Our mission is to promote appreciation, knowledge and conservation of Montana’s native birds, other wildlife, and natural ecosystems to safeguard biological diversity for current and future generations.

Founded in 1976, Montana Audubon has built effective programs in public policy, education, and bird conservation to serve its members and Montana’s nine community-based Audubon Chapters.

Montana Audubon
PO Box 595, Helena, MT 59624
Phone: 406-443-3949
Fax: 406-443-7144
info@mtaudubon.org
www.mtaudubon.org

Helena Staff
Norane Freistadt
Interim Director
Janet Ellis
Senior Director of Policy
Amy Seaman
Conservation Program Manager
David Cronenwett
Development/Communications Specialist
Janet Johnston
Office Manager
Cathie Erickson
Accounting Specialist

Audubon Centers
7026 S. Billings Blvd.
Billings, MT 59101
Phone: 406-294-5099
www.mtaudubon.org/center

Audubon Center Staff
Carolyn Sevier
Center Director
Trinity Pierce
Restoration Coordinator
Annabelle Britton
Community Outreach Specialist
Sarah Chatwood
Preschool Coordinator
Heather Belden
Teacher-Naturalist
Emily Chilcoat
Teacher-Naturalist
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Montana Audubon is a proud member organization of Montana Shares, a partnership of Montana-based nonprofits devoted to improving the quality of life in the Big Sky state.

THE VIEW FROM ABOVE

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

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

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

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

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

Warm Regards,

Members of the Executive Committee of Montana Audubon Board of Directors
Fred Weisbecker, President
Rachel Van Wingen, Vice President
Cary Lund, Secretary
Ron Farmer, Treasurer
Linking People and Place at the Montana Audubon Center

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

Curious students explore a bunchgrass prairie.

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

After the field trip, her teacher explained that the girl had just moved to Billings from Fort Peck and was herself Assiniboine. As with many new students, she had been shy and reserved and struggled to make connections with her new community. According to her teacher, the girl already knew the word for chokecherry in her native language and was delighted to hear her own culture referenced during school and to learn the name of a plant in a different tribal language. She was, according to her teacher, more engaged that day than any other before.
In 2018, the Montana Audubon Center will celebrate its 10th year of providing nature-based education programming to Billings and the surrounding area.

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

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

Above: Students learning about Osprey biology.  
Left: Pond ecology and canoeing!

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

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

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

MEET OUR NEW COMMUNITY OUTREACH SPECIALIST

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

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

The Community Outreach Specialist position is a new one for the Center; a role dedicated to expanding our visibility and public presence. Annabelle is excited to promote our vision by engaging with the community, strengthening relationships, and building on the success of the Center’s programs as we prepare for our second decade.
The Montana Audubon Center is fully into our Spring field trip season, and we’re looking forward to summer camps!

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

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

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

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

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

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

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

We focused our work this session on defending past gains, like ensuring funding for our state’s Greater Sage-grouse Stewardship Act in addition to Habitat Montana programs. We also kept bad bills, including a state program allowing wetlands to be filled for development, and one legalizing pet foxes, from becoming law. To that extent, we are celebrating! Montana Audubon supported numerous bills to expand solar energy, promote climate policy, and safeguard places like the Smith River from new hardrock mines but the political climate was not conducive to passing such legislation. While we can develop great policy, pack committee hearing rooms, and generate thousands of public comments (which we did in 2017), sometimes there are simply not enough votes to carry new, proactive conservation bills into law. This is a firm reminder that elections matter!

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

Thanks to all of you that heeded our calls to action!
Proposed budget cuts would impact Montana’s wildlife

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

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

National Wildlife Refuge Fund

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

Land and Water Conservation Fund

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

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

Berkeley Pitfalls

November 2016’s rapid ice-up of Freezeout Lake and abundant grain resources in Canada are each partially blamed for the second major white goose mortality incident in just over 20 years at the Berkeley Pit Superfund Site, near Butte. A low cloud ceiling, stormy conditions, and a generally late migration made the night of November 28th a deadly trap for passing waterfowl. In the end, after days of stormy weather and tireless efforts of Montana Resources and ARCO employees, approximately 3,000–4,000 birds are thought to have perished from heavy metal poisoning in the mine’s waters. The weight of the situation was felt throughout the Butte community, but waves of reaction also came from around the country as evidenced by headlines nationwide. In response, Montana Resources has convened a panel of advisors to help re-envision the site’s migratory bird mitigation plan. Montana Audubon has accepted an invitation to share our expertise with the group as a new plan is adopted to protect snow geese and other migrating species.

