

20TH ANNUAL  
MONTANA AUDUBON  
BIRD FESTIVAL

June 7–9, 2019  
Cottonwood Inn  
Glasgow, Montana

*wings*   
*across the big sky*  
MONTANA  
AUDUBON



Bob Marnika



Sunrise over Fort Peck Lake  
Above: Sage Thrasher

John Lambing

# welcome

Montana Audubon is excited to host our 20th annual Wings Across the Big Sky bird festival in the stunning glaciated plains region of northeastern Montana!

This year's festival home base will be the Cottonwood Inn, in Glasgow, Montana, June 7–9. Registration will open at 3 p.m. on Friday afternoon and is followed by a dinner buffet and our festival keynote address that evening.

Native prairie habitats in the area support many important and uncommon grassland bird species. Numerous field trips will explore wildlife-rich landscapes of this unique and underappreciated region of Montana. There will be informative presentations, informational tables and many fun events scheduled over the festival weekend.

Please refer to this brochure for festival scheduling, field trip information and to learn about local points of interest in the Glasgow area. We know you will have a great time!

## Overview

### FRIDAY

- 3:00 p.m. Registration Opens
- 4:30 p.m. Social (Cash Bar)
- 5:00 p.m. Dinner – Country Comfort Buffet  
Festival Kickoff  
Keynote Speaker – Sean Gerrity

### SATURDAY MORNING

- 5:00 a.m. Breakfast with field trip leaders;  
pick up sack lunches
- 6:00 a.m. Depart on field trips
- 2:00 p.m. Return from field trips;  
snacks available
- 2:45 p.m. Speaker Sessions

### SATURDAY EVENING

- 4:30 p.m. Social (Cash Bar)
- 5:30 p.m. Dinner – Mediterranean Buffet  
with Dessert Auction  
Awards  
Nature Adventure Tour  
Auction Closes  
Executive Director Presentation

### SUNDAY MORNING

- 5:00 a.m. Breakfast with field trip leaders;  
pick up sack lunches
- 6:00 a.m. Depart on field trips; refer to field  
trip description for return details

# keynote speaker

## Sean Gerrity

### The Wonder of Birds in the American Prairie Reserve Region

What makes the northern mixed grass prairie and glaciated plains so rich, intriguing and important in regards to its birdlife? How might we protect it in order to maximize its value and habitat suitability to the wide array of bird species that frequent this unique yet shrinking landscape?



Sean Gerrity, American Prairie Reserve Founder & Managing Director and National Geographic Explorer, is committed to wildlife conservation and creating the largest wildlife complex ever assembled in the continental United States. Mr. Gerrity and his team are dedicated to building the Reserve for the benefit of humanity – from Native American and other local communities neighboring the Reserve to the global visitors who enjoy the Reserve's growing educational and recreational opportunities.

He hopes to inspire others around the globe to use similarly creative 21st-century solutions on our world's conservation challenges. Prior to joining American Prairie Reserve, Mr. Gerrity – a Great Falls native – co-founded Catalyst Consulting, a Silicon Valley-based company specializing in organization alignment and strategy development. Leading the American Prairie Reserve project has enabled him to combine his business skills with his passion for wildlife to leave an extraordinary, nature-based legacy for future generations.

# field trips

## We invite all registrants to participate in these birding and conservation-themed trips.

Please review each description on pages 4–5 and make your choices. Saturday trips are labeled “SA”; Sunday trips are “SU.” Please note the *first nine trips* are labeled SA / SU since the trips are identical both days. Two trips (Fort Peck and North Valley County) are offered two times each day, and the American Prairie Reserve trip is offered three times on Sunday only (the trips will fan out in different directions).

All field trips will leave Glasgow's Cottonwood Inn at 6:00 a.m. on Saturday and Sunday. Please join your fellow field trip participants and leaders at the breakfast table marked with your field trip number at 5:00 a.m. in the banquet room. This allows you to meet your group and leader, receive pertinent information, and make plans for car-pooling.

Sack lunches are available as part of your registration, so be sure to pick those up as you leave with your group. Also – bring your gear – comfortable walking shoes, your own water bottle, raingear, camera, binoculars and any personal needs for your trip.

All Saturday trips will return to the hotel by 2:00 p.m., whereas some Sunday trips end later in the day or away from Glasgow. Check individual trip descriptions for specific information on trip ending time/place for your return trips home.



