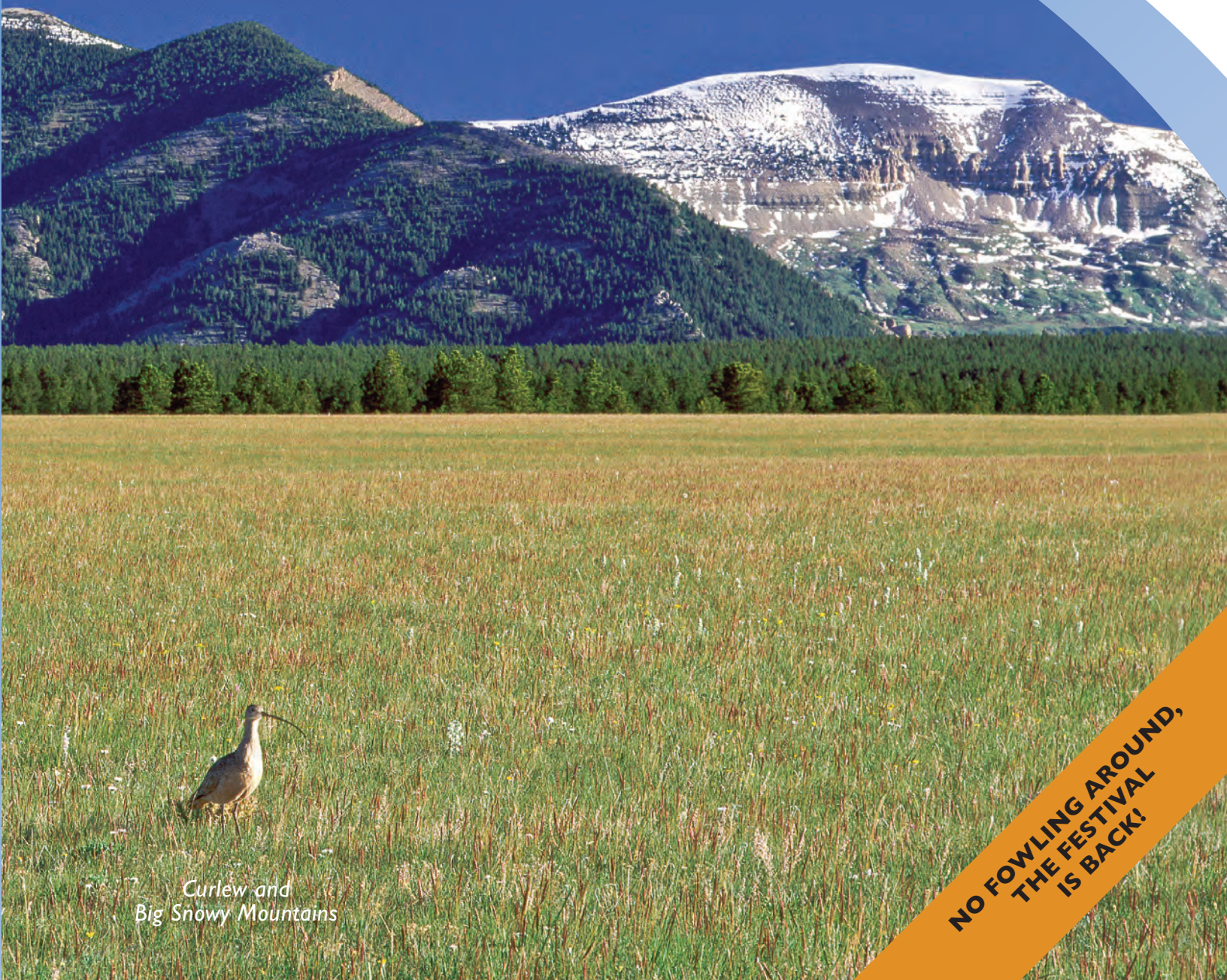


21ST ANNUAL
MONTANA AUDUBON
BIRD FESTIVAL

JUNE 3–5, 2022
YOGO INN,
LEWISTOWN

wings 
across the big sky
MONTANA
AUDUBON

John Lambing



Curlew and
Big Snowy Mountains

NO FOWLING AROUND,
THE FESTIVAL
IS BACK!

welcome

Montana Audubon is excited to host our 21st Annual Wings Across the Big Sky bird festival in the rolling prairies and surrounding mountain ranges of central Montana.

