

fall 2016



**IN THE TRENCHES:
PREPARING
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**OUR EXECUTIVE
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**FALL AT
MONTANA
AUDUBON
CENTER**

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

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

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Montana Audubon is a proud member organization of Montana Shares.

THE VIEW FROM ABOVE



Dear Montana Audubon members and friends,

I wish to announce my decision to retire as Executive Director of Montana Audubon. Following more than a decade of service, my last day with the organization will be December 31. I believe it is time for a change, for both myself and for Montana Audubon. I very much look forward to working closely with the board and staff over the next few months to ensure a smooth transition to new leadership. I plan to remain in Montana for the foreseeable future, and look forward to supporting Montana Audubon's mission and work for years to come!

Over the past year, I've had an increasing desire to spend more time outdoors enjoying nature and have decided to start a birding tour company to continue sharing my passion for birds, nature and conservation with the Montana community.

Thank you for your amazing support, friendship, and generous contributions in support of our conservation work.

During my tenure at Montana Audubon, I have been fortunate to work with a highly competent and dedicated staff, board, and chapter volunteer network. It has been both an honor and a privilege to be part of the Montana Audubon family.

Together, we have embarked on an exciting journey. Over the past decade, Montana Audubon's staff and budget has tripled, and our conservation programs have expanded accordingly, and Montana's nine-chapter Audubon network is stronger than ever. Through our collective efforts to build Montana Audubon's endowments, diversify funding sources, recruit capable, engaged board members, and strengthen our partnerships and conservation outcomes, I believe we have made tremendous progress toward Montana Audubon's long-term sustainability.

As the only statewide voice for birds and bird conservation, Montana Audubon needs your support. Birds are the most accessible window we have into the natural world! I believe Montana Audubon members have a critical role to play in the conservation movement, so let's continue working together to do everything possible to save Montana's biodiversity.

Thank you for your amazing support, friendship and generous contributions in support of our conservation work. Montana Audubon's loyal and profoundly generous donors have ensured our success through the years, and I am forever grateful to each one of you. I intend to keep in close touch with many of you at future Montana Audubon bird festivals, and spending time with you in the field!

Yours in conservation,

Stephen Hoffman, Executive Director

On the cover:

Lima Peaks
 Inset: Yellowstone River sunset
 Photos by John Lambing

fall 2016

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Upcoming Legislature

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2017 MONTANA LEGISLATURE

As we have for done for many years, our team is preparing to defend the birds, other wildlife and critical habitats of the state

READY OR NOT, HERE IT COMES!

Some days we just want elections over and done with—we're tired of listening to politicians and being told what we should care about and who we should vote for. At Montana Audubon, we're anxiously awaiting the November 8th elections, particularly to learn the outcome of the Gubernatorial race and the makeup of the 2017 Montana Legislature.

November's election results set the stage for leaders headed to Montana's capital where they will decide which state programs are funded, how policies impact everything from sage-grouse to clean water, and who will run these programs, from directors of agencies to who sits on the Fish and Wildlife Commission.

As a nonprofit organization, Montana Audubon can't get involved in elections. However, we do track how election results will shape the issues we care about, especially during the 90-day Montana Legislative session which begins on January 2. As we have for done for many years, our team is preparing to defend the birds, other wildlife and critical habitats of the state, with Associate Director of Conservation Amy Seaman taking to the halls of the capitol as our lobbyist.

This is a long-standing Montana Audubon tradition: the organization hired its first lobbyist in 1981, and we have been in the legislative trenches every session since—because we expect to accomplish a great deal of conservation work between January and April during legislative years.

continued...



Associate Director of Conservation Amy Seaman will be taking to the halls of the capitol as our lobbyist.

In the upcoming 2017 session, Montana Audubon will focus on a number of diverse and challenging conservation issues



We want to remove current land-purchase restrictions on FWP; doing so will significantly benefit wildlife.



Chestnut-collared Longspur, a species threatened by climate change

A glimpse at some Montana Legislative issues

In the upcoming 2017 session, Montana Audubon will focus on a number of diverse and challenging conservation issues including:

Sage-Grouse

Funding for key staff is the main issue facing Montana's sage-grouse conservation program. Additionally, money remaining in a \$10M stewardship fund needs specific authorization to be spent on sage-grouse work.

