



Montana Audubon

Magpie Muse

"For the conservation of native birds, other wildlife, and their habitats..."

Montana Audubon at the 2011 Montana Legislature

As you read this, elections have just occurred—which means that Audubon is gearing up for the 2011 Montana Legislature. Once again, we will be represented by veteran lobbyist Janet Ellis. Starting in January, Janet will be on the front line in our efforts to protect birds, other wildlife, and their habitats. And this session, the stakes are high—with much to gain and so much to possibly lose. Two of our priority bills include:

PROTECTION FOR STREAMS AND RIVERS ~ As Montana grows it makes sense to protect its clean water, rivers, and streams. Just as Montana law currently regulates development in floodplains, regulations are needed to decrease the damage caused by homes and other structures built too close to streams. Legislation will be introduced to establish a "buffer" between streams and new buildings.

WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY WIND SITING ~ Wind farm issues are straightforward: if turbines are located in areas heavily used by wildlife, such as critical migration flyways or key breeding/nesting areas for rare species, the impacts to wildlife can be significant. However, if these areas are

avoided, wildlife impacts are often minimal. Legislation will be introduced to establish criteria to minimize impacts to wildlife, critical wildlife habitat, and other areas of special concern. This legislation will encourage wind farm developers to be a "good neighbor" to Montana's wildlife.

In addition to promoting these and other pieces of legislation, we will also be defending Montana's current environmental laws, working hard to keep them from being weakened or repealed.

If you are interested in helping our legislative work, there are two important things you can do:

DONATE TO MONTANA AUDUBON—to help pay for face-to-face time with legislators, send out action alerts at critical times, and research key issues to defend Montana's natural heritage.

SIGN UP ON OUR WEBSITE to be part of our action alert network—we ask these folks to contact their legislators at critical times (under Issues & Actions: Take Action: Be an Armchair Activist).

Citizen Science Opportunities Abound

Do you like birds? Are your record-keeping skills good? If the answer to both questions is 'yes,' you may be interested in participating in one of the many opportunities we have in Montana to monitor birds—and help scientists answer important questions about our feathered friends.

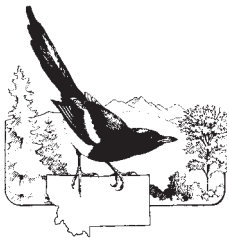
Here is the issue: Montana is a big state with a lot of bird species (427 species to be exact). Scientists are trying

to answer questions about where birds live and nest in the state, when they migrate north and south, what habitats they use, and much more. But there aren't enough scientists to collect this information—so birdwatchers have a time-honored tradition of stepping up to the plate and helping out with important data gathering. Although paid wildlife experts are critical, they are richly complimented by a cadre of dedicated volunteers.

Volunteers monitoring birds is particularly important now because of the speed at which our planet is changing in response

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From the Executive Director...

Greetings! Montana Audubon continues to grow and thrive—and it is YOUR ongoing generosity that makes it all possible. THANK YOU!

I want to take this opportunity to “brag” about the exceptional work Audubon’s chapters are doing across Montana. The most effective, longest-lasting conservation work is often accomplished at the local level. Montana Audubon’s 9 community-based, “grassroots” chapters are certainly some of our greatest assets.

For example in Missoula, Montana Audubon and Five Valleys Audubon worked together to nominate the Clark Fork River–Grass Valley area for Important Bird Area (IBA) status. Since the establishment of this IBA 4 years ago, the chapter has been working vigorously to protect key habitats within the IBA by commenting on development proposals, conducting landowner outreach, and working with the local land trust to acquire permanent conservation easements.

In Bozeman, Sacajawea Audubon is working closely with us to monitor two Important Bird Areas (Madison Valley and Headwaters State Park), as well as nominate two new IBAs (Harrison Lake and Bridger Mountains). Bitterroot Audubon is partnering with us to develop educational materials that will help landowners manage lands in ways that will benefit bird populations within the Bitterroot River IBA. Flathead Audubon spearheads stewardship efforts on Owen Sowerwine Natural Area IBA. And finally in Billings, Yellowstone Valley Audubon is currently making plans to assist us in gathering essential data so we can nominate all or portions of the Yellowstone River corridor for IBA status.