This year's festival headquarters will be the Yogo Inn, in Lewistown Montana from June 3–5. Registration will open at 3 pm on Friday afternoon and is followed by a dinner buffet and our festival keynote address.

Numerous field trips will explore wildlife-rich landscapes of this unique and underappreciated region of the state. There will be informative presentations, 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 Lewistown area. We know you will have a great time.

Overview

FRIDAY

- 3:00 pm Registration Opens
- 4:30 pm Social (Cash Bar)
- 5:00 pm Festival Kickoff dinner buffet and Keynote address

SATURDAY MORNING & AFTERNOON

- 5:00 am Breakfast buffet with field trip leaders
- 6:00 am Depart on field trips
- 2:00 pm Field trips return (unless otherwise indicated)
- 3:00 pm Afternoon presentations

SATURDAY EVENING

- 4:30 pm Social (Cash Bar)
- 5:30 pm Dinner buffet
- Executive Director presentation
- Dessert auction
- Nature Adventure Tour auction

SUNDAY MORNING

- 5:00 am Breakfast with field trip leaders
- 6:00 am Depart on field trips (Field trips do not return to hotel.)

keynote speaker

Chris Wilson

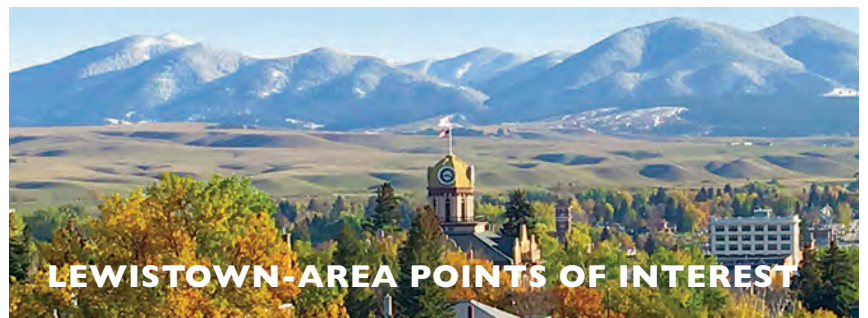
Director, Audubon
Conservation Ranching

Chris got hooked on birds in the sixth grade, and he's been a bird enthusiast, researcher, scientist, and conservationist in various roles ever since. As the first and current Director of the Audubon Conservation Ranching Initiative, he oversees the strategic direction and administration of the program nationally, including working directly with staff and partners in participating states to coordinate local implementation, monitoring, ranch-to-retail supply chain development, and marketing support.

Chris has a B.S. in Fisheries and Wildlife from the University of Missouri and a M.S. in Environmental Science from Oklahoma State University. He spent 17 years working for The Nature Conservancy in conservation planning, land protection, and stewardship, which included extensive work in grassland restoration, fire management, invasive species control, and biological monitoring. He spent nine years as the first Director of the 17,000-acre Nickel Preserve in the Oklahoma Ozarks, in which he developed a visitor center, oversaw elk reintroduction, and initiated ambitious efforts in fire management, prairie planting, and savanna renewal. He and his family live on four acres in Liberty, Missouri alongside goats, chickens, rabbits, pollinator gardens, fruit trees, honeybees and a one-acre prairie planting.



"For those that love birds and biodiversity, these are challenging times. We're at a point where each one of us needs to think about what we can do individually to change the trajectory of things. We've got to save the things that matter."



