GO OUTSIDE AND PLAY!

Montana Audubon Center to offer Billings’ first nature preschool

page 4
Greetings,

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

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

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

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

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

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

Yours in conservation,

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

I learned about disappointment and how to manage frustration with my failings. My experience helped me develop my imagination, observation skills, and manage risk. Finally, because I spent my childhood outside, I found a connection to nature that in turn developed my understanding of conservation.

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

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

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

Students will make their own healthy snack each day, learning about healthy eating and preparation. And, of course, there will be plenty of unstructured outdoor play! Unstructured outdoor play is when the magic happens. Children learn to work together as they fill a wagon with rocks, they develop cognitive skills by finding a solution to building the best fort, assess risk as they try to scale a log, and develop observation skills by studying an insect. Many of the unstructured play times will happen at the Montana Audubon Center’s nearly constructed (estimated completion May 16, 2015) Shepard Nature Play Space. This is not a playground, it is a place of natural obstacles. Children will be able to explore dens and tunnels, hop along a “tree-cookie” pathway, climb a dirt pile, balance on logs, pump water from a hand pump, build forts, play music with natural objects, and even have a quiet place to read or observe. In addition to the nature play space, we are fortunate to have acres of parkland along the Yellowstone River, adjacent to the Center.

By the end of the school year, our Fledglings will have an intimate connection to the Yellowstone watershed. We may never return to a time when kids roam freely, exploring the natural world on their own, but we can provide similar experiences to our children within today’s social parameters. The Fledglings program will accomplish just that while nurturing our future conservation leaders.

A 2006 Cornell University study demonstrated that children under the age of 11 who have positive experiences in wild nature tend to develop a strong conservation ethic as adults.
The 2015 legislative session has been a bit wacky, a little bright, and thankfully somewhat less destructive for wildlife than the past few sessions. We wish we could say the same for climate and clean energy bills.

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

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

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

Montana Audubon will play an important role, lending our expertise to MSGOT while the sage-grouse stewardship plan is enacted and improved over time.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WFO Conference in Billings, June 10–14, 2015

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

Workshops include field identification of sparrows (Jon Dunn) and flycatchers (Dan Casey), natural history of owls (Denver Holt), bird sound identification (Nathan Pieplow), raptors (Steve Hoffman), and more. Friday and Saturday afternoon science sessions will provide updates on the most current avian research from the region. The Saturday evening banquet will feature Stephen Dinsmore’s keynote address on Mountain Plovers. Ed Harper and Nathan Pieplow will again offer their ever-popular sessions on bird ID by sight and sound.

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

Help Fill the Silent Auction’s Treasure Chest!

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

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

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

Do you know someone who deserves recognition for their conservation achievements?

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

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

Avian Adoption

Alternatives Abound

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

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

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

Wake Up and Jump In:

Birds and Climate, Part 2

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

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

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

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

–Rebecca Solnit, Author

Well-Deserved Preening!

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

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

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

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

Reel It In!

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

Wake Up and Jump In:

Birds and Climate, Part 2

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

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

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

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

–Rebecca Solnit, Author
Butterflies & Moths & Bees, Oh My!

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

In an effort to educate the community about pollinators, we have developed a new Pollinator Garden Program focused on empowering children to create and maintain wildflower habitat for our soon-to-be-installed beekeeping area. As our project progresses, children will have the chance to become Junior Bee Keepers and earn field study badges, including counting bees, determining bee health, estimating amount of honey produced, and assessing the health of wildflowers. Children will also have the opportunity to create and maintain natural nest sites, such as nesting blocks and stem bundles, in the wildflower garden. This project is made possible by the generous funding of the Captain Planet Foundation.

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

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

South-side & Self-driven

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

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

Adventure in Nature Summer Camps 2015

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

Get Outside, Montana—Again and Again!