## FESTIVAL HEADQUARTERS AND LODGING

**Cottonwood Inn & Suites** is Glasgow's premier hotel and convention center where it's all about Montana hospitality. The Cottonwood's accommodations include standard guest rooms, executive, family, hot tub, or accessible rooms in addition to spacious queen/king and family suites. The Cottonwood Inn & Suites RV Park features 12 RV sites (4 pull-through) with full hookups available, picnic table at each site, shower house, laundry facilities, and free WiFi. Enjoy the fitness center or relax in one of the indoor hot tubs or the pool with accessible chair lift.

Among the Cottonwood Inn & Suites amenities are home-style cooking and hearty meals at The Wood Restaurant and a fun place to be at The Wood Lounge & Casino.

The standard room rate of \$93 plus \$6/additional person is available through May 6, 2019 when you mention the Montana Audubon bird festival.

**54250 US Highway 2, Glasgow, MT 59230**  
**406-228-8213 • 800-321-8213 •**  
[www.cottonwoodinn.net](http://www.cottonwoodinn.net)

### Camping Option

**Fort Peck Project – Downstream Campground** offers 85 family campsites, 70 of which have electrical hookups; 15 sites are tent-only. One large group campsite is available with electrical hookups. Seven day-use picnic shelters are available for reservations, all with electrical hookups. Rates of \$14 – \$184/night. The campground offers flush and vault toilets, showers, playgrounds, a basketball court and horseshoe pits. A dump station and fish cleaning station are located on-site.  
[www.recreation.gov/camping/campgrounds/233489](http://www.recreation.gov/camping/campgrounds/233489)

## PRE- AND POST-FESTIVAL LODGING

**American Prairie Reserve** is offering pre- and post-festival lodging (**June 3–6 & June 9–14**) at a discounted rate for festival participants who would like to come early or stay after the event and enjoy the spectacular expanse of the Reserve. Lodging is at Buffalo camp or the Reserve hut system.

### Huts

The hut-to-hut system provides visitors with a base camp from which to explore the prairie. In the tradition of other hut systems around the world our huts offer comfortable and affordable accommodations. The Founders Hut and John and Margaret Craighead Hut each



Dennis Lingohr

consist of 30-foot yurts connected by a hallway and accommodate nine people in four bunk rooms. One yurt serves as sleeping space, the other contains a fully-equipped kitchen, dining area, a library, and interpretive displays. A third connected yurt contains a composting toilet and a changing area. Solar panels power LED lighting, a refrigerator, and an outlet for charging small electronics.

For those who would like to travel even lighter, Lewis and Clark Trail Adventures may be booked to provide meals, sleeping bags, and guided trip options.

### Buffalo Camp

Located on the Sun Prairie Unit, Buffalo Camp is situated on the home range of our bison herd. The camp has seven RV sites with electric hookups and six tent platforms, a supply of non-potable water, vault toilets, fire rings, an amphitheater, and covered picnic areas.

**Rate: 30% off**

**Promo Code: AUDUBON2019**

**Reservations:**

[www.americanprairie.org/reservations](http://www.americanprairie.org/reservations)



Reid Morth

## MONTANA AUDUBON SUSTAINABILITY FUND

Your registration form includes a donation check box to help us build a restricted fund that Montana Audubon specifically uses for energy conservation, carbon neutrality and related sustainability projects.

Help our organization move toward a low-carbon future by contributing toward the Sustainability Fund!



John Lambing

# field trips

SA-1 / SU-1

## Bowdoin National Wildlife Refuge



**Departure Time 6:00 a.m., 2:00 p.m. return.**

This field trip will visit one of the jewels of the National Wildlife Refuge system. Bowdoin is located about 65 miles west of Glasgow and home to a wide variety of prairie water birds ranging from ducks to ibis and nearly everything in-between. Additionally, there are a number of grassland birds such as Baird's Sparrows and Chestnut-collared Longspurs to be found and the area around the headquarters can produce many warblers and other passerines. The field trip will complete the auto tour loop around Bowdoin Lake and will also spend some time birding in the trees and shrubs surrounding the refuge headquarters. This outing will conclude at the refuge headquarters early in the afternoon on Sunday, allowing people to begin their journeys home.