Central Montana Historical Museum Administered by the Central Montana Historical Association, whose mission is to collect, preserve and exhibit artifacts which depict the cultural past of Central Montana, with permanent and rotating displays representing the local history of Lewistown and surrounding areas.

Downtown Lewistown Surrounded by the beauty of the island mountain ranges, Downtown is the community hub of Central Montana. Much of the charm and strong sense of community found in Central Montana is reflected in the downtown and is rooted in its rich western heritage. Visit Lewistown Downtown for an authentic, western experience you won't soon forget.

Ackley Lake A local favorite of Central Montana, Ackley Lake is approximately a 40-minute drive from Lewistown near Hobson. Views of four mountain ranges along with spectacular sunsets are visible from any of the 23 campsites, with fishing, canoeing, boating and hiking opportunities.

American Prairie Experience the vastness of the prairie, birds, wildlife and trails. Visit www.americanprairie.org for directions and more information.

Ghost Towns and Gold Mines

Maiden, Gilt Edge, Kendall and Fort Maginnis Ghost Towns offer a glimpse back to a time when these areas were once bustling with miners and merchants.

FESTIVAL HEADQUARTERS AND LODGING

The Yogo Inn and Conference Center has been the center of Lewistown life for over 55 years. The Yogo Inn is a preferred central Montana hotel for travelers who enjoy the great outdoors. Featuring 123 guest rooms in a variety of accommodation types to suit your needs including courtyard, poolside and the historic train depot. All guest rooms offer complimentary wifi, fridge, microwave and morning coffee in the lobby.

Enjoy the fitness center, heated indoor pool and spa and expansive courtyard. Stetson's Restaurant and the Golden Spike Lounge offer dining options to satisfy every palate.



Book your room by May 3 for a special rate of \$105 per night plus tax. (\$134 after that)

The Yogo Inn, 211 E Main St.,
Lewistown, MT 59457
406-535-8721 • yogoinn.com

PRE- AND POST-FESTIVAL LODGING

American Prairie is offering pre- and post-festival lodging (from May 26 to June 12) at a 20% discounted rate for festival participants who would like to come early or stay after the event and enjoy the spectacular expanse of the prairie. Lodging is at Buffalo camp, Antelope Creek Campground, or the prairie hut system.

Huts on the PN Unit

The Myers Family Huts at American Prairie provide visitors with a base camp from which to explore the prairie. In the tradition of other hut systems around the world, these huts offer comfortable and affordable accommodations in spectacular settings.

The Founders Hut, John and Margaret Craighead Hut, and Lewis and Clark Hut are located on the PN property. The Founders and Craighead huts each consist of two 30-foot yurts connected with a hallway and can accommodate nine people in four bunkrooms. The living yurt contains a fully-equipped kitchen, dining area, a library, and interpretive displays. Solar panels power LED lighting, a refrigerator and an outlet for charging cell phones/camera batteries. A propane stove and solar air-conditioning unit provide heating and cooling in the living yurt. A third yurt contains a composting toilet and a changing area. The Lewis and Clark Hut includes a kitchen and dining area, three bunkrooms

with beds for eight people, a covered deck with picnic tables overlooking the river; and a detached outhouse. Guests bring their own sleeping bags, pillows, groceries, and supply of water for drinking, cooking, and washing dishes.

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.

Antelope Creek Campground at Mars Vista

The Antelope Creek Campground is located seven miles north of the Missouri River along US 191. The campground has 12 RV sites with power, four small rental cabins (each sleeps 4), five drive-in tent platforms and three walk-in tent platforms, fire rings, potable water, a bathhouse with showers, and an interpretive hiking trail.

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 nonpotable water, vault toilets, fire rings, an amphitheater, and covered picnic areas.

Rate: 20% off
Promo Code:
Audubonfest2022
Reservations:
americanprairie.org/where-to-stay



field trips

Please review each description and make your choices. Saturday trips are labeled "SA"; Sunday trips are "SU." Please note trips labeled SA/SU are identical both days.