Habitat Montana

Habitat Montana is Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks' (FWP) main habitat program. In 2015, Montana legislators put restrictions on FWP, largely preventing them from purchasing new parcels. We want to remove this restriction—which will significantly benefit wildlife.

Renewable Energy

Some Montanans generate their own electricity with alternative technologies like solar panels. When more power is generated than used, these customers receive credit on their utility bill for the power they feed back into the utility system. Montana Audubon will support at least one bill on this topic: it allows government buildings (including county courthouses and schools) to invest in large enough solar arrays to save them money on utility bills in the future. A win-win—and a smart investment in renewable energy.



John Lambing

We will lobby for the continued federal oversight of wetland conservation programs.



Sandhill Cranes

Colstrip

Global warming is the biggest environmental issue of our generation, threatening to greatly disrupt birds, other wildlife and human communities. Numerous pieces of legislation will be introduced on coal and the Colstrip generating facility. Montana Audubon will be involved in this legislation to ensure that solutions are crafted that address climate change, while not harming our constitutional right to a “clean and healthful environment.”

Clean Water

Most of the controversy surrounding water rights is focused on the use of ‘exempt wells’ in residential housing developments. The Montana Supreme Court recently ruled that future large subdivisions must change the way they acquire water. Numerous bills are anticipated on this issue. Since residential subdivisions greatly impact a variety of wildlife, Montana Audubon will focus on this legislation.

Wetlands

Montana legislators will be exploring whether or not to take over the federal program that allows wetlands to be filled for development (Section 404 of the Clean Water Act). State management of this permit program does not make sense to us for many reasons. We will lobby to keep this a federally-managed system.

AS ALWAYS, THE STAKES ARE HIGH FOR WILDLIFE, WHICH IS WHY WE NEED YOUR HELP

You can support our legislative work in two ways:

- Donate to Montana Audubon to help support face-to-face contact with legislators, send action alerts at critical times, and defend Montana's natural heritage.
- Sign up for our action alert network by visiting www.mtaudubon.org

Montana's Colonial Waterbirds Accept a New Colonist

Colonial waterbirds are a group named for their behavior of nesting communally in colonies from a few individuals to a few thousand birds. Their conservation and management is challenging due to large segments of the population being concentrated in small areas, specific wetland and riparian habitats that are particularly vulnerable to drought and altered hydrology, and the threat of habitat loss due to climate change. Annual monitoring helps us understand threats and how these species respond.

Through collaborative efforts with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), and expert researcher Fred Tilly, Montana Audubon surveyed 17 key sites during the 2016 field season. Eight are Important Bird Areas and three of these are globally recognized for large American White Pelican colonies. Keeping an eye open paid off—this marked the first year where non-native Cattle Egrets were recorded (likely nesting) in a colony at Bowdoin National Wildlife Refuge with Franklin Gulls, White-faced Ibis, and Black-crowned Night-Herons nearby. This sighting brings the number of colonial waterbird species nesting in Montana to 19. All were recorded this summer.

Of the colonial waterbirds in Montana, 10 are listed by the state as Species of Concern: American White Pelican, Great Blue Heron, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Forster's Tern, Franklin's Gull, Black Tern, Caspian Tern, Common Tern, Clark's Grebe, and White-faced Ibis. The Double-crested Cormorant is considered a Focal Species.

The eight remaining range from the Cattle Egret (documented only in 2016) to uncommon Snowy Egrets (documented in 2014 and 2015), to a variety of grebes (horned, red-necked, eared and western), to the abundant Ring-billed and California gulls. These birds have no special conservation listing, although they use many key sites and Important Bird Areas preferred by "listed" species.

Montana Audubon recently summarized facts about this unique group of birds and our eight-year survey effort into a visually stunning, colonial waterbirds poster!

To see our latest waterbird report and the poster, visit www.mtaudubon.org. Use the search word "waterbirds." Please email Amy Seaman: aseaman@mtaudubon.org for details or to receive copies.



Golden Eagle

2016 Raptor Migration Update

On August 27, Montana Audubon launched the 26th consecutive, season-long scientific count of migrating Golden Eagles and other birds of prey atop the Bridger Mountains near Bozeman. The project will continue through November 5. Veteran hawk watchers Bret Davis (his fourth season counting in the Bridgers) and Jess Cosentino (who previously counted migrant raptors for three seasons at Carter Hill, New Hampshire) are this year's official counters and assisted by several dedicated volunteers.