*There will be limited walking around the refuge headquarters and the terrain is easy.*

SA-2 / SU-2

## Fort Peck 1



SA-3 / SU-3

## Fort Peck 2



**Departure Time 6:00 a.m., 12:00 noon return.**

Two Fort Peck field trips are offered both Saturday and Sunday! This trip will concentrate on the area around the town of Fort Peck and below Fort Peck Dam. The river bottoms of the Missouri River near the Corps of Engineers' Downstream Campground will have a variety of species associated with cottonwoods and willows including the possibility of three species of orioles (Baltimore, Bullocks and Orchard), and could produce a good variety of migrating warblers. The uplands hold the potential of a Grasshopper Sparrow or Field Sparrow. There may be an assortment of gulls on the river and Piping Plovers and White Pelicans may be seen. This is also a good tour to find Eastern Bluebirds that have nested in the area in the past. The field trip will involve driving to Fort Peck and locations near the town of Fort Peck.

*There will be some walking involved near the Fort Peck Interpretive Center.*

SA-4 / SU-4

## Missouri River Float Canoe Trip



**Departure 6:00 a.m., 2:00 p.m. return**

This canoe trip is ideal for the beginner canoeist, and will allow birders to see up-close the birds and habitats of the Missouri River from a unique perspective. The trip will enable us to find birds associated with the river such as American White Pelican and Northern Rough-winged Swallow as well as birds associated with the riparian vegetation along the banks such as Warbling Vireo and possibly Red-headed Woodpeckers. This float will start just below the Fort Peck Dam and will conclude about five miles downstream. Canoes and equipment will be provided.

*The float is easy with flat moving water.*

SA-5 / SU-5

## North Valley County 1



SA-6 / SU-6

## North Valley County 2



**Departure 6:00 a.m., 2:00 p.m. return**

Two North Valley County trips are offered both days! This field trip will explore the native grasslands of the northern half of Valley County. We will traverse prairie habitats and expect to see displaying McCown's Longspur, Chestnut-collared Longspur and Sprague's Pipit. In addition, Burrowing Owl, Long-billed Curlew, Baird's Sparrow and Grasshopper Sparrow are likely. The trip may also visit a prairie wetland where a large variety of waterfowl species may be found in addition to the possibility of Black Tern and Wilson's Phalarope. The field trip will involve driving north of Glasgow on the highway as well as some dirt and gravel roads.

*The driving portion of this trip could be as long as 90 miles depending on the exact route taken which will be dependent on weather and road conditions.*

*Some walking at various stops, but the terrain and distance will be easy.*

SA-7 / SU-7

## Pines and Sage



**Departure 6:00 a.m., 2:00 p.m. return**

This tour will explore the sagebrush and Ponderosa Pine habitats of the southern half of Valley County. We will look for birds associated with Ponderosa Pine near Fort Peck Lake such as Western Tanager and Plumbeous Vireo and we plan to visit a Mountain Bluebird nest box trail. Along the way the trip will progress south through extensive sagebrush habitats where Brewer's Sparrow and Ferruginous Hawk may be found. We will also look for Greater Sage-Grouse along the way. The field trip will involve driving south of Glasgow on dirt and gravel roads.

*The trip could be as long as 60 miles depending on the exact route taken which will be dependent on weather and road conditions.*

*Some walking may be involved at various stops, but the terrain and distance will be easy.*