In addition, all of Montana’s Audubon chapters do important and valuable local community education work through their regular field trips, monthly membership meetings and newsletters, education programs with schools, tabling at local events, and much more. It is also noteworthy that all chapters conduct one or more Christmas Bird Counts in their local areas each year.

Here at Montana Audubon we greatly appreciate the critical conservation work being accomplished by Montana’s 9 chapters—congratulations to all the chapter leaders and chapter volunteers for your valuable work in your local communities!

Yours in conservation,

Steve



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Building Climate Solutions—The Work Continues

For the past three years, Montana Audubon has been at the forefront of building support for climate solutions that truly turns the corner on carbon pollution and puts us on a path to a sustainable future.

This summer, the Senate stunningly abandoned efforts to pass a comprehensive climate and energy bill. The sliver of good news is there is still hope that Congress might advance a few clean energy measures this year, including a nationwide Renewable Electricity Standard (RES). This RES legislation would require the U.S. to produce 15% of its electricity from renewable sources, with energy efficiencies a part of the mix. With climate legislation stalled, it is even more important in this November's "Lame Duck" session of Congress to advance a RES that will reduce our dependence on dirty fuels, curb global warming pollution, and create clean energy jobs.



Amy Cilimburg oversees tree planting in Missoula's Greenough Park for the 10.10.10 Global Work Party.

ensure that the Clean Air Act effectively reduces carbon pollution and safeguards our birds and wildlife.

The other sliver of hope is that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has the ability to hold polluters accountable through one of our nation's most successful laws, the Clean Air Act. Audubon—together with you, our grass-roots advocates—will need to voice our support for this Act and the EPA during the Lame Duck session and into the next Congress. We'll work to

We believe that building a movement for climate crisis solutions means rolling up our sleeves and working at the local, state, and federal levels. Last month Auduboners were pivotal to successful 10.10.10 Global Work Parties around Montana—part of over 7,000 work parties around the world! We planted trees, weeded public parks, built bikes, and created gardens—all efforts to reduce our carbon footprint, build resilient habitats and communities, and tell our elected officials to "get to work." Thanks for making a difference!

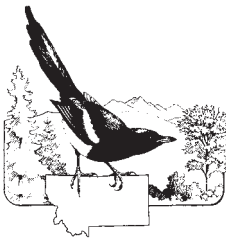


Volunteers harvesting carrots at Missoula's PEAS farm, part of the Audubon sponsored 10.10.10 Global Work Parties.

Three New Birds for Montana

Montana's state bird list just got longer by 3 birds. The Montana Bird Records Committee recently evaluated 52 reports of rare birds, which are defined as species for which fewer than 20 accepted records exist for the state. Two of these reports resulted in the addition of new species to the state list: Crested Caracara (found by Robin and Jeff Miller at their home near Hot Springs), and Carolina Wren (found by Jerry and Janet McGahan at their home near Arlee). The official list of Montana birds now stands at 427 species, including these two new birds, along with the Pacific Wren, which recently was split from the Winter Wren by the American Ornithologists' Union. The State List, along with a wealth of information about the Montana Bird Records Committee, can be found on Montana Audubon's website: <http://mtaudubon.org/birds/mbr.html>.





Victory for Cottonwoods: Sale of Russian Olive Prohibited

The willow and cottonwood riparian areas lining our rivers and streams are a small part of Montana, occupying 3% of the landscape. Yet these areas are critical for wildlife. For example, cottonwoods provide habitat for at least 150 (35%) of Montana's bird species at least part of the year. One significant threat to this habitat is the invasion by exotic plants, with Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*) of great concern because it can out-compete cottonwoods, and could eventually replace them along our rivers and streams.



Cavity-nesting birds such as this Northern Flicker commonly use cottonwoods for nesting—but they are unable to nest in Russian olive.

In order to combat this problem, in August 2008 Montana Audubon and the Montana Native Plant Society petitioned the Montana Dept. of Agriculture. We are pleased to report that after a lot of hard work—and several challenges—as of September 10, 2010, Russian olive can no longer legally be sold in Montana. This victory should help reduce the spread of this exotic plant—and help protect our important riparian areas!

The concern surrounding Russian olive was supported by local Conservation Districts, many County Commissioners, federal agencies, and others who have spent time and money controlling this invasive species. As examples:

- ▶ From 2005 through 2007, the Bureau of Land Management spent \$500,000 controlling this tree.
- ▶ In 2009 a control project along the Marias River received \$21,000.
- ▶ Treasure County spent \$100,000 removing this plant from 100 acres.