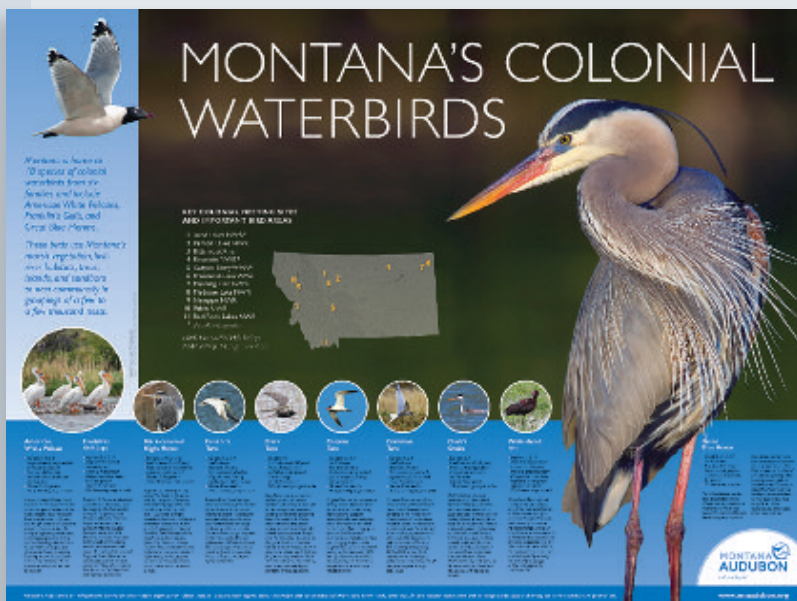
Long-term data collected at the Bridger site helps scientists learn more about regional and continental raptor population trends. This project is also valuable for monitoring environmental change by using "apex" predators as barometers of ecological health. The Bridger lookout is best known for recording impressive numbers of southbound Golden Eagles; recent count totals have varied from 1,000 to 1,400 eagles per season, and up to 200 individuals on a peak migration day in mid-October.

As of September 27, Bret & Jess had tallied a total of 1,243 raptors of 17 species, including 342 Golden Eagles. Frequent storms and low cloud cover throughout September have reduced visibility and limited observations on several days.

The Bridger Raptor Migration Project is generously supported by Sacajawea Audubon, Gallatin National Forest, NaturEner USA and Bridger Bowl Ski Area.

Montana Audubon and several partners are conducting a similar raptor migration monitoring effort in the Big Belt Mountains near Helena. In fall 2015 a total of 2,630 Golden Eagles were tallied during an abbreviated 47-day count. This year, a full 66-day count (September 1 – November 5) is planned. This successful collaboration includes Last Chance Audubon, Helena-Lewis & Clark National Forest, MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks, and Montana Audubon. You can follow the project's progress on Facebook: www.facebook.com/goldeneagle/migrationsurvey/

Bob Martinka



This informative and visually engaging colonial waterbirds poster is available for schools and individuals, free of charge.

Grants Available for Wildlife Projects

Montana Audubon is currently accepting grant applications to fund projects through its Audubon Wildlife Fund of Montana endowment. Grant applications will be accepted through Thursday, December 15, 2016. Successful recipients will be notified by early February 2017.

Last year, Audubon Wildlife Fund grants supported a Salish Kootenai College project to provide expanded wildlife education and research opportunities to college students;

a Harlequin Duck study centered in Glacier National Park; and an acoustic monitoring project in the Bitterroot Valley, which allowed high school students to document the nighttime migration of birds.

Nearly \$1,600 is awarded annually by Montana Audubon for conservation projects. For an application and more information about projects funded in previous years, visit the Wildlife Grant Program page at our website: www.mtaudubon.org



Bob Marinka

Three Magic Words for Sage-Grouse

There are three words that will play a critical role in the future of sage-grouse conservation: avoid, minimize, and compensate. In total, these terms summarize the on-the-ground mitigation steps needed to protect sage-grouse habitat as Montana continues to develop.

In order to prevent the declining Greater Sage-Grouse from being listed as a protected species under the federal Endangered Species Act, the state of Montana created a conservation plan and is currently developing its mitigation program, with active involvement from Montana Audubon.

So what do the three words have to do with sage-grouse conservation? If a new project (road, cell tower, wind farm, mine, etc.) is proposed in sage-grouse habitat:

- First, the developer must prove that they have done their best to **AVOID** the habitat altogether and must specifically demonstrate consideration of other locations, and that no suitable alternative site exists.