*This trip is not suitable for low clearance passenger cars.*

SA-8 / SU-8

## South Valley County

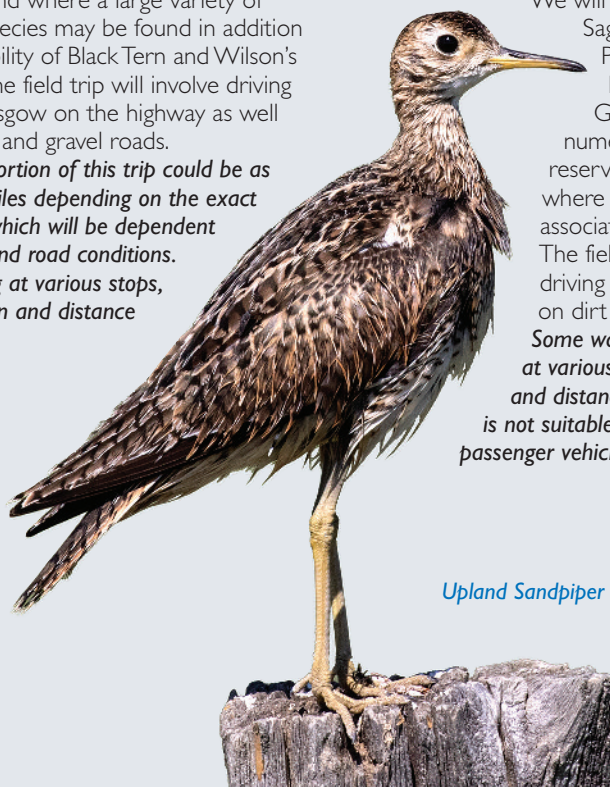


**Departure 6:00 a.m., 2:00 p.m. return**

This is a tour that will explore the sagebrush and badland habitats of the southern half of Valley County. The tours will progress south through extensive sagebrush habitats where Brewer's Sparrow, Sage Thrasher, Golden Eagle, and Ferruginous Hawk may be found.

We will also look for Greater Sage-Grouse, Mountain Plover and McCown's Longspur just south of Glasgow. There are also numerous small ponds and reservoirs along the route where a variety of water associated birds can be found. The field trip will involve driving south of Glasgow on dirt and gravel roads.

*Some walking may be involved at various stops, but the terrain and distance will be easy. This trip is not suitable for low clearance passenger vehicles.*



Upland Sandpiper

Bob Martinka



Family Friendly



Mostly Driving



Restrooms Available

SA-9 / SU-9

### Fort Belknap Snake Butte



#### Departure 6:00 a.m., 2:00 p.m. return

Fort Belknap's Dennis Longknife will lead this trip to Snake Butte, a beautiful landmark fractured by glaciers and inhabited by abundant wildlife, including buffalo, a prairie dog town, and many species of grassland birds. The Butte and surrounding prairies have been used by local tribes for hundreds of years for camping, Buffalo hunting and using a natural spring. Participants can fill up water bottles at this spring before hitting the trail with guide George Horse Capture Jr. who will talk about the cultural history of this area.

The group will proceed to the Buffalo Pasture, for a chance to see bison in their native habitat. Tribal Fish and Game Warden Tom Jones will discuss his work with prairie birds, mainly the Greater Prairie Chicken and Sage Grouse. Western Rattle Snake, Bull Snake, Blue Racer, Western Plains Garter Snake, and the Western Hog-nosed Snake occur in the area. Bird species may include Long-Billed Curlew, Golden Eagle, Great Horned Owl, Burrowing Owl, Prairie Falcon, Ferruginous Hawk, Western Meadowlark, and a Species of Concern, Mountain Plover.

Tour leaders will meet with the group at the Fort Belknap Agency Kwik Stop Gas at 8:00 a.m. The Snake Butte tour will end at 12 noon, unless participants choose to stay longer on Sunday. Kwik Stop is located at the junction of Highway 2 and Highway 66. Bird attendees can take a restroom break, then we will proceed to Snake Butte, 7 miles away. **There will be some walking on relatively flat terrain with sage, cactus, rocks and snakes.**

SA-10

### Nelson Reservoir Area



#### Departure 6:00 a.m., return 2:00 p.m.

This field trip will visit Nelson Reservoir and surrounding areas – located around 55 miles west of Glasgow. A few different habitat types will be explored, which should produce a nice variety of wetland, grassland and river bottom bird species. Waterfowl, gulls and terns can be expected at the reservoir, and nearby wetland areas. Breeding shorebirds that are likely include Long-billed Curlew, Marbled Godwit, Willet, and perhaps Upland Sandpiper.

Chestnut-collared Longspur and Grasshopper Sparrow will be among some of the typical grassland species seen in the area. Orchard Oriole, Brown Thrasher, Clay-colored Sparrow and Loggerhead Shrike should also be found, as well as Red-headed Woodpecker as a possibility along the Milk River.