- ▶ In 2007 the Yellowstone River Conservation District Council made this recommendation: "Russian olive should not be planted in the Yellowstone River valley."
- ▶ In 2008 the Montana Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation stopped selling Russian olive from the state nursery because it "has become an invasive weed in riparian areas across the state. Russian olive is known to crowd out native vegetation, reduce wildlife species diversity, and reduce browse. Currently there is no way to insure that a Russian olive planting will not spread to local riparian areas."

We are pleased that all of this work led to a ban of Russian olive sales in Montana. Thanks to everyone for their hard work on this issue!

Workplace Giving Supports Audubon

Montana Audubon is a proud member of Montana Shares, a partnership of nonprofit organizations that provides workplace giving through payroll deductions. For Montana Audubon to receive funds from this program, you must specifically designate us to receive your payroll deduction. Thank you to all who currently support our work through Montana Shares. If you don't yet have this opportunity at your workplace, please contact Norane at 406-443-3949.



Montana Audubon Wins National Innovation Grants

Montana Audubon recently received two new TogetherGreen grants. TogetherGreen is a 5-year partnership between National Audubon and Toyota to build a greener, healthier future.

Montana Audubon received a \$25,000 TogetherGreen grant for an exciting one-year pilot project, *Market-based Incentives for Stewardship of Important Bird Areas in Montana*. Working in partnership with the Livingston-based Western Sustainability Exchange and Montana's ranching community, we will use this grant to help create an economic incentive to protect and restore key river bottom forest habitats, as well as critically important sagebrush country for the increasingly threatened Greater Sage-Grouse. **As a part of the project we will be offering Audubon members in Montana an opportunity to use their consumer power to save wildlife by buying beef from ranchers who manage rangelands in ways that protect habitat for sage-grouse and other birds of conservation concern.**

Heather Ristow, Montana Audubon's Education Director at the Audubon Conservation Education



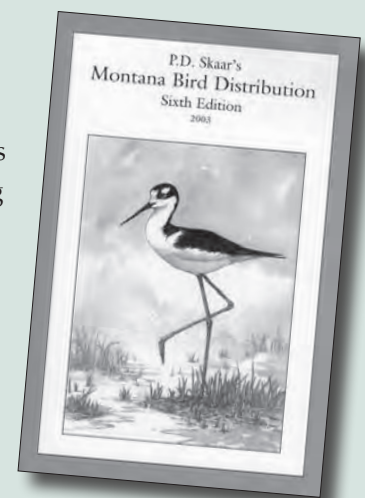
Center in Billings, received a \$10,000 TogetherGreen Fellowship. Heather will use the grant money to connect youth with the natural world through a program that matches local high school students with disadvantaged 4th–6th grade students at Billings' Friendship House. Approximately 15 high school students will receive training in leadership and team-building skills this winter, followed by a mentorship experience with elementary school youth in the spring. All participants will be involved in restoration projects; landscape exploration through canoeing, hikes, and insect collecting adventures; and culminating in a competitive weed-pulling contest. Weekly outdoor experiences will be designed to connect these young people to the natural world that sustains all of us.

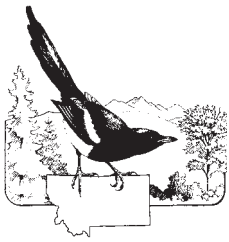
Montana Bird Distribution

DEADLINE LOOMING: Observations Needed by December 31, 2010

You only have two months to submit your bird observations for the 7th edition of P.D. Skaar's *Montana Bird Distribution*, which will be released in 2011. This book will contain breeding and wintering distribution maps for every bird species observed in the state, making it an excellent companion to your field guide.

We encourage you to contribute your bird observations to the upcoming book (and see your name in print!). All you need to do is enter your bird records on-line or submit your records by mail. For more information about this program and how to submit records, visit our website (under Birds & Science: Bird Distribution) or contact Janet Ellis by phone (406-443-3949) or email: jellis@mtaudubon.org.





News from the Audubon Center

Programs at the Audubon Conservation Education Center in Billings have undergone tremendous growth since we opened the doors to the Norm Schoenthal Field Lab in October 2009.