Restrooms
Available



Mostly
Driving



Driving &
Hiking



Family
Friendly

All field trips will leave Lewistown's Yogo 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, and make plans for car-pooling.

Lunches are available as part of your registration. Bring your gear – good shoes, water bottle, sun protection, raingear, binoculars, bird guide, camera, and any personal needs for your trip.

All Saturday trips will return to the hotel by 2:00 p.m. Some Sunday trips end later in the day or away from Lewistown. Check individual trip descriptions for details on your return trip home.

SATURDAY/SUNDAY TRIPS

1SA/1SU

James Kipp Recreation Area and Missouri River



This tour will take you north along highway 191 to the James Kipp Recreation area, and along the Charles M. Russell NVR auto tour. Visit a remote stretch of the Missouri River and take in the Missouri River Breaks National Monument elk viewing area just miles upstream of Fort Peck Reservoir. Listen closely for all of your favorite riparian songbirds like Black-capped Chickadees, and larger species like American White Pelican, Great Blue Heron, Bald Eagle, and more. Returns by 2:00 p.m.

2SA/2SU

East Red Hill Road



This tour will head southeast towards Billings and will explore the Big Snowies and Musselshell plains. There, spruce-fir stands give way to open meadows. Cliffs house eagles and falcons, while the surroundings are full of woodpeckers, chickadees, nuthatches, Mountain Bluebirds and maybe even Boreal Owls. Returns by 2:00 p.m. Saturday.

3SA/3SU

Citizen Science and Herons from Lewistown to Utica



Explore Lewistown and its surroundings, to search for historical Great Blue Heron rookeries while traversing a mosaic of grasslands, agricultural lands, prairie ponds, and vegetated coulees. Search for songbirds like Black-headed Grosbeak and Warbling Vireo that share their cottonwood habitat. Swing through tiny Montana towns learning about current Montana Audubon citizen science programs, how to use data collection programs like ebird in the field, and how to participate in our newest Great Blue Heron citizen science program. Stop along the way to listen and look for bluebirds, Western Meadowlarks, Vesper Sparrows, Horned Larks, Lark Buntings, and other grassland specialists. Returns by 2:00 p.m. Saturday.

4SA/4SU

Bear Gulch Pictographs



A chance to combine birding with cool history! Bear Gulch is in the foothills of the Little Snowies southeast of Lewistown. Local American Indian tribes (500 to 1700 AD) told their stories by painting on the sandstone rocks. 2,000 pictographs dot the canyon. The group will be split in two, half for guided viewing of the pictographs and half birding in the brush. Groups will then swap. Day concludes with our guide explaining the pictographs. Birds to watch for include warblers, vultures, Mountain Bluebirds, nuthatches and nesting Red-tailed Hawks. \$15 fee per person. Light hiking. Returns by 2:00 p.m.

5SA/5SU

American Prairie PN Ranch



The PN Ranch hike offers birders a moderate hike near the confluence of the Judith and Missouri Rivers. The three-mile walking trip follows a two-track dirt road through a riparian area along the Judith River and gently ascends 1000' through a grass/pine upland valley. Watch for riparian birds, waterbirds, as well as Clark's Nutcrackers, Brown Creepers, Wild Turkeys, Ruffed Grouse, Bald Eagles, Golden Eagles, woodpeckers, flycatchers, nuthatches, kinglets, thrushes, and search for wildflowers. Returns by 2:00 p.m. Saturday.

6SA/6SU

Big Springs State Fish Hatchery



Big Springs State Fish Hatchery is seven miles south of Lewistown. Springs bubble up supporting greenery and giant willows. A leisurely walk takes you through grassy hills and shade trees. Watch for Belted Kingfishers, woodpeckers, crossbills, grosbeaks, sparrows and warblers, and duck and goose families. Tour the hatchery and feed the fish! Returns 2:00 p.m.