- Second, if the developer proves that impacts cannot be avoided, then the project must be designed to **MINIMIZE** its size on-the-ground. This can be accomplished by reducing the amount of surface area disturbed, clustering development, completing work when sage-grouse are not present, or similar measures.

- Third, if impacts cannot be avoided and project impacts have been minimized, the developer must **COMPENSATE** by paying into a stewardship fund that will benefit sage-grouse elsewhere.

One critical detail to remember: it is important to keep your eye on the prize with a mitigation program. The overall goal is to achieve a net-positive outcome for sage-grouse.

How Montana sets up its sage-grouse mitigation program will influence whether or not these birds increase in number or continue to decline. The other eleven states where sage-grouse occur are struggling to design mitigation programs. However, Montana Audubon will steadfastly continue to be involved in shaping our state's innovative sage-grouse conservation plan well into the future.

A Feather is Worth a Thousand Words!

As sage-grouse dance on their breeding leks each spring, some of their feathers are inevitably shed. Between 2009 and 2012, agency biologists and technicians—and Audubon volunteers—collected these feathers and turned them in for analysis. This feather collection, along with blood samples taken for another project, are the basis of a newly released genetics study on Montana's sage-grouse populations. The paper, recently published in *Conservation Genetics*, gives us a hint at the relationship between different sage-grouse populations in the state.

As background, a total of 3,481 feathers and blood samples were collected during the four-year study, noting the exact location where each item was collected. In the lab, the genetic structure of each sample was examined, showing that the

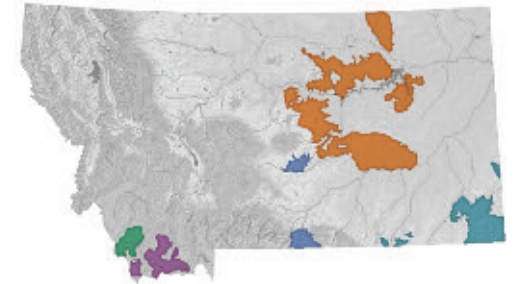
samples were gathered from 1,499 individual sage-grouse from 297 leks.

Based on the research, scientists recommend that Montana's sage-grouse populations be divided into five management groups or subpopulations. The map below shows where they are located. Understanding sage-grouse genetics and how different subpopulations are related sheds light on how on-the-ground management decisions might maintain population- important grouse corridors in the future.

Montana Audubon is actively involved in sage-grouse conservation. If you are interested in learning more about this issue or the subpopulation genetics study, visit the Sagebrush page under the Conservation Policy section of our website: www.mtaudubon.org

Sage-Grouse Core Areas by Genetic Groupings

- Southwestern-North Management Group
- Southwestern-South Management Group
- Southeastern-West Management Group
- Southeastern-East Management Group
- Northern Management Group



Montana's mysterious Black Swift

August 2016 was a month for discovery in the Glacier Park backcountry. Efforts by park staff, Montana Audubon, and volunteers revealed three new nesting colonies of Black Swifts beneath tumbling waterfalls; one of these became Montana's first-recorded colony east of the



Amy Seaman

continental divide. A total of sixteen colonies are known state-wide. Black Swifts are a state-listed Species of Concern, Species of Greatest Inventory Need and one directly threatened by climate change. These factors motivate our continued involvement with the remote surveys necessary to find colonies and understand the species' conservation needs.

By supporting Montana Audubon you support this kind of important research. Visit our website and search "Black Swift" for our 2016 update from the field and more.

Beaver Medicine Falls in Glacier National Park

Falling for Nature at the Montana Audubon Center

It's autumn and now is a great time to reconnect with nature at the Montana Audubon Center in Billings. The property and trails are open to the public seven days a week, sunrise to sunset. The building is open to visitors Monday through Friday. Limited open hours on weekend days will occur throughout the fall, but we recommend visiting our Facebook page for the most up-to-date information. Please note that interpretive resources and displays inside the building are limited, as it serves primarily as a teaching facility for programs geared towards school groups and the general public.

The Center hosted an inaugural Native Plant Symposium on Friday, October 7, and Saturday, October 8. Friday's program consisted of an invitation-only, facilitated session of professionals and enthusiasts with a working knowledge of Montana native plants. The goal was to create a baseline of native plant capacity and resources in the Billings community. The event concluded with a public program on Saturday morning that included a speaker series and a native plant sale. Center staff, inspired in part by Douglas Tallamy's book, *Bringing Nature Home*, emphasized the

value of native plants for birds.