New projects to keep those citizens’ eyes to the skies

Over the years, Montana Audubon has worked with citizen volunteers to monitor many species of concern in our state, from Flammulated Owls to Lewis’s Woodpeckers, to the elusive Black Swift. This year we are continuing work on Black Swifts, supported by a Fish, Wildlife, and Parks citizen science grant, and are adding Chimney Swifts as well as Black-crowned and Gray-crowned Rosy Finches as new target species. The change of focus is a good indication that our state’s monitoring efforts aided by citizen volunteers are paying off. Many species we’ve worked on in the past were “Species of Greatest Inventory Need” and later removed from the list because data we collected helped fill the knowledge gap. This year’s effort include an in-person training for rosy-finches, recruitment for Breeding Bird Survey routes, a pilot project in eastern Montana surveying for Chimney Swifts, and two in-person trainings for Black Swifts. If you enjoy bird-adventures and these projects sound fun to you, contact Amy Seam an (aseam an@m taudubon.org) or visit the citizen science pages on our website.
Nominate a Conservation Hero for a
40th Anniversary Year Montana Audubon Award

Nominations are being accepted for Montana Audubon’s 2017 awards. Consider nominating a notable individual for Conservationist of the Year, Environmental Educator of the Year, Special Achievement, Citizen Scientist of the Year, or Lifetime Achievement Award.

Nomination forms can be found on our website: mtaudubon.org/about/award/. To be considered for this year’s awards, nominations and all supporting material must be emailed (preferred) or postmarked no later than Friday, May 19, 2017. Please send to Janet Ellis at jellis@mtaudubon.org or c/o Montana Audubon, Box 595, Helena, MT 59624.

The awards ceremony will take place on June 10 at Montana Audubon’s Bird Festival in Great Falls.
Invasive species are a big topic this year in Montana due to the first positive detection of aquatic Zebra mussels in the state (Tiber Reservoir in November) and suspect samples in Canyon Ferry Reservoir. Minimizing their spread and impact is key to protecting the Columbia River system, the country’s last uninfected river basin. Terrestrial invasive trees like Russian olive and tamarisk, or saltcedar, can also substantially affect Montana’s most important wildlife habitat along waterways, and have plagued the state for a long time. Montana Audubon helped lead the charge that ultimately categorized Russian olive as a “Regulated Plant Species” in 2010. Saltcedar is formally defined as a “Noxious” shrub. As part of our River Initiative we are convening a symposium of experts to discuss the state of invasive species in currently-infested river systems.

The time to act is now, as both species are likely to expand their range and density due to climate change, potentially out-competing native cottonwood gallery forests. However, work is being done to manage the problem. State-wide, scientists and resource managers are trying to control these plants and restore native cottonwoods, a species crucial for supporting 150 of Montana’s bird species during some portion of the year. Our symposium will help managers to network and begin developing short and longer-term state goals, while better understanding impacts to species, potential management options, and spread prevention techniques.

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

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

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

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

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

Welcome New Montana Audubon Staff

We are pleased to welcome Janet Johnston as our Office Manager. Janet’s friendly, service-oriented demeanor, attention to detail, and her keen insights are proving to be important assets for Montana Audubon.

Through her experience as a small business owner, she has honed her skills in the multiple facets of office management and customer service. Added to her commitment to integrity and hard work, she brings strengths in organizing and problem solving. Originally from rural Eastern Oregon, Montana has been her home since 1993. Janet has spent her life appreciating the rich landscapes and wildlife of the West. She, her husband, and three high school and college-aged daughters enjoy spending time together while hiking, fishing, hunting, skiing and especially picking huckleberries. We are delighted to have her join our team.