7SA/7SU

Explore the Musselshell Watershed



Explore nearby ranchlands within the Musselshell Watershed that have a little bit of everything. Visit grasslands and riparian areas, working lands, and forested parcels, searching for meadowlarks, warblers, flycatchers, chickadees, raptors, and other important wildlife like deer and antelope. Learn about working land conservation practices, restoration projects, and the watershed approach to conservation as you take in all of the sights and sounds of grasslands. The tour will explore sites close to Roundup, MT. Returns by 2:00 p.m. Saturday.

8SA/8SU

Central Montana Raptor Route



Accipiters, buteos, falcons, vultures, Ospreys and eagles – this has them all! We'll follow one of the Montana Raptor Survey Routes. Our trip winds through rugged ranchlands and continues north to the Missouri Breaks town of Winifred. Having difficulty distinguishing between Swainson's and Ferruginous Hawks? This is your chance to see enough to get it right. Short-eared Owls, harriers, kestrels and Merlins are common. You'll drop off a high ridge into the Judith River canyon, only to climb back up to another high plateau with views of the Missouri River and the Little Rockies! Returns by 2:00 p.m.

9SA

Lower Spring Creek

During this tour we will walk 2 – 3 miles along Big Spring Creek just downstream from Lewistown. During the remainder of the morning, we will be driving and stopping at Fishing Access Sites further downstream. Our initial stop will be at Upper Carroll Trail, where we will walk about two miles along Big Spring Creek. We should see most of the species found along Big Spring Creek, which include a wide variety of riparian species as well as some raptors and ducks. Species of interest that are possible include: Black-headed Grosbeak, Veery, Bank Swallow, Wilson's Snipe, Eastern Kingbird and possibly a Wood Duck or a Sora. Walking on flat uneven terrain on unmaintained paths. Driving less than 15 miles with stops including some gravel roads. Returns by 2:00 p.m.



10SA

Judith Mountains

This 45-mile, mostly paved, loop through the heart of the Judith Mountains will begin by traveling east out of Lewistown, then north through Giltedge and into Maiden Canyon. We will then travel west along Warm Spring Creek, and return south to Lewistown via Highway 191. Much of our time will be spent in the foothills and mountains, where we should see a really nice variety of songbirds present in the area. These will include several species of woodpeckers, flycatchers, vireos, thrushes, warblers and sparrows, etc. In addition, a number of wetland species should be found during a stop at the Carter Ponds, on our return to Lewistown. Returns by 2:00 p.m.



11SA

Grassland Melodies East of Lewistown

Explore the grasslands and sagebrush landscape east of Lewistown on this tour that showcases prairie songbirds. See and hear little brown grassland birds like Thick-billed longspur, Vesper Sparrow, Horned Lark, and Lark Bunting, and seek out sagebrush specialists like the Brewer's Sparrow. Take your time to enjoy the overlapping songs of these prairie birds as they "lark" high above your head, or skulk low in the grasses. Keep your ears open to hear the vocal Long-Billed Curlew, and keep your eyes to the sky to spot raptors high above. Returns by 2:00 p.m.



12SA

Bohemian Corners to Carroll Landing

Explore the grasslands and forests of Fergus county to the east of Lewistown, heading out to Carroll Landing via Bohemian Corners and US 191. While you are likely to see nuthatches, chickadees, blue-birds and a few raptors, keep your fingers crossed for encounters with Burrowing Owls, Plumbeous Vireos, or even Common Poorwills. Because of potentially wet road conditions at this site, this field trip will visit the Judith Mountains as an alternative. In that case we will travel Gilt Edge Rd. to Maiden Rd. and head up and over the Judith mountains heading east to west. This alternative trip will pass historic locations like Fort McGinnis, the Teddy 'Blue' Abbott gravesite, and the Maiden Radar Base (Air Force) while searching for Ovenbirds and Plumbeous Vireos. For this tour we request that you bring a hard copy of a field ID book, and limit the use of

cellphones and photography. Photography is great for special moments, but we want to focus on birding and taking in the landscape. Returns by 2:00 p.m.



