & Beasleys, John Whitmire and Susie Maclin, and to all who gave generously to our silent auction.

Audubon's Annual Awards

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



Jack Kirkley was honored with our *Lifetime Achievement Award* for his decades of work for Audubon at the state and local level, research on Northern Goshawks and other raptors, and work as a professor at the University of Montana–Western, where he has taught biology classes since 1985.



Carol Ward was chosen as *Educator of the Year* because of her inspiring work as a conservation education professional who has taught over 10,000 students at the Audubon Center in Billings since 2005.



Kate Stone received our *Citizen Scientist of the Year Award* for her infectious dedication to numerous citizen science projects in the Bitterroot Valley, including monitoring Bald Eagles, Osprey, Vaux's and Black Swift, and more.



Paulette Epple was recognized as *Conservationist of the Year* for her role in protecting the 54-acre Story Mill Community Park, Bozeman's newest city park.



Peter Norlander received a *Special Achievement Award* because of his committed and active volunteer work for Bozeman's Sacajawea Audubon—as well as his work as an active member of the Montana Audubon Board of Directors.

Read more about these champions on our website: www.mtaudubon.org, click on About Us, select Who We Are, then Awards from drop down menu.



Special Thanks

Montana Audubon thanks these volunteers who worked so hard to ensure the success of the Festival

- | | | | |
|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Evelyn Acton | Rachel Feigley | Richard Keigley | Loreene Reid |
| Jocelyn Allen | Tom Forwood | George Kelly | Forrest Rowland |
| Vickie Backus | Leo Freeman | Nate Kohler | Joan Ryshavy |
| Glenda Barnes | Diane Gresham | Beth Madden | Vicki Saab |
| Jean Block | Andrew Guttenberg | John Marzluff | Jeff Safford |
| Noreen Breeding | Carol Guzman | Roxanna McLaughlin | June Safford |
| Roger Breeding | Sharon Hanton | Janice Miller | Rick Sanders |
| Monica Brelsford | Ed Harper | Nora Miller | Peggy Schwalm |
| Martha Collins | Lou Ann Harris | Jinnie Milne | Michael Scott |
| Jim Dolan | Mimi Harris | Marilyn Murdock | Derek Strahn |
| Rob Domenech | Janne Hayward | Peter Norlander | Gary Swant |
| Karen Ehlert | Carolyn Hopper | John Parker | Brian Thorpe |
| Andy Epple | Dan Hopper | Jeff Pentel | Keri Thorpe |
| Paulette Epple | Mitch Hurt | Adele Pittendrigh | Suzanne Thweatt |
| Audrey Evers | Beth Kaeding | Sandy Pittendrigh | Jackie Wilson |
| Ron Farmer | Lynn Kaeding | Tim Preso | Robin Wolcott |

Mark Your Calendars!
June 5-7, 2015
in Helena

2015 Wings Across the Big Sky Festival

Our annual Bird Festival is coming to the Capital City! Montana Audubon and Last Chance Audubon Society are already planning trips, speakers, and activities to create three fun and fascinating days.

Watch for upcoming information and make plans now to meet us at the Red Lion Colonial Inn in Helena next June.

Board Member Spotlight: Donald Seibert

Donald Seibert has served actively on Montana Audubon’s Board for the past six years. Originally from New Jersey, Donald received his Bachelor of Wildlife Management from the University of Montana. Donald then enjoyed a distinguished 30-year career with the Bureau of Land Management, working in several western states and the Washington, D.C. office as a range conservationist, wildlife biologist, and assistant district manager. Donald next worked as a district executive for the Boy Scouts of America in Idaho and Montana for 10 years. While there, he earned a Master of Personnel Management from Murray State University in Kentucky.

Donald is passionate about Montana’s wild backcountry. His extensive knowledge and interest in western wildlife conservation

issues made him a perfect fit for Montana Audubon’s Board of Directors. He has played a pivotal role in creating and leading an active Development Committee, successfully advocating for the expansion of our endowment funds and encouraging members to financially support our work.

Donald is a thoughtful, diligent, and exceptional team player. We look forward to his continued guidance in helping Montana Audubon become even more effective in wildlife conservation throughout the Big Sky Country.




Memorial Gifts

A gift given to Montana Audubon in memory of a special person helps preserve our birds and their habitats. We owe a special thanks to those who have made a tribute in memory of the following people:


- | | | |
|---------------|------------------|---------------|
| Loraine Baker | Adrianne Marks | Lila Weber |
| Robert Ballou | James Marsh | John Whitmire |
| Carolyn Dazey | Rose McClannahan | Laura Young |
| | Margie Melton | |




Montana Audubon 2015 Birding Tours—Save the Dates!



May 1–3, 2015
Southwestern Montana Sage-Grouse Lek Tour
Back by popular demand!
Reserve your chance to view the spectacular dawn displays of male Greater Sage-Grouse at their breeding leks.