Star Volunteers

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

- 4H Club
- Amer Alghanni
- Candace Beery
- Bill Bucher
- Builders Club
- Lucinda Butler
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- Donald Seibert
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Blue-gray Gnatcatcher

Bob Martinka

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James Pauley
Megan Poulette
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Rimrock Foundation
Don Roberts
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Martha Sanford
Norm Schoenthal
Donald Seibert
Hanne Sherwood

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Bob Martinka
Thank you for Supporting Montana Audubon

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

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

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

Montana Audubon is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization under 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code. This financial information is drawn from audited financial statements by the accounting firm Douglas Wilson & Company, PC.
Jim Brown and his wife Sue have lived in a quiet, wooded corner of the upper Rattlesnake Valley for years. It’s the type of modest homestead, sitting just beyond the bustle of Missoula, where one might expect to find a contemplative, philosopher-outdoorsman. “I got excited about doing things outside when I was very young, including fishing, hunting, hiking and camping and I’ve been a regular birder since sophomore year in high school.”

Growing up in the Twin Cities, Jim had frequent exposure to nature and was especially affected by the forest and lake country of northern Minnesota.

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

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

His interests in natural history have led him to explore many landscapes around the planet, ranging from arctic Canada to tropical South America. In the mid-1990s, Jim became a board member with Montana Audubon serving a total of 15 years, five of those as the organization’s president. “I think Montana Audubon’s role is to promote the story of birds, and describe the many ways they are important. In telling that story, we encourage appreciation and conservation solutions.” Although no longer involved with the organization’s governance, Jim and his wife give generously to the work of Montana Audubon. As he describes it, “Birds have given us so much enjoyment and provide our world with innumerable, essential functions as part of the web of life. Supporting Montana Audubon is a way for me to give something back, a humble act of reciprocity.”
Please note this list does not include festival, tour, or event registration fees, nor does it include sales, auction purchases below fair market value, or endowment giving.

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

**Special Thanks**

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- ConocoPhillips
- CRH US Trident Plant
- DoVertail Designs
- Feast Wine Bar and Bistro Inc.
- General Mills Foundation
- Matching Gift Program
- Great Falls Tourism Business and Improvement District
- Hanson Chemical, Inc.
- Juro’s Medical, Inc.
- Kid Country Child Development Center
- Kid Country CDC
- Kohl’s
- Marvin’s Bar
- Montana Resources
- Montana-Dakota Utilities Co.
- Morrison & Maierle, Inc.
- National Audubon Society
- NaturEner USA, LLC
- NorthWestern Energy
- Pacific Source
- Patagonia Outlet Dillon
- Phillips 66
- Pooh’s Too
- RBC Wealth Management
- Real World Design
- RiverStone Health
- St. Luke’s Child Enrichment Center, Inc.
- The Base Camp
- The Summer Source, Inc.
- Valley Bank of Helena
- Wild Birds Unlimited of Bozeman
- Yellowstone Naturopathic Clinic, P.C.
- Yellowstone Track Systems, Inc.
- Zulu Nayala

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

**Organizations and Educational Institutions**
- Audubon Wildlife Fund of Montana
- Beartooth Elementary
- Beartooth Recreational Trails Association
- Billings Catholic Schools
- Billings Child Care Association
- Billings Junior Women’s Club
- Billings School District
- Billings Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
- Kid Country Child Development Center
- Kid Country CDC
- Kohl’s
- Marvin’s Bar
- Montana Resources
- Montana-Dakota Utilities Co.
- Morrison & Maierle, Inc.
- National Audubon Society
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- Yellowstone Track Systems, Inc.
- Zulu Nayala

**Memorial Gifts**
We are deeply grateful to those of you who have made generous gifts and lasting tributes in memory of:
- Jim Dayton
- Cliff Hilden
- Mary Munsell
- Gerald Navratil
- Mary Nikolovic
- Barbara Wilson Molen

**Honorariums**
Special recognition to the following for recent gifts in their honor:
- Shari Dayton
- Simon Gratch
- Carol McAllister
- Judy Tureck
- Del Wilkinson
- Steve Hoffman
- Rachel Van Wingen

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

Rufous Hummingbird

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

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

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

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

Whether or not you plan on attending the festival, take your chances on winning wonderful raffle prizes! We’re offering a “Big Raffle” this year—a two-day vacation in and around Grand Teton National Park. How about a stay at Abbott Valley Homestead near Glacier National Park, or your choice from several birder- baskets complete with binoculars, quilts, and books? Call Montana Audubon at 406-443-3949 to request raffle tickets. You do not have to be present to win—but we’d love it if you were!