Kids examine their bucket full of macroinvertebrates during Creepers and Crawlers camp.

The summer was abuzz with six weeks of camps, staffed in part by interns in our new Naturalists-in-Training (NiTs) program. Eight local high school students were chosen to participate, which was sponsored by a grant from TogetherGreen (*see related article, page 5*). After a week of training in outdoor leadership, natural history, and lesson planning, the NiTs assisted our Teacher Naturalists with summer camps for children ages 5–13. Each intern also completed an independent project relating to the ecology of the Yellowstone region. One student commented about her internship, “It gave me the experience of truly interacting with the children instead of just watching over them... Teaching also helps me to better learn and understand the subject matter... I have already recommended this experience to my friends!”

This fall we expanded our year-long Audubon Naturalists in the Schools (ANTS) program to reach 17 classrooms (a 30 % increase). This program continues to be popular with both teachers and students. One participating fourth grader gave the program a rave review: “Normally field trips are cheesy, but this one is fun. Normally we can’t touch anything, but here we get to touch everything!”

We are expanding our programming to include an evening lecture series and family weekend programs. For instance, every third Saturday of the month, we are

offering free family programs. We began in September with an investigation of insects. Participants collected insects and spiders in nets, and learned to identify them with the aid of field guides and magnifying glasses. They also gathered macroinvertebrates from one of our ponds and learned about their larval and nymph stages. Other family programs include Native Montana Plants, Tracking Animals in Our Backyard, and Natural Ornament-Making.

Other special programs are being offered for the general public. An evening Owl Prowl will take place on November 26th. On October 9th we hosted a Weed Pull Contest in partnership with the Montana Conservation Corps where over 30 volunteers pulled spotted knapweed and Canada thistle (in the rain!). A whopping 1,142 pounds of weeds were yanked out of the ground in just over an hour!

Dr. Jim Barron of MSU-Billings launched the adult lecture series in September with a fascinating presentation on short-horned lizard ecology. In October Allison Begley spoke about white-tailed prairie dog conservation, and Derek Yeager discussed pine bark beetle ecology. The lecture series will continue on the fourth Tuesday of every month from 7–8 pm.



Audubon Center’s Day of Caring Event.



To help teach our expanding educational offerings, we recently hired two new staff members. Carol Ward, our Teacher Naturalist for the past five years, is joined by Karen Marts and Adam Sundstrom. Karen and Adam both come to us with a background in science education. Karen has worked extensively with preschool students and volunteered at Arrowhead Elementary School. Adam spent a year as a graduate intern at IslandWood, a residential facility specializing in place-based education.

In addition to our program expansion this fall, we also completed many restoration and landscaping projects. Restoration work is still being spearheaded by Norm Schoenthal, the Audubon Center's volunteer restoration manager. In the last six months Norm has organized a large cadre of volunteers to pot, water, and plant over 1,000 trees and shrubs! On September 16th, ongoing restoration work was aided by 60 volunteers from local businesses who participated in United Way's Day of Caring event. These volunteers came from the Billings Clinic, ConocoPhillips, Wells Fargo, and Human Resources Development Council. This dedicated group helped us finish planting the demonstration gardens on the west side of the building, planted trees and shrubs along our amphitheatre berm, and planted sagebrush throughout the Pryor Mountains' habitat hillside south of Will's Marsh.

Several events were held this summer to benefit the Audubon Center. On July 13th the Center participated in a summer concert series hosted by McCall's Homes at Josephine Crossing. The Peach Pickers performed while Audubon Center Council members and staff served Yellowstone Valley Brewing Company (YVBC) beer (YVBC generously donated \$1 to the Audubon Center for each beer sold). On September 18th YVBC hosted another fundraising event for the Center—participants enjoyed good music, food donated by Good Earth Market, and raffle prizes donated by The Spoke Shop, Riverstone Health, and Sunshine Sports. Earlier in the day, with our partner the Yellowstone River Parks Association, we hosted the first Yellowstone Riverfest. This family-friendly event included bike and canoe races at



Riverfront Park. All participants had great fun and look forward to participating again next year.