**Driving with stops, and short walks. Good gravel roads for a portion, and facilities available.**

SU-10

### Bitter Creek Wilderness

**Study Area** (moderate hiking off-trail)

#### Departure 6:00 a.m., 2:00 p.m. return

We will explore several habitat types on this trip to Bitter Creek Wilderness Study Area, including wooded coulees, mixed grass prairie, and prairie streams. There will be prairie wildflowers blooming and the trip leader can point those out and identify them for interested participants. Bird species we're likely to see are Baird's sparrow, Sprague's pipit, McCown's longspur, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Long-billed Curlew, Loggerhead Shrike, Ferruginous Hawk. We will drive 20 miles west of Glasgow on Highway 2 and then drive 15 to 20 miles north on the Britsch Road. **We will then hike 3–4 miles in moderate terrain with some hills and coulees, through the mixed grass prairie of Bitter Creek Wilderness Study Area.**

SU-11 / SU-12 / SU-13

### American Prairie Reserve Symphony of Songs



**Departure 6:00 a.m., 3:00 p.m. return to Enrico Education and Science Center on the Reserve (2.5 hr drive to Glasgow, 2.75 hr drive to Lewistown.) No return to Glasgow.**

The Symphony of Songs trip is offered three times on Sunday! Join American Prairie Reserve, whose mission is to create the largest nature reserve in the continental United States, a refuge for people and wildlife preserved forever as part of America's heritage. You will be greeted on the Reserve at the Enrico Education and Science Center by Reserve birding experts, and then spend the day exploring the extraordinary diversity of grasslands birds who call the Reserve home.



Ferruginous  
Hawk

Bob Martinka

More than two dozen species of raptors, including imperiled and rare species such as Burrowing Owl, Ferruginous and Swainson's Hawk, Prairie and Peregrine Falcon, and Northern Harrier, as well as over 200 other species, may be observed. Lucky visitors may get a glimpse of the Mountain Plover, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Baird's Sparrow, Greater Sage-grouse and Long-billed Curlew. **This tour will 1–2 miles of walking, primarily on two track dirt roads. Groups may choose to scramble through the uneven prairie terrain. Weather dependent, rubber boots are recommended as wet weather causes very muddy conditions.**

SU-14

### Little Rockies/Missouri River Birding Tour



**Departure 6:00 a.m., trip will conclude no later than 2:00 p.m. at James Kipp Landing on the Missouri River. No return to Glasgow.**

We will first drive to Camp Creek Campground in the Little Rockies near Zortman. Camp Creek Campground is about 120 miles from Glasgow, southwest of Malta off Hwy 191. We then will travel to James Kipp State Park 35 miles south along the Missouri River.

At Camp Creek Campground we will find mountain species seldom observed out in the prairie country. These could include such nesting birds as Red-naped Sapsucker, Veery, Ovenbird, American Redstart, White-crowned Sparrow, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Red-eyed Vireo, and Swainson's Thrush. James Kipp State Park is a riparian area along the Missouri River, and we could find both Black-headed and Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Ovenbird, Warbling Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Yellow Warbler, Baltimore and Bullock's Oriole, and possibly Orchard Oriole.

Between the two spots we will encounter some grass and sage associated species. These could include Sprague's Pipit, McCown's Longspur, Baird's Sparrow, Sage Thrasher, Brewer's Sparrow, Clay-colored Sparrow and Chestnut-collared Longspur.



## SATURDAY AFTERNOON PRESENTATIONS

### **Biodiversity of grassland birds as a function of grazing system on Montana's Northern Great Plains.**

*Andy J. Boyce, PhD*

*Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute*



All species native to the Montana prairies evolved in the presence of large, nomadic herds of bison, but nowadays this landscape is dominated by domestic cattle. We know there are large differences in how these two animals move and eat, but we don't really understand how, or if,

those differences impact biodiversity. That's the gap in knowledge our work seeks to fill – how do grazers shape grassland ecosystems, specifically the abundance and diversity of grassland-obligate songbirds?

Andy finished his PhD in 2011 at the University of Montana in Missoula and is now working as a conservation ecologist for the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute (SCBI) in partnership with the American Prairie Reserve. His fascination with birds and biology started in the tropical forests of Venezuela and Borneo, but he has taken lessons learned there and is applying them to a system closer to home – the vast prairies of Eastern Montana.

### **The Nature Conservancy's grasslands conservation work in north-central Montana**

*Kelsey Molloy, The Nature Conservancy*



Kelsey Molloy will present an overview of The Nature Conservancy's conservation program in eastern Montana. The Conservancy utilizes a number of different methods to protect native

prairie habitat in the region including a "grassbank", easements, management plans for grassland birds, monitoring with drones, working closely with community partners, and more.