Since 2011, the first Sunday in June has provided more than 1,485 children and adults a full day of outdoor activities, including archery, knot-tying, packing a backpack, wildflower scavenger hunt, and a visit from Smokey Bear. This June event is the official kick-off to the popular eight-week, back-to-nature Get Outside Montana, a family-friendly competition. Each summer, more parks and activities are added to the teams’ passport, providing unique opportunities to spend time outside with their families while competing for prizes. Register and find out more about this free program at www.getoutside montana.com.
Board Members Migrate, Too

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

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

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

Feathering Our Nest: David Cronenwett

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

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

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

Board Spotlight: Ron Farmer

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

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

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

Star Volunteers

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sabrina Ambrezewicz</th>
<th>Kalvin Eisenach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Katrina Abell</td>
<td>Emily Hannaman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Beasley</td>
<td>Kate Hansen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenda Bradshaw</td>
<td>Liz Hiltunen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindy Butler</td>
<td>Suzi Holt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lois Dalton</td>
<td>Hannah Hostetter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shari Dayton</td>
<td>Sue Jackson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan Donaldson</td>
<td>Jeff Kitchens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashley Drury</td>
<td>Boris Krizek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Dykstra</td>
<td>Jo Lace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer Lyman</td>
<td>Marian Lyman-Kirst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob Mackin</td>
<td>Bob Martinka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheila McKay</td>
<td>Precious McKenzie-Stearns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janice Miller</td>
<td>Rose Leach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelby Miller</td>
<td>Lorna Milne-Motl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuck Ward</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Volunteer Spotlight

Chuck Ward

Chuck-Ward began volunteering at the Montana Audubon Center this past summer; working with Trinity Pierce on maintenance, infrastructure, and land restoration projects. He has helped Trinity get the riding mower back in operation, hung the new gate near the osprey nest, built stairs up to the storage area, and managed an Eagle Scout project painting the back room and building storage shelves.

In the next few months he will construct the new kiosk at the Shepard Nature Play Space and manage the construction of a shed being built by another Eagle Scout.

Chuck’s grandfather ran a small farm and his father was an aircraft mechanic, so he learned how to use tools at an early age. Since retiring from 35 years of federal land management, with over 20 years in law enforcement, he has been working on home improvement projects and volunteering with the Billings Police Department. He has worked on trail and tool maintenance projects in the Beartooth Ranger District and tutored math and reading at Arrowhead Elementary School. Volunteering is a way for him to “pay forward” the time and effort people invested in him while he was growing up. Chuck said, “I have time, tools, and skills, and I get personal satisfaction from helping to improve the quality of life in my community.”

A Plateful of Birds

You can make a meaningful impact for the birds of Montana by choosing the Bird Habitat license plate.

Sporting several favorite Montana bird species—American Avocet, Ruddy Duck, Lewis’s Woodpecker, and a trio of Black-billed Magpies, we are pleased to boast over 1,000 Bird Habitat plates across Montana! The initial cost is $40, which includes a $20 donation that directly supports our work to ensure long-term protection for critical wildlife habitat.

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

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

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

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

“Some of my earliest memories are of the wildflowers and birds on our place, which my parents encouraged me to learn about as I grew.”

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

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

Montana Audubon depends on generous gifts from many individual donors. The following individuals contributed to a variety of projects from April 2014 through March 2015. Due to space constraints in this publication, we have listed all donors with gifts totaling $100 or more. Many thanks to 500 of you who have recently made a gift in memory of:

Lorraine Baker
Robert Ballou
Carolyn Daze
Charles Edwards
Dee Hedges
Frieda Iverson
Adrienne Marks
James Marsh
Rose McClannah
Margie Melton
Lila Weber
John Whitmire
Laura Young