Native plants and birds await those who visit the property during this season of transition. The cottonwoods provide brilliant yellow highlights around three ponds: Deep Mill, Shallow Mill, and Will's Marsh. These wetlands are the remnants of a former gravel mine, which has been reclaimed over the past 15 years. The ponds attract a variety of a migrating and wintering waterfowl including American Coot, Cinnamon Teal, Hooded Mergansers, and Common Goldeneye. Inquire during staff hours about borrowing binoculars and field guides at no charge.

Finally, fall is the time to start thinking about year-end giving. Your tax-deductible gift to the Montana Audubon Center will support another year of place-based nature education in Billings and beyond. Programs at the Center served over 5,000 participants and visitors in calendar year 2016. Your gift will help strengthen and expand program offerings in 2017. After 10 years, the building and resources are due for upgrades, with some already in the works. If you'd like to see more resources for drop-in visitors or help upgrade the equipment used by students to study the ecology of the Yellowstone River, please consider making a gift to the Center via our website: www.mtaudubon.org/center.

The Center ponds attract a variety of a migrating and wintering waterfowl including American Coot, Cinnamon Teal, Hooded Mergansers, and Common Goldeneye.



Bob Merrinika



Bob Merrinika

ANTS Program Taking Off

The education department at the Audubon Center is entering its 10th school year of providing place-based, hands-on nature education through our flagship Audubon Naturalists in the Schools (ANTS) program. With a consistent upward trend in the number of students served through that time, this year saw a big jump from 34 to 49 classrooms; a 44% increase in programming. That totals out to 800 hours of contact time between our staff and area classrooms. Multiplied by the number of students in each classroom, that runs in the range of 18,400 kid-hours of nature time. With reports of the average student in the US spending less than an hour outside every day, it's great to be a part of a program that gets kids outside, especially as part of their formal education.

In addition to the increase in classrooms, the ANTS program has had a major curriculum revision, bringing it more in line with new academic standards, industry best-practices for Environmental Education, and Montana's Indian Education For All. The principles of IEFA work well with place-based education in general, and the program has been the source of much of the financial support for

our partnership with School District 2 in Billings. We work closely with Indian Education instructional coaches and curriculum experts to ensure that the tenor and content of our lessons is accurate and respectful to Montana's indigenous people. Many of our participants are part of tribal communities and decisions on which schools we work with are based in part, on the percentage of Native Americans enrolled. Watching students engage with the content through discussions of traditional uses of plants, migration stories, or the importance of relationship and direct observation as a way of learning about the natural world, is one of the most rewarding parts of the program.

Of course, ANTS isn't the only thing going on at the Center. We've added another full class of four and five-year olds to our preschool crew. Every weekday, the back classroom is filled with little voices, at least for the few minutes they are inside. We have also been successfully re-engaging our area high schools, whose Environmental Science classes are now visiting the site regularly, developing research projects to be completed through the rest of the year. It's an exciting time for programs at the Audubon Center!

Young Stewards engage in restoration

This spring, the Audubon Naturalists in the Schools program (ANTS) engaged visiting fourth graders in the conservation worlds of observation, identification and sensitive action. Over 600 students (26 classes) hand-pulled 4,000 pounds of Houndstongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*) and White Top (*Lepidium draba*). What an extraordinary accomplishment!

Together we learned that these plants are not inherently bad, just not suited to our healthy, native plant communities. Together we continue to enrich the Center grounds as we strive to become more conscientious and respectful members of our ecosystems.



File photo

"Young stewards stand proud with conservation zeal, no weed left unpulled!"

**Center Volunteer Spotlight:
Karen Grimes**

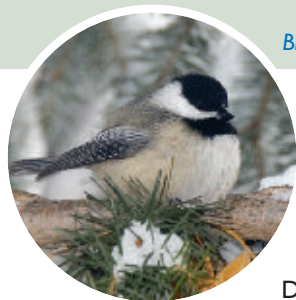
Karen Grimes, an Ohio native, started at the Center during the interim tenure of Montana Audubon Board Vice Chair, Rachel Van Wingen. We're fortunate Karen continues to support the weekly administration of the Center operation, and recently she completed a full year of service.