13SA

Castle Butte and East Fork Reservoir

Castle Butte Road, south of Lewistown, is known for Mountain Bluebirds and raptors. This casual drive will stop at three reservoirs, Casino Creek, Hansen's and East Fork. Casino Creek houses Northern Shovelers, American Wigeons and Redheads on the water, and warblers in the brush. At Hansen's, one is likely to find goslings, mergansers, wigeon and even muskrat and beaver. East Fork is located 20 miles southeast. The reservoir covers 200 acres and is surrounded by tall-grass prairie and pine trees. Spotting scopes will be handy for identifying mergansers, grebes, and ducks. Sandhill Cranes, Great Blue Herons and shorebirds may show in the reeds on shore. Explore for Common Yellowthroats, Lazuli Buntings, catbirds, warblers and gamebirds. Some moderate hiking will yield great results.



14SA

Crystal Lake

Explore the area surrounding Crystal Lake in the Big Snowy Mountains where prairie and mountain vistas abound. Travel a few miles on foot, along moderate nearby trails looking for birds and wildflowers on this island mountain range. Look for sparrows, nuthatches, vireos, forest hawks, and woodpeckers, along with waterfowl or shorebirds, like the Spotted Sandpiper. Returns by 2:00 p.m.



Mountain
Bluebird



Bob Martinka

SUNDAY-ONLY TRIPS

All Sunday field trips depart from the Yogo Inn.
Trips DO NOT return to the Yogo Inn.

9SU

Limekiln Trail



The Limekiln Trail offers birders a moderate hike in the Judith Mountains. The four-mile trip follows a good trail that ascends through lodgepole pine until reaching Lewistown Overlook at 5,880 feet. The forest opens to a south-facing vista. Lewistown can be seen nestling gently into rolling hills. West, three island mountain ranges thrust up: The Big Snowies, the Little Belts and the Crazyes. Watch for woodpeckers, flycatchers, kinglets and thrushes, and search for wildflowers.

10SU

Lake Mason Willow Creek Unit to Roundup



On this tour, we will be exploring the grasslands, sagebrush and wetlands located in and around the Lake Mason NWR complex, about 65 miles southeast of Lewistown. We will access the area by driving a handful of gravel and dirt roads that traverse the region. If road conditions allow, we may take time to visit Lake Mason itself, though our primary focus will be seeking out bird species associated with the native grasses and sagebrush located in the area. Species of interest to see include Upland Sandpiper, Long-billed Curlew, Sprague's Pipit, Ferruginous Hawk, Chestnut-collared and Thick-billed Longspurs, plus Grasshopper and Baird's Sparrows. Also possible in the area are Greater Sage Grouse, Mountain Plover and Burrowing Owl. Located 65 miles southeast of Lewistown.

11SU

Fergus County and Carroll Trail



Take a tour that will explore Fergus county via the historical travel route taken by George Bird Grinnell in 1875. Follow portions of the Carroll Trail, along gravel roads, visiting the locations of some of Fergus county's first recorded bird observations. As you travel, look forward to seeing sparrows, bluebirds, swallows, and raptors of all types overhead, all while listening to the meadowlarks sing. Especially look forward to the chance to hear the eerie call of the Long-billed Curlew. For this tour we request that you bring a hard copy of a field ID book, and limit the use of cellphones and photography. Photography is great for special moments, but we want to focus on birding and taking in the landscape.