For program updates please visit the Audubon Center's new website (www.mtacec.org) and Facebook page. If you would like to receive our monthly Center E-newsletter, simply send an email request to Heather Ristow (hristow@mtaudubon.org). To learn about the phenology of the area, visit our blog at acecbillings.blogspot.com. We also welcome you to visit us onsite at 7026 South Billings Blvd. We hope to see you soon!

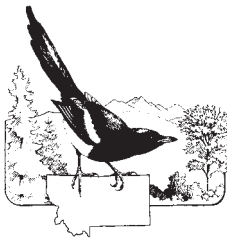
Volunteers learn about spotted knapweed from Ryan Sylva, Regional Program Coordinator with Montana Conservation Corps during the Weed Pull Contest.

Looking for a holiday gift that gives back?

Buy an Audubon Center Heritage Walkway Brick!

Your custom brick will be engraved with the name of your family, friend, business or organization, and will become part of the Center's rich heritage. The purchase of your brick supports the conservation education programs conducted at the Center. For more information and order forms please go to www.mtacec.org.





Changes to Our Board

Strause and Ballard Retire After Two Decades of Outstanding Work for the Audubon Cause

We are honored to recognize two retiring long-time Montana Audubon Board members:



Howard Strause, recipient of Montana Audubon's Conservationist of the Year Award and the Great Falls Conservation Council's George Engler Conservation Award (both in the year 2000), has served for a great many years on the

Boards of BOTH the Upper Missouri Breaks Audubon Chapter (Great Falls) and Montana Audubon. Howard's service to Montana Audubon includes being President from 1997 – 1999, writing letters and visiting with editorial boards on various issues, providing legal advice and representation, testifying at public hearings, and much more. In short, Howard has been a stalwart supporter of Montana Audubon's mission and work for the past 17 years, and his active, long-term involvement will be sorely missed. His contributions have left a permanent mark on this organization. THANK YOU, HOWARD!



Similarly, for the past 22 years **Bill Ballard** has worked tirelessly for BOTH the Five Valleys Audubon Chapter (Missoula) and for Montana Audubon. He served a 4-year term as chapter President, and also volunteered for lengthy stints as the chapter Conser-

vation Chair. His service to Montana Audubon includes being Treasurer for many years. Bill strongly supports the diversity of Montana Audubon's program work, but is especially committed to our legislative/lobbying and advocacy efforts designed to achieve broad wildlife and habitat conservation objectives. THANK YOU, BILL, FOR YOUR LONG-TERM COMMITMENT AND DEDICATION!

Welcome New Montana Audubon Board Members!

Bob Mackin, owner of Mackin Construction Company (a bridge construction company started by his grandfather in the 1930s), is Montana Audubon's newest Board member. Bob is serving as the official representative of the Audubon Center's Advisory Council. He tells us that environmental education has been a great passion for him ever since he experienced Norm Schoenthal's outdoor education program in 6th grade. Bob resides in Billings with his wife Elizabeth Adcock (a classical guitarist). They have one son, Elliot (age 15).



Deb Regele, owner of R & E Environmental Consulting and Construction of Billings, changed her role on the Montana Audubon Board this summer: she moved from "chapter alternate" to chapter representative of Yellowstone Valley Audubon. Deb currently serves as Yellowstone Valley Audubon's Treasurer. She resides outside of Billings in Joliet with her husband Steve. Deb is a familiar face to Montana Audubon, as she has regularly attended Board meetings over the past year.



Other changes to Montana Audubon's Board: We have three new "chapter alternate" members on the Board: Carolyn Goren serves for Five Valleys Audubon (Missoula), Bob Lee for Flathead Audubon, and Bill Miller for Upper Missouri Breaks Audubon (Great Falls). Meanwhile, we have one more goodbye to highlight: Jeanne Olson, former chapter representative for Yellowstone Valley Audubon, has moved to Portland, Oregon. THANK YOU, Jeanne, for your outstanding service to Montana Audubon during the past year! As noted above, Jeanne was replaced by Deb Regele.

THANKS TO ALL for your exceptional service and dedication!