Behind the scenes Karen lends her business expertise to our weekly accounting procedures—reconciling petty cash and credit card transactions, preparing a weekly report for the state office, and making sure our bank deposits are in tip-top shape. These services are invaluable, as the Center operates on a tight budget and devotes maximum energy



to development and implementation of education programs.

Karen was a key member of the team that helped execute this year's Evening Under the Big Sky event on Saturday, September 17. She not only assisted with checking in registered attendees, but helped process auction-related transactions at the end of the evening. We are truly grateful for her support!



Black-capped Chickadee

You Are Invited: Join a Christmas Bird Count

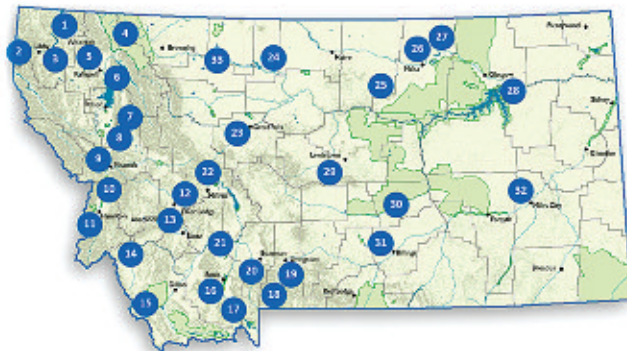
When cabin fever strikes in December, please consider joining one

CBCs are FREE and all are welcome to participate; newer birders are paired with more experienced birders. Counts will take place between December 14, 2016 and January 5, 2017.

Plan to join one or more of the 33 Christmas Bird Counts this winter!

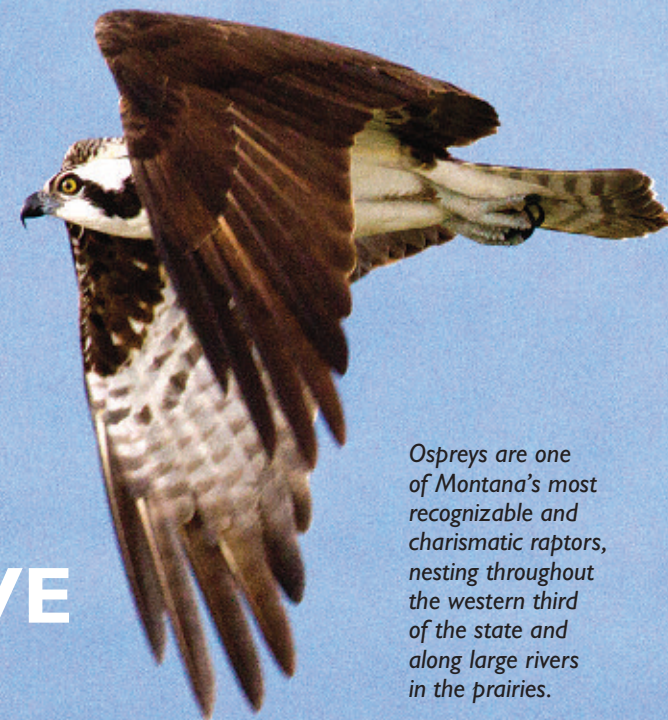
of Montana's 30+ Christmas Bird Counts (CBC). You can spend a day (or half day) outside with fellow bird enthusiasts, make new friends, and learn area-bird species. Last winter, 698 birders counted 140 species on Montana CBCs.

By late November, Montana Audubon will post information on our website about all Christmas Bird Counts occurring in the state, including where and when different counts take place, how to contact leaders, and other pertinent information. Check www.mtaudubon.org to learn more.



Bob Martinka

**RIVER
INITIATIVE
UPDATE**



Ospreys are one of Montana's most recognizable and charismatic raptors, nesting throughout the western third of the state and along large rivers in the prairies.

"The habits of this famed bird differ so materially from those of almost all others of its genus, that an accurate description of them cannot fail to be highly interesting to the student of nature."

—John James Audubon, writing of Ospreys

Audubon's words still apply today. Watching an Osprey dive feet first into the water, sometimes submerging completely, before rising from the surface with a struggling fish leaves a lasting impression for birder and non-birder alike. Ospreys are one of Montana's most recognizable and charismatic raptors, nesting throughout the western third of the state and along large rivers in the prairies.