$1000 & up
Baldrige, Julie
Broadbent, Toni & Clark
Brown, Bill & Amy
Brown, Jim & Sue
Dayton, Shari & Bob
Degenstein, Joel
Duncan, David & Mary Susan
Duncan, Tom & Karen
Darrett, Steven & Julie
Edwards, John & Gayla
Ellis, Janet & Jim Hansen
Farmer, Cheryl & Ron
Fisher-Grey, Nora & Randy Gray
Goren, Carolyn
Harris, Lou Ann & John
Hartung, Jim & Lillian
Hoffman, Barbara & Richard Dun
Hoffman, Steve & Lisa Daly
Hudson, Cynthia & Robert Zirl
Kaeding, Beth & Lynn
Maclin, Susie
Mars, Forrest
Martinka, Bob & Kathy
McDonald, Deborah
McHugh, Bernard & Frances Clark
Miller, Janice & Martin
Orser, David & Osie Abrams
Roberts, Andrew & Karen
Roberts, Donald & Carol
Schrauder, Marilyn & Chuck
Seibert, Donald & Leilu
Stern, Jean
Speers, Jennifer
Spenzy, Michelle & Andy Boettcher
Stevens, Ham
Stocks, Mitchell
Sullivan, Dan & Delight
Sutherland, Jan & Tom
Treadway, Suzanne & Dick
Weibecker, Fred & Carolyn

$500–$999
Ballard, Lee
Birnbaum, Dana
Burler, Steven & Cindy Cook, Keith
Corcoran, Linda & Joe Crawford, Tim & Kathy Hansen
Dietrich, Dale & Nancy Ellison, Daniel & Elizabeth Fournier
Gordon, Richard & Cheryl Watkins
Lindbergh, Randi & Janet McMillan
Loehn, Paul & Elizabeth Lund, Cary & Susan Witte
Mackin, Robert & Elizabeth Adcock
Marks, Barbara
McKevel, Robert Miller, Bill & Joyce Peters, Becky & Bill Ross, Bev Ross, Sig Salisbury, Russell Siddoway, Mike Speers, Randy Spence, Tancy & Ralph Still, Thomas & Sally Owen-Still Struse, Howard Townsend, Karen & Burke

$250–$499

$100–$249

Memorial Gifts
Few tributes are as lasting as a gift that preserves Montana’s birds and their habitats. We owe a special thanks to those of you who have recently made a gift in memory of:

Lorraine Baker
Robert Ballou
Carolyn Daze
Charles Edwards
Dee Hedges
Frieda Iverson
Adrienne Marks
James Marsh
Rose McClannah
Margie Melton
Lila Weber
John Whitmire
Laura Young

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

Mary Taylor Emily Butler & Chris Cast Judy Gabrielle Shiner Deb Gay & Lori Booth

Please consider including Montana Audubon in your estate plans to assure a brighter future for Montana’s birds and other wildlife.
Special Thanks

We 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
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
Bullitt Foundation
Cadeau Foundation
Captain Planet Foundation
Charlottesville Marion Foundation
Cinnabar Foundation
David E and Sara K. Weston Fund
Donald and Carol Roberts Foundation
Drellinger Family Charitable Foundation
Fawnwood Foundation
Harry L. Willert Foundation
High Stakes Foundation
Kendeda Fund
L.E.A. W. Family Foundation
Margaret V. Ping Foundation
Mary, Alice Forin Foundation for Youth Enrichment
Montana Community Foundation
My Good Fund Trust
William P. Wharton Trust
Wolf Creek Charitable Foundation

Corporate/Business Donations & Grants
Abbott Valley Homestead
Allegro - Bozeman
Allegro - Billings
Allegro - Helena
Arrow Solutions Group
Base Camp
Big Sky Resorts
Billings Clinic Foundation
Bird & Beasley's
Blue Cross Blue Shield of MT
Bozeman Chamber of Commerce
Bozeman Camera and Repair
Broadway Ski Area
Broadway Deli & Cafe
Burlington Northern Santa Fe Foundation
Cabelas Cashman's Nursery
Chefs and Cooks of Montana
CHS Refinery, Pipelines & Terminals
CIA Mamo