Welcome New Staff

Norane Freistadt joined the staff in late September as Development Director. She comes to Montana Audubon with a strong fundrais-

ing background, tremendous passion for our work, and diverse life experiences. While raised in Washington, Norane spent childhood summers traipsing after her geologist father in Montana. With a degree from Washington State University in Anthropology, she conducted archaeological studies in northwestern Montana before settling in Helena, where she has lived for three decades. For 20 years, she ran a retail antique shop. In the last decade she has become increasingly involved in community groups that better fit her life-long passion for conservation. Her experiences include serving on the Downtown Helena Board, Lewis & Clark County Historic Preservation Commission, Plan Helena Board, and Helena Citizens Council. She is a founding member of Prickly Pear Land Trust, where she worked as Development Director before moving to the Montana Wilderness Association, where she also served in that position.



“I am truly excited and appreciative of this wonderful opportunity to be Development Director at Montana Audubon, working to protect wildlife across our magnificent state. I hope to spread the word that investing in Montana Audubon’s vital conservation work is the right thing to do, and it makes people feel great about their own role in wildlife protection!”

Norane and her husband Rob have three adult children. Her non-work life interests include backpacking, gardening, playing piano, and continuing her community activism.

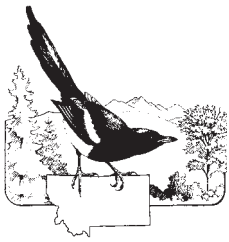
Larissa Berry, our new Office Manager, joined the Helena office in July. She received her Bachelor’s degree in English and minor in Printing and Publishing Arts from Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington. For the previous 12 years she worked in book publishing for small to mid-sized publishers in Helena, Berkeley, and Seattle.

A native of East Helena, Larissa returned to Montana last year, where she spent part of the summer at The Nature Conservancy’s Pine Butte Guest Ranch, which refueled her strong feelings toward environmental issues and passion for Montana’s rich and diverse habitats and wildlife. This interest led to her first nonprofit position at Montana Audubon—a new adventure and important mission she is very excited to be a part of. Her current ‘to do’ list now includes becoming a decent birder. We are pleased to report that her first few experiences in the field have her hooked on birds!



Larissa holds and releases a juvenile Red-tailed Hawk at Raptor View Research Institute’s banding site near Rogers Pass (Fall 2010).





Thank You!

Montana Audubon depends on the support of numerous individual donors. The following individuals made gifts to Montana Audubon, the Audubon Conservation Education Center in Billings, and/or the *Birds of Montana* Book Project in the period between April 16, 2010 and October 15, 2010.

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Memorial Donations

Few tributes are as lasting as a gift that helps preserve Montana's birds and their habitats. We owe a special thanks to those of you who have recently made a gift in memory of:

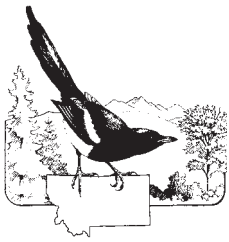
- ▲ George Carlson
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- ▲ Karen Evenson
- ▲ Mary Elizabeth Munsell
- ▲ Barb Jaquith
- ▲ Phil Wittman

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Goodbye—and Thank You Barb Jaquith and Don Marble

We were deeply saddened by the news that **Barbara Jaquith** passed away on September 7. Barb birded regularly in and around Red Lodge, often with Stan Heath, and she was especially fond of visiting Bear Canyon, the Pryor Mountains, and Cooney Reservoir. She contributed many records to the Montana Bird Distribution database and also helped with surveys of Sage Grouse leks and Peregrine Falcon nests. Barb and Stan documented Montana's first nesting Blue Grosbeaks in 2009, and Barb was instrumental in confirming the state's first record of an Eastern Towhee, which spent the winter of 2004-05 near Red Lodge. She was also well known



for helping birders find local specialties such as Broad-tailed Hummingbirds and Black Rosy-Finches. We extend our condolences to Barb's husband Jake, her four children, 14 grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren. Barb was a great supporter of the *Birds of Montana* book project, and the family has requested that memorial donations be sent in her name to: Birds of Montana, Montana Audubon, PO Box 595, Helena, MT 59624.



Montana lost another friend on August 22, when **Don Marble** of Chester passed away. Don was the birding companion of his wife, Harriet. Together they documented the birds of north-central Montana, particularly in the "greater Chester" area. Don also played an important role in conservation. He worked tirelessly to protect the Sweetgrass Hills, successfully fought several mining proposals in the Little Rocky Mountains, stood up for conservation while serving on the Board of Environmental Review, and was instrumental in getting a wind turbine installed so that Liberty County's maintenance shop could run on clean, renewable energy. We extend our condolences to Don's wife Harriet, his two sons and their wives, and his two grand-daughters.

