

A significant percentage of land in Montana is managed as public land by local, state, and federal agencies. They are critical habitat for much of the wildlife that lives in Montana and are important elements of our ecosystem. If managed well, protect our watersheds, prevent soil erosion, mitigate climate change, and contribute to healthy communities. Some of these lands, such as Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, Inventoried Roadless Areas, or others containing old growth forest or native prairie, have characteristics that give them special value. Such designations should not be changed without serious examination and evaluation supported by sound, up-to-date science and substantial public support. While in general fewer people on public lands are better for wildlife, we recognize that people enjoying the outdoors increases support for wildlife and habitat conservation. Having access to these lands for birding, hunting, trapping, fishing, biking, skiing, hiking, and camping is essential to our fellow citizens. Federal lands, managed by the National Forest System, National Parks System and the Bureau of Land Management, belong to all Americans and should remain so for future generations; their control should not be transferred to the state or to individuals.



### The policy of Montana Audubon regarding Public land and Recreation is to:

- Educate the public and decision makers on the importance of public lands as critical habitat for wildlife and native plants, including threatened and endangered species
- Supports legislation and policies that protect the benefits public lands provide to people, wildlife, and the environment and opposes legislation that diminishes those benefits
- Opposes the transfer of federal public lands to state or private interests
- Supports public lands decision processes that provide the opportunity for substantial public input;
- Supports the opportunity for a diversity of recreational activities, including **but not limited** to birding, wildlife watching, hiking, hunting, mountain biking, climbing and equestrian activities;
- Prioritizes habitat and wildlife protection over recreation and so asserts that not all public lands should be open to all uses at all times. For example, some trails should be closed to mechanized and/or motorized use. Some climbing routes near active raptor nests should be closed during breeding seasons
- Encourages public lands managers to work with users to develop pro-active recreation strategies to meet the facility, access, and service demands of a growing population and new technologies (such as e-bikes)
- Prioritizes private recreation use over commercial, for-profit use