City Brew
Community Food Co-op of Bozeman
Conservator Media
CTA Architects
Elk River Art
EP Energy Matching Gifts
Exchange City Bar & Grill
First Interstate BancSystem Foundation
General Mills Foundation
Global Positions, LLC
Good Earth Works
Great Harvest Bakery
Hanson Chemical, Inc.
Helena Airport Authority
Helena Tourism and Business Improvement District
Holcim Cement
Intermountain Distributing Co. J Bar I Ranches, LLC
Jim Dolan Art
Kid Country Child Development Center
Kohl's
Lewis & Clark Motel, Bozeman Log Cabin Restaurant
Lucky's Farmers Markets, LLC
Madsion River Brewery
Meier Family Chiropractic
Mimi Matsuda Art
Mitchell Golf
Montana Data Utilities Co.
Morrison & Mairer, Inc.
Morrison, Sherwood, Wilson and Deola
Mosaic Threads
NatuerEner USA, LLC
Northwestern Energy
Oasis Health Spa
Opportunity Bank
Patagonia Outlet Dillon, MT
Peaks to Plains
Phillips 66
Planet Natural Garden Supply
Plum Creek Timber Company
Pool's Too Daycare
Prudential Foundation
Real Wild Design
REI Bozeman Rockjumper Birding Tours
Sacajawea Hotel
Schools
Silver Gate Cabins
Sleeping Giant Communications, LLC
South Hills Dentistry
Southwestern Montana Financial Center, Inc.
St. Peter's Hospital
Stillwater Mining
Stix Yarn Company
Stonefly Studio
Sunburst Consulting
Sunshine Sports
Sylvan Peak Mountain Shop
The Joy of Kids
The Joy of Living
The Paper Crane
The Rivers Edge Fly Shop
The Sanctuary
The Spoke Shop
The Wine Gallery
Toucan Gallery
Town Pump Inc.
Toyota-Audubon, TogetherGreen Partnership
Valleyr Bank of Helena
Velvet Cravings
Westech Environmental Services
Western Awards and Engraving
Wild Birds Unlimited
Wilderness Adventures Press, Inc.
Wixbang Hats
Yellowstone Cellars and Winery
Yellowstone Country Club
Yellowstone Natrpathic Clinic, P.C.
Yellowstone Track Systems
Yellowstone Valley Brewing Company
Zoo Montana

Agency Partners
City of Billings Parks & Recreation
Intermountain Joint West 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
United Way of Larimer County, Inc
Will James Middle School
World Wildlife Fund Yellowstone River Parks Association

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

In Kind Donations
Atkin, Gary
Backus, Vickie
Ballou, Bucky
Blewett, Andrea
Boone, Jean
Brown, Jeri Ann
Burnett, Tessa
Butler, Steven & Cindy
Chadwick, Chad
Colvin, Susan
Clayton, Shari & Bob
Dickison, Barbara
Drum, Carol
Ehler, Karen
Eldridge, Bonnie
Ettis, Loren
Evers, Joe & Robin
Farmer, Cheryl & Ron
Celier, Charles & Barbara
Gore, James
Greene, Jim
Gresham, Diane
Guzman-Arzupe, Carol
Hamann, Betty
Hanton, Sharon & John
Harper, Ed & Susan Scott
Hayward, Bill & Janine
Heim, Edna
Ingram, Dan
Jeffrey, Robert
Johann, Durrine
Johnson, Reid
Kaeding, Beth & Lynn
Kemwick, Ed & Lisa
Kirchman, Gary
Gary Kirkman Photography
Kirley, Jack & Debra
Kitchens, Rachel & Jeffrey

Special Thanks

Organizations and Educational Institutions
American Prairie Reserve
Audubon Wildlife Fund of Montana
Billings Catholic Schools
Billings High School District
Blue Creek Elementary School District
Boys and Girls Clubs of Yellowstone County
Broadwater School PTA
Canyon Creek School District
Ducks Unlimited
Education Foundation
Billings Public Schools
Family Promise
Friendship House of Christian Service
Girl Scouts of Montana and Wyoming
Grace Montessori Academy, Inc.
Hawkwatch International
Holter Museum of Art
Huntley Project Museum
Interfaith Hospitality Network of Yellowstone County
Montana Conservation Voters
Montana Land Reliance
Montana Native Plant Society
Montana Wilderness Association
Eastern Wildlands Chapter
Montana Wildlife Federation
Montana Land Reliance
Montana Native Plant Society
Montana Wilderness Association
Eastern Wildlands Chapter

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

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

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

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