Both Barb and Don will be fondly remembered.

Our Volunteers Move Us Forward!

Many of our friends volunteer their time and expertise to specific Montana Audubon projects. We want to recognize these individuals—and thank them for their important work.

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
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| Gary Buchanan | Kevin Murray |
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| Bob Martinka | Don Wirth |

We also want to thank these businesses for restoration work, facility improvements, website design, and special events at the Audubon Center:

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|-------------------|-----------------------------|
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| Morrison-Maierle | Yellowstone Electric |

We greatly appreciate the dedication, time, and support our volunteers have given to the Audubon cause!



A Special Thanks!

We want to thank the following foundations, corporations, organizations, and agencies for their support. Their contributions make our work possible:

Audubon Chapters

Bitterroot Audubon
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Last Chance Audubon
Mission Mountain Audubon
Pintler Audubon
Sacajawea Audubon
Upper Missouri Breaks Audubon
Yellowstone Valley Audubon

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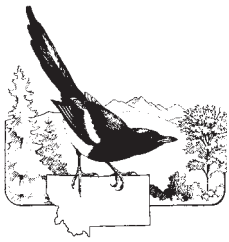


Audubon! The initial cost for the Bird Habitat plate is \$35, with an annual renewal rate of \$20. For more details, check our website (under About Us: Online Store). *Thanks for your support!*

License Plate is for the Birds!

Let's face it—we all use our cars, right? But, you can turn your ordinary car into a traveling statement about your support for birds, vital habitat protection, and Montana Audubon, all while you are doing those mundane chores that require driving your car! Please consider purchasing the beautiful Montana Audubon Bird Habitat license plate, which features a colorful American Avocet, Ruddy Duck, Lewis's Woodpecker, and a trio of Black-billed Magpies—on a Rocky Mountain Front backdrop. You'll show your support for bird conservation and donate to Montana





Citizen Science Opportunities Abound *(continued from page 1)*

to global warming. Scientists have responded by advancing studies that track wildlife movement, phenology (periodically recurring biological phenomena, like the timing of birds' nesting or migration), and distribution. Citizen science projects that can mobilize a network of volunteers across large geographies allow scientists to ask questions on a global scale. Individual observers can also begin to see and document local indications of a changing climate. Records of phenological events provide an excellent means of assessing climate change.

Before we describe our favorite Montana bird monitoring efforts, what is a citizen science project?



*Common Tern.
Photo by Bob
Martinka.*

In a nutshell, people use basic, scientific protocols to report observations of natural events. Some studies may have thousands of participants submitting millions of observations. Others may look more closely at a specific species and habitat. In a state like Mon-

tana—large and diverse with few people—volunteer contributors are essential.

What might be surprising is the number of ways Montana birders can contribute year-round. Let's take a tour.

First, basic bird observations are collected through the **Montana Bird Distribution Program** (*see page 5*). This project produces maps of where birds are seen in the state, where they breed, and where they overwinter. It also collects seasonal information on first and last sightings of migratory birds throughout Montana, which helps with phenology studies.

Montana Audubon cooperates with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and the Montana Natural Heritage Program on this project.

With fall winding down the various "raptor migration" watches have ended for the season. Montana Audubon collaborates with HawkWatch International, the US Forest Service, and Bridger Bowl Ski Area to sponsor the **Bridger Raptor Migration Count** outside Bozeman. Although this project was begun in 1991, it is Montana Audubon's second year of running this long-term raptor monitoring effort. Volunteers help the surveyors count birds and provide them with much-needed days off. In the Flathead, colleague Dan Casey spearheads the **Jewel Basin Hawk Watch**, where oodles of volunteers are helping to better understand this migration route. And, near Rogers Pass the Raptor View Research Institute counts and bands migrant eagles and other raptors along this prominent flyway.

There are also national efforts worth your participation. Now is the time to sign up for **Project FeederWatch**, where the Cornell Lab of Ornithology encourages volunteers to "Embrace the winter. Count feeder birds for science!" Counts begin mid-November and last through early April. Interesting results have come from FeederWatch. In 2008 researchers reported a significant decline in Evening Grosbeaks based on over 20 years of citizen reports.