12SU

American Prairie White Rock Unit



During this tour, we will explore the mixed-grass prairie, sagebrush, and riparian woodlands, by car and foot, on public land leased by American Prairie and The Nature Conservancy. This amazing area of extensive, intact prairie affords the opportunity to intimately experience the spectacle of prairie birdlife alongside black-tailed prairie dog towns and herds of bison and pronghorn. Birders of all backgrounds and experience levels are welcome, especially if you haven't experienced the prairie before! Trip specialties we hope to encounter include Greater Sage-Grouse, Upland Sandpiper, Marbled Godwit, Long-billed Curlew, Burrowing Owl, Ferruginous Hawk, Mountain Plover, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Sprague's Pipit, and Baird's Sparrow. Located 102 miles northeast of Lewistown. Roads in the destination area are rough dirt and gravel. Good tires recommended. If road conditions are extra bad due to rain, we will limit our distance by car and spend more time on foot.

13SU

Montana Raptor Conservation Center

All participants must be at the Raptor Center BY NOON. We recommend leaving by 9:00 am at the latest to allow for any traffic and bathroom breaks.

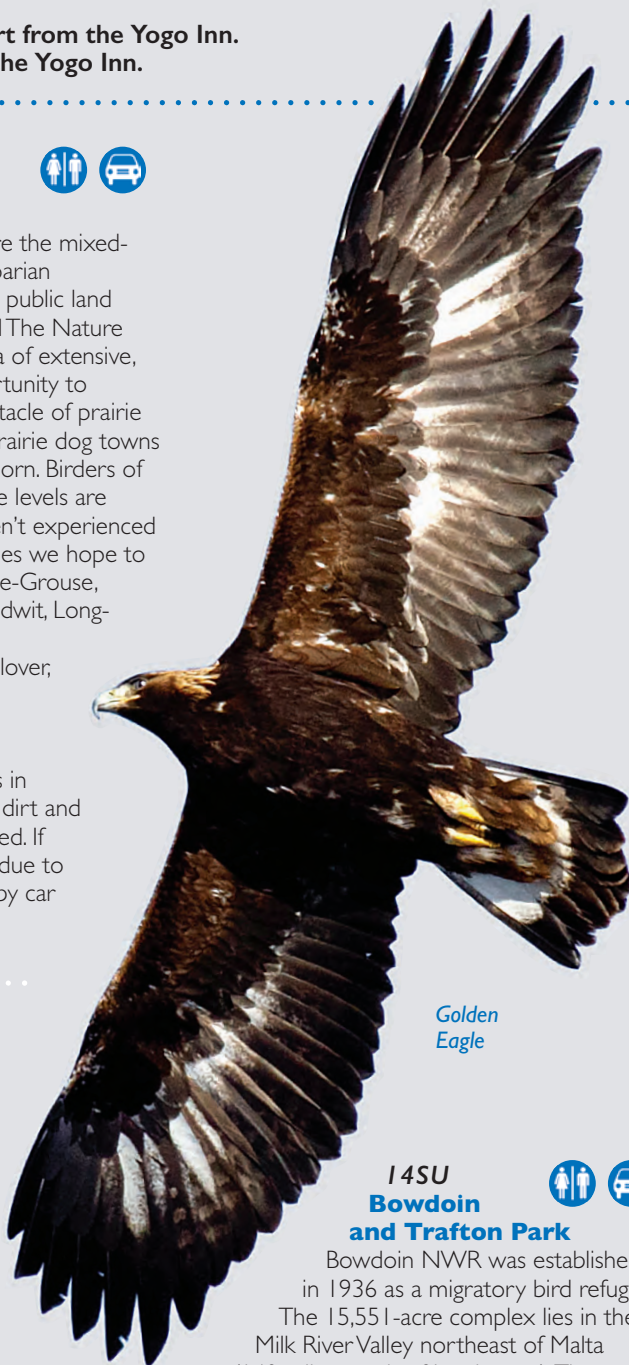
Be one of the lucky festival participants to enjoy a private tour of the Montana Raptor Conservation Center. The tour includes the hospital facility, ambassador birds, and flight cages. The MRCC is a non-profit raptor rehabilitation organization in Bozeman, Montana. The Center is dedicated to the conservation of raptors by providing rehabilitative care to sick and injured birds of prey, with the goal of releasing healthy birds to the wild. The Center strives to reduce conflicts between humans and raptors. The tour is limited to 10 people, and a \$25 donation/person is required. Trip will not return to Lewistown. Bring your lunch or dine in Bozeman following the tour.