May 29–31, 2015
Centennial Valley & Red Rock Lakes Tour
Back by popular demand!
Late May is the best time of year to visit this remote, scenic, bird-rich area. This tour fills quickly.



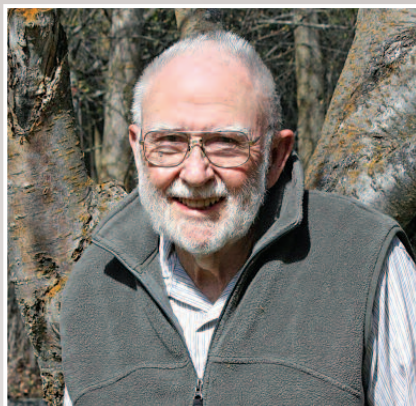
October 2015
Veracruz, Mexico, River of Raptors Tour
Witness the world’s largest raptor migration. Led by Montana Audubon Executive Director Steve Hoffman, a raptor expert. More than 100,000 migrant raptors can cover the skies each day!

More information: www.mtaudubon.org, select Birdwatching, then Tours.
Reservations via Montana Audubon office: 406-443-3949
or email mtaudubon@mtaudubon.org

REMEMBERING BILL BALLARD AND JOHN WHITMIRE

Last spring, Montana Audubon lost two very dear friends.

Bill Ballard, 89, was professor of Mathematics at the University of Montana for 30 years. In 1988, shortly after retiring, Bill was persuaded by ornithologist Philip Wright to serve as president of Missoula's Five Valleys Audubon chapter. In addition to his four-year term as chapter president, he volunteered for lengthy stints as chapter conservation chair, and treasurer of Montana Audubon. Bill was actively involved and generously supported Audubon for more than two decades. Bill was especially appreciative of Montana Audubon's diverse program work, most notably our legislative and advocacy efforts. In fact, a few years ago Bill made an incredibly generous gift to establish Montana Audubon's Public Policy Endowment at the Billings Community Foundation. We extend our deepest sympathies to Bill's wife, Lee, and his children and grandchildren and their families. Bill will be greatly missed, and fondly remembered always.



John Whitmire, 73, was a lifelong conservationist and avid bird watcher, angler, and hunter. Based in Houston, Texas, John's career in the energy industry was punctuated by a great many conservation successes, most notably efforts to protect valuable and well-known stopover habitat for migrating songbirds, including High Island, Texas. John was especially pleased to serve on the governing boards of both National Audubon and the Playa Lakes Joint Venture. John and his wife, Susie Maclin, felt a special fondness for Montana, spending time at their cabin along the Missouri River near Cascade. For many years John was an exceptionally generous contributor to Montana Audubon. We extend our sincere condolences to Susie, and John's children and grandchildren and their families. John's sound judgement, quiet demeanor, and dedication to conservation and philanthropy will never be forgotten.



Hello and Good-bye to Board Members

A hearty welcome to incoming Montana Audubon at-large board member **Rachel Van Wingen** from Ennis. Rachel is a relatively new



resident of Montana, and we look forward to working with her to further expand Montana Audubon's presence and conservation efforts throughout the Madison Valley.

Departing board member **Andrew Roberts** of Big Sky contributed immeasurably to Montana Audubon's growth and success during the past two years, developing new and improved fiscal policies for the organization and providing strong and capable leadership as treasurer and chair of the Board Finance Committee. We are tremendously thankful for Andy's dedicated service and exceptional support for Montana Audubon's conservation work in Montana!

Welcome new staff

Please welcome Montana Audubon's new Education Director, **Frances Boyens**. Frances comes to us with a rich history in environmental education, from running summer camps and school programs in Ohio to teaching environmental science in Washington. She brings with her 15 years of environmental



and conservation experience as well as a degree in Environmental Science. She is very excited to move to her bucket list state, Montana, and can't wait to explore all the state has to offer!

We are also pleased to welcome **Sara Lipscomb** to Montana Audubon as our new Office Manager. Sara comes to us with a long and varied history of administrative and management positions in the Missoula nonprofit community. She has an incredible set of skills in administrative support, database oversight, customer service, and office management. Sara is resourceful and a clear communicator, with a calm yet strong demeanor, and lots of common sense. We are very fortunate she decided to move to the Queen City of the Rockies and join our team!



Way to Go, Amy!

Montana Audubon's **Amy Cilimborg** was recently recognized by the Missoula Sustainable Business Council as Sustainable Advocate of the Year. Amy was recognized for her tireless work on two projects: spearheading Missoula's Conservation and Climate Action Plan, and bringing together community members for a series of Climate Summits to produce a community Climate Action Plan. Both actions have solidified the commitment of both city and business leaders toward taking important actions on global climate change.



Bob Martinka

Wildlife Grants Available—Apply Today

Montana Audubon is offering small grants (\$500 maximum/\$1,700 total) for wildlife research and education projects, with an emphasis on nongame wildlife, through our Audubon Wildlife Fund of Montana endowment. Funds can be used for mileage, equipment, printing, and communications; not salaries, stipends, and personal equipment.