Marco Restani, Director of Conservation, collaborates with the Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society (YVAS), which has been monitoring Osprey nests along the Yellowstone River since 2009. The project focuses conservation efforts on Ospreys because the population is increasing, most pairs are building nests on power poles and thereby coming into conflict with utility companies, and nestling mortality from entanglement in baling twine is evident. In 2009 three volunteers located 22 nests while today 30 volunteers hustle along 300 miles of river to monitor nearly 100 nests.

Since 2012, Marco has banded nearly 300 Ospreys with YVAS. Banding allows researchers to determine short and long-range movements and survival. Some 'Yellowstone' Ospreys have been observed wintering in Texas, Mexico, and Costa Rica. A few are also returning to eastern Montana to breed, adding to the burgeoning local population.

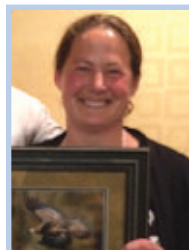
For unknown reasons, Ospreys incorporate baling twine into their nests despite it posing an entanglement hazard. Of 11 nestlings found trapped in twine the past five summers, eight were cut free and fledged normally, whereas three others were found dead or had to be euthanized. One adult also was found strangled in its nest. YVAS is directing efforts at regional education and has been working toward developing a twine recycling center near Billings.

The Osprey project would not be possible without the cooperation and generous in-kind support of Beartooth Electric Coop., Montana-Dakota Utilities, NorthWestern Energy, Park Electric Coop., Yellowstone Valley Electric Coop., and Yellowstone Valley Tree Surgeons. Also, several landowners graciously granted access to their properties for banding and nest observation.

2016 Award Winners

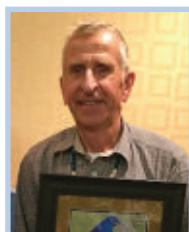
Congratulations and well done!

Montana Audubon recently recognized the following individuals for their great conservation work:



Becky Kean was awarded *Conservationist of the Year* for her incredible devotion and work on behalf of hawks, owls, and eagles at the Montana Raptor Conservation Center.

Larry Weeks was chosen as *Educator of the Year* because of his 13 years as a teacher for Five Valleys Audubon. Larry has reached a cumulative total of over 7,000 children and 3,000 adults with his programs that combine classroom study and field trips.



Gary Swant received our *Citizen Scientist of the Year Award* for his decades of bird observations and careful record keeping, contributing 33,713 observations on 320 bird species to the state's

bird database—and Gary currently holds the record for the most bird species seen in Montana (329 species in one Big Year).



Bev Orth Geoghegan was honored with our *Lifetime Achievement Award* for her volunteer work as the Five Valleys Audubon newsletter editor for 15 years, producing 10 newsletters per year, every year, rain or shine.

Jeff Marks, Dan Casey and Paul Hendricks

received an *Outstanding Achievement Award* for their work to complete the recently released reference book, *Birds of Montana*. Consider buying one of these books today by visiting www.mtaudubon.org



Whisper Camel-Means (top) and **Stephanie Gillin**

received a *Science Outreach Award* for their work as Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes' wildlife biologists and their educational programs and outreach to teachers, tribal members, and the general public.



We are pleased to recognize these remarkable individuals for their outstanding work. Read more about these champions on the Awards page of our website: www.mtaudubon.org

Birds of Montana published — buy one today!

Looking for a great Montana-based reference book for that special someone who loves birds? Consider getting them a copy of the newly published *Birds of Montana*. This book has detailed accounts of 433 bird species documented in Montana, in addition to a wealth of information on habitat types, historical records, and more. This jam-packed book is a "must have" for the serious bird watcher. It was written by ornithologists Jeff Marks, Paul Hendricks, and Dan Casey—and sponsored by Montana Audubon. This hardcover book can be purchased for \$75 from Buteo Books. For more information, visit our website: www.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!

Montana Audubon

Lori Alrawi
Sandra Amsden
Ser Anderson
Vic Applegate
Susan Beale-Spencer
Allison Begley
Chris Berry
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Memorial Fund Furthers Engler Legacy

The **George and Laurene Engler Montana Audubon Conservation Fund** was recently created as a memorial for two very special people. All proceeds will support Montana Audubon, and the Montana Community Foundation will administer the endowment. It's purpose is to provide sustainable revenue to monitor, study and conserve Montana's birds, including preservation, enhancement and restoration of avian habitats, and to promote land-use policies and legislation consistent with these conservation goals. Although they are no

longer with us, George and Laurene's legacy of supporting and furthering conservation in Montana will live on through the creation of this permanent endowment named in their memory, allowing others to give to a cause that they each strongly believed in.