14SU

Bowdoin and Trafton Park



Bowdoin NWR was established in 1936 as a migratory bird refuge. The 15,551-acre complex lies in the Milk River Valley northeast of Malta (140 miles north of Lewistown). The spectrum of habitat, from short and mixed grass prairie, creates an oasis for 263 species of birds. We'll take an auto tour to look for American Avocet, White-faced Ibis, Wilson's Phalarope, Marbled Godwit, Cinnamon Teal, Brown Thrasher, Yellow-rumped Warbler and Black-necked Stilt. Upland nesting birds include Sprague's Pipits, Baird's Sparrows and Chestnut-collared Longspurs. The area is important to wildlife such as white-tailed deer, pronghorn antelope, Sharp-tailed Grouse and coyotes. En route we will visit Trafton Park in Malta for a chance to stretch our legs and explore an active town park. Trip will not return to Lewistown.



Golden Eagle

Bob Martinka

SATURDAY AFTERNOON PRESENTATIONS

Supporting Whole River Management Through Whole River Collaboration

The Musselshell Watershed Coalition

The Musselshell Watershed Coalition is a partnership of individuals, organizations, and agencies working towards whole basin management through collaboration on the Musselshell River. Four water-user groups, several conservation districts, and state and federal agencies across Musselshell, Golden Valley, Wheatland, Garfield, and Petroleum Counties comprise the coalition.

The Watershed Coalition has a three-part goal to achieve a desirable quality of life for both water users, the residents of the Musselshell Valley, and the river itself: The Coalition's goals are to sustain sufficient water quantity, quality and provide governance, planning and outreach.

Join the representative from MWC to learn about current projects and the ongoing work of the coalition.

Policy, Citizen Science, and More

Montana Audubon Staff

After Musselshell Watershed Coalition, Montana Audubon Staff will be presenting updates to their projects and answering questions about what lies ahead in bird research and Montana wildlife politics.

As one of Montana's largest conservation organizations, our staff has been hard at work and this is your opportunity to ask questions and participate in one-on-one conversation. Some of Montana Audubon's ongoing projects include the Blackswift Project, the Audubon Conservation Ranching Initiative, and our myriad of citizen science opportunities.

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 our current conservation work and the critical role that Montana Audubon plays in recovering and preserving bird populations in our state.



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!

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 sweet treats concludes the Saturday evening banquet. These are auctioned off and eaten. Proceeds are shared between Montana Audubon and Winnett ACES.

The Winnett ACES (Agricultural Community Enhancement & Sustainability) is a grassroots non-profit that aims to conserve and improve the prairies and rural communities of Montana's Missouri-Milk River Grasslands.

Our mission is to strengthen our community by sustaining the health of our land, economy, and traditions for future generations. The ranchers that steward this land manage a considerable portion of the last remaining intact, native prairie in North America and our aim is to keep these landscapes working for future generations through sustainable management that benefits the land, wildlife, and people. Learn more at www.winnettaces.org.



21ST ANNUAL MONTANA AUDUBON BIRD FESTIVAL

JUNE 3 – 5, 2022
YOGO INN,
LEWISTOWN

CORVID-19?

As much as we hope everyone sees 19 corvids at the festival, we need to get serious about COVID-19 and its impact on our festival.

This is the first time we are gathering in three years and we want to be sure everyone stays safe. Your well-being, as well as that of our staff, volunteers and trip leaders, remains our top priority. With this in mind, our event will support all COVID-19 health directives and mandate requirements for social distancing and use of masks. We certainly hope the worst of COVID-19 will be behind us in time for our festival, however, we may adjust the schedule to accommodate your safety.

Your cooperation and willingness to adjust to these potential changes in the schedule will be greatly appreciated.

Canada Jay