In 2014, grants purchased equipment for research and education projects at Salish Kootenai College, helped fund research on Montana's vulnerable

wetlands, and aided a **Northern Hawk Owl** study in western Montana.

To apply for a grant, visit www.mtaudubon.org, select **About Us**, then **Wildlife Grants**.

Applications must be emailed (preferred) or postmarked by Friday, December 12, 2014. Grant recipients will be announced by February 1, 2015. For more information, contact Janet Ellis at jellis@mtaudubon.org.

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!

Alternatives Inc.
Katrina Asbell
Valana Austin
Savahra Austin
Awahu Tribe
Jim Brown
Alina Bruhnke
Chantal Bureau
Bob Bushnell
Cindy Butler
Elaine Caton
Sarah Chatwood
Martha & Hobart Collins
Pat Cross
Lois Dalton
Bret Davis
Shari Dayton
Ali Dominguez
Paulette Epple
Kimberly Fargon
Luke Funyuk
Neal Gunnels

Will Hammond
- Eagle Scout Project
Emily and Bart
Hannaman
Katy Hedke
Megan Heinemann
Alex Howard
Kenedi Howard
Shawn Howard
Mikaela Howie
Amy Ward
and Brent Jacobs
Justin Kecera
Matt Keefer
Daniel Kennedy
Jeff Kitchens
Boris Krizek
Stephanie Lewis
Olga Lincoln
Cary Lund
Janene Lichtenberg
Misty Logan

Jennifer and Tom Lyman
Christie MacDonald
Sheila McKay
Precious and Bill
Mckenzie Stearns
Candi Millar
Janice Miller
Shelby Miller
Montana Conservation
Corp
MSUB Adopt-a-Floor
Students
John Parker
Phillips 66
Marleigh Punt
Loreene Reid
RMC Freshman
Service Day

Jim Rogers
Ben Rosemeyer
Mike Schmelzel
Donald Seibert
William Sevier
Colby and Wyatt Stearns
Howard Strause
Team LeFevre
Team Meadowlark
Team O'Macdonald
Team JReX
Target Employees
Bo Walker
Carol and Chuck Ward
Fred Weisbecker
Alex Whittington
Ben Wilks
- Eagle Scout Project

Volunteer Spotlight

Janice Miller

Following a magical trip of birding and canoeing the wild and scenic Missouri River, Janice Miller was sold on birds, sold on nature, and ready to act. She joined Helena's Last Chance Audubon Society in 1989 and has played an active and enthusiastic role as a chapter member, citizen scientist, conservation advocate, and volunteer ever since. Her major contributions have included annual birdathons and leading a Christmas Bird Count area near Helena.

Recently, Janice took volunteerism to a new level. Using her passion for photography, Janice has helped Montana Audubon capture the faces and feelings of Bird Festival participants for the past five years. Additionally, this year Janice helped collect Lesser Scaup population data (and photos!) at Red Rock Lakes (see page 10) and is co-chair of Helena's 2015 Bird Festival Committee.



Janice has helped Montana Audubon capture the faces and feelings of Bird Festival participants for the past five years.

Viewing natural wonders such as a perfect sunrise or birds in flight motivates and inspires Janice. True to her generous nature, she credits Jean and Naomi Smith with fostering her birding/conservation career. Janice appreciates former conservationists and birders who are now passing the torch. With volunteers like Janice, we know that light will continue to burn brightly.

A Plateful of Birds

Make a meaningful impact on the birds of Montana by choosing the Bird Habitat license plate. For more details, visit www.mtaudubon.org, select the Join & Support tab, click on Online Store.



What's Your Legacy?

The greatest legacy of conservationists is protecting habitats for native wildlife in perpetuity.

Important Bird Areas like Owen Sowerwine Natural Area, North Valley Grasslands, and Pablo National Wildlife Refuge are all reminders of human reverence for birds and other wildlife.

Ensure this good work continues by investing in a Montana Audubon Endowment. The principal is preserved in perpetuity, while a portion of the annual earnings can be spent to achieve lasting protection of deserving habitats.

Gift annuities are one simple way to make a planned gift. In exchange for a transfer of cash or marketable securities, you can establish an annuity that guarantees annual payments to you, or you may choose to defer those payments. Montana donors may be eligible to receive significant tax advantages through the Montana Tax Credit for Endowed Giving. This program gives donors an incentive of 40 percent of the present value of a planned gift—up to \$10,000 annually—that can be taken as a direct credit (not deduction!) against your state income tax liability.

Gifts to Montana Audubon's endowment truly keep on giving. The Vaux's Swift, Long-billed Curlew, and Ferruginous Hawk win, the cottonwood forests win, you win, and Montana Audubon's vital work continues.

For more information, contact Norane Freistadt at norane@mtaudubon.org.

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