To learn more, visit our Endowments page at www.mtaudubon.org



Bob Martinka

Board/Donor Profile

Joe & Lana Batts

Joe and Lana Batts are a well-traveled and worldly “conservation couple” with a great affection for Montana. They each had formative experiences with the landscape at a young age; both were active with scouts, camping and outdoor life generally — Lana in Billings and Joe in Lakeside. While studying at the University of Montana in the late 60s, they met under interesting circumstances. As Joe recalls; “We were debate partners on the UM debate team, traveling to tournaments around the state, spending a great deal of time talking, and getting to know each other.” Lana humorously adds, “We’ve even carried on the debating tradition in our marriage with, at times, rather animated discussions—that follow the rules!”

In 1973, life took them far from home, to the Washington DC area, where each pursued interesting careers. Joe formed a successful database-design consulting firm, and Lana held several executive roles in trucking associations, eventually launching her own company as well. It was during this time that the Batts developed an interest in birding via mutual friends. “We both have a strong affinity for nature” says Joe, “so when we discovered an outdoor activity that we could do together, something that combined travel, wildlife photography and a strong social element, we were hooked.”

The couple has traveled the world on their birding adventures, including recent trips to



“Birding together and sharing the beauty of nature with others is a very important part of [travelling] for us.”

Antarctica, Costa Rica, and Namibia. Lana adds, “Birding together and sharing the beauty of nature with others is a very important part of it for us.” After more than 40 years back east, they returned to Montana for good in 2013. As with many people, their love of birds ultimately led to a commitment to conservation: Joe currently serves as treasurer for Flathead Audubon as well as alternate chapter board representative for Montana Audubon, and Lana sits on our board as an at-large member. The Batts are also major donors to the cause.

“Birds turned us into conservationists,” Joe remarked. “We support the work of Montana Audubon as a way to ensure the future of native birds and habitat in our magnificent state.”

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.



FLY HIGH ON MONTANA AUDUBON'S SUMMER 2017 TOURS

Rocky Mountain Front

June 15 – 17, 2017

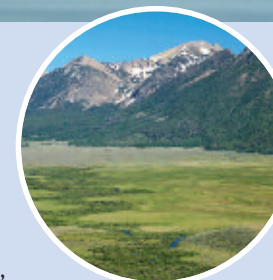


NEW THIS YEAR!

The Rocky Mountain Front is a spectacular, diverse region that supports the full complement of Montana’s wildlife, from grizzly bears to bobolinks. This tour will explore wetlands, native prairies, and forested habitats looking for the many bird species found on this landscape where prairie meets mountain.

Centennial Valley & Red Rock Lakes

May 26 – 28, 2017



This popular tour explores Montana’s Centennial Valley and Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. The remote, scenic, bird-rich area has optimal diversity of migrant and resident birds. In addition to Trumpeter Swans, we will see abundant shorebirds, waterfowl, grebes, songbirds, raptors, and more.

Each tour is 3-days/2-nights (includes lodging, meals, and group transportation from select Montana cities.) Cost TBD.

For more information and reservations: Montana Audubon office 406-443-3949 or email mtaudubon@mtaudubon.org.

wings across the big sky

Mark Your Calendar! Great Falls, June 9–11, 2017

Celebrating 40 Years of Montana Audubon will be a central theme as we gather in Great Falls, Montana at the Best Western Heritage Inn, June 9 – 11, 2017 for our annual festival, Wings Across the Big Sky!

Montana Audubon and Upper Missouri Breaks Audubon Society are planning amazing field trips, engaging speakers and informative programs...all designed to make your time at the festival educational, enjoyable and adventurous!

Registration information will be available in March 2017, but make plans now to spend a fantastic weekend in Great Falls with birders from across the state and country.

Where's the envelope?



In this issue, you may have noticed the absence of a small remittance envelope that was regularly included in our print newsletters over the years as another way for members to support Montana Audubon.

In an effort to streamline the organization (and save resources) we'd like to take this opportunity to direct your desire to support us by visiting our website. While there, you can also explore our News page for current happenings and events, join our Online Network to receive timely conservation alerts and learn more about our Public Policy, Science and Education programs.

Visit us today at
www.mtaudubon.org



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