Kelsey Molloy is a rangeland ecologist for The Nature Conservancy in Malta. She grew up in Rhode Island and moved west to do her Master's research on grassland birds at the University of Manitoba in 2011. She fell in love with the prairies and has been here ever since!

### **Montana's Grasslands – Treasure Trove of Birds**

*Amy Seaman, Montana Audubon*



The grasslands of eastern Montana are a haven for some of our state's most charismatic avian species of concern, like Long-billed Curlew or Marbled Godwit, and the cryptic Mountain Plover. Amidst the prairie potholes and towns that punctuate the landscape are half-a-dozen others, like the American Avocet, Wilson's Phalarope, and the seldom seen Chimney Swift. Montana Audubon and our citizen science network have had our eye on these species

for a number of years now. There is no better place to talk about that work than in the heart of our state's intact grasslands!

Amy Seaman came to Montana Audubon in 2013. She works on our Important Bird Area (IBA) Program and myriad other bird conservation projects. In 2015, Amy became our lead lobbyist for Montana Legislative sessions in Helena. Amy earned her M.S in Biology in 2012 at the University of Nevada, Reno, studying the ecology of olfaction and foraging rodents in the Eastern Sierras. Her teaching experiences are varied, but include several semesters assisting field ornithology. Avian studies have been a focal point for Amy, taking her to many locations throughout Montana.

## SATURDAY EVENING PRESENTATION

### **State of the Birds**

*Larry Berrin, Montana Audubon  
Executive Director*



Founded in 1976, Montana Audubon works toward its mission through programs in conservation science, public policy, and environmental education. At the time of its

founding, local Audubon chapters in Montana came together to establish an independent organization that could work directly on important conservation issues across the state. Montana Audubon has since grown to be one of the largest conservation organizations in Montana. Join the Executive Director as he shares with you the history of conservation in our state and how that legacy drives the current work to protect birds, other wildlife and habitats in Montana.



## GLASGOW-AREA POINTS OF INTEREST

Fort Peck Lake Badlands

### Fort Peck Lake

From Glasgow, MT, take Highway 24 south 17 miles to Fort Peck. More than fifty different kinds of fish are found in Montana's largest body of water at about 134 miles in length, 220 feet deep when full, and over 1,520 miles of shoreline.

### Fort Peck Interpretive Center and Museum

Featuring the two largest aquariums in Montana and a life sized model of the Tyrannosaurus Rex discovered near Fort Peck as well as other dinosaur exhibits, a wildlife display of Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge, and Fort Peck Dam history.

### Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge

Encompassing approximately 1.1 million acres, the refuge provides a rare opportunity to experience wild lands and wildlife in a natural setting. Visitors to the Refuge can enjoy the wildlife and scenic grandeur in nearly the same surroundings as encountered by the Lewis and Clark Expedition in 1805.

### Valley County Pioneer Museum

Exhibits on the history of Valley County include an Assiniboine collection, wildlife, early homes & schools, cowboys, and railroads.

### Children's Museum of Northeast Montana

Hands-on creative arts, culture, and science exhibits for children, located in downtown Glasgow.

### Fort Peck Theatre

Celebrating 50 years of bringing excellent entertainment to NE Montana. The building was originally constructed in 1934 during the construction of the dam.

### American Prairie Reserve

Experience the vastness of the prairie, birds, wildlife, and trails. Visit their website [www.americanprairie.org](http://www.americanprairie.org) for directions and more information.



## CAKES FOR CONSERVATION!

One of the most enjoyable events during our annual bird festival is the dessert auction: lively bidding on a variety of creative cakes and other scrumptious desserts concludes the Saturday evening banquet. These are auctioned off (and chowed down!) to raise funds to support bird conservation.

All proceeds from the Cakes for Conservation dessert auction will support Montana Audubon's citizen science program, which helps monitor state-listed Species of Concern in Montana.



## 20TH ANNUAL MONTANA AUDUBON BIRD FESTIVAL

June 7–9, 2019  
Cottonwood Inn  
Glasgow, Montana

# NATURE ADVENTURE TOURS

**A bird festival tradition!**

Write in a bid for an amazing, uniquely Montana experience! Nature Adventure Tours are led by a variety of highly experienced guides, birders and naturalists.

From insider birding trips, to weekend getaway cabins, we've got an unforgettable nature-based excursion for you!

All proceeds from the sale of Nature Adventure Tours will support the work of Montana Audubon.



*Sanderling*