The most long-standing volunteer birding effort remains the **Christmas Bird Count** (*see page 8*). Because these surveys are conducted in teams, birders both experienced and new are welcome. Information gleaned from the thousands of counts done over the decades demonstrates some striking patterns. If you missed Audubon's "Ecological Disruption in Motion" story, see our website and learn how birds are shifting north as our early winter weather warms.

Soon after the CBC, there's the **Great Backyard Bird Count**, where birds are censused on President's Day Weekend.



As all birders know, activities ramp up in the summer. Montana Audubon is directly involved in a number of volunteer projects. For the last few years, we've worked with the Helena National Forest to organize **Flammulated Owl surveys** near Missoula and Helena. These data are pooled with other studies to elucidate owl distribution and habitat use. This year we also began encouraging involvement in a **Nationwide Nightjar Survey**, which is gathering information on declining populations of Common Poorwills and Common Nighthawks. In addition, volunteers have helped with a **nesting colonial waterbird study** in Montana. A number of Audubon members are helping with summer **Raptor Survey Routes**, spearheaded by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks. And finally, more skilled birders have participated in **Breeding Bird Surveys**, the primary way we are able to track population declines across the continent.

One of the most important bird monitoring project for volunteers is within our **Important Bird Areas (IBAs)**. Excellent bird data have been collected by volunteers in the Bitterroot River, Clark Fork/Grass Valley, Madison Valley, and North Shore of Flathead Lake. The scientific integrity of our IBA program rests in large part on sound data from these sites, and we could never do that without Chapter and individual assistance. We also know that volunteers with good record-keeping habits can contribute great feats. Take Sacajawea Audubon's John Parker, who has been surveying Harrison Reservoir for 6 years now. John is currently working with us to turn those data into an IBA nomination—something not possible without his records and dedication.

And if you cannot get out in the field consider this great project: the **North American Bird Phenology Program** allows folks to transcribe old, hand-written migration cards into their online database. All you need is a computer and internet access to help researchers explain changing patterns.

As you can see, there are plenty of opportunities for you to get involved. All of the studies described above are explained more fully on our website.



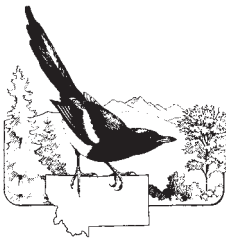
But before you get involved, do you need to brush up on your skills? With the internet and computers in general, researchers and volunteers are linked more closely together. Volunteers now can readily go to a website to learn about a project and protocols, improve their skills with on-line training, and enter their bird and wildlife sightings on-line.

People may be drivers of ecological change—yet we are also the solution. Putting your passions for observation and time outside to beneficial use will help with this work!

The key to citizen science projects is to get started now. Today's fall hawk migration record or next spring's bird arrival dates may help your grandkids better protect our wildlife and landscapes. You also might meet new friends, learn new bird songs, or maybe just practice patience as you wait for the rain to stop. Additionally, these citizen science efforts build community, and in these decisive times, that in and of itself has meaning and lasting impact.

Jamie Hogberg and David Laufenberg searching the skies for migrating hawks and eagles atop the Bridger Mountains, Southwest Montana (Fall 2010).





2010 Bird Festival – A Tremendous Success!

It was fun, we made new friends, and we did a lot of exciting birdwatching (186 bird species seen!)—making our 2010 Bird Festival in Missoula a huge success! Capably co-hosted by Five Valleys Audubon (Missoula) and Bitterroot Audubon, a vast array of field trips and speakers attracted more than 250 festival participants.

Things kicked off on Friday, with Kate Davis of Raptors of the Rockies educating and entertaining us with her engaging program with live raptors. The Saturday morning Family Festival, co-presented by the Montana Natural History Center and Montana Audubon, offered a fun-filled morning of activities for the whole family.

Dr. Erick Greene, Professor of Biology & Ecology at University of Montana, provided the Saturday lunch keynote: a fascinating account of how songbirds learn to sing, and how birds use a wide variety of alarm calls to warn their neighbors about potential predators lurking nearby. Saturday afternoon's workshops covered a broad range of topics, including Long-eared Owls, dragonfly watching, bats, gull identification, wildlife transportation crossings, citizen-based bird monitoring projects, Trumpeter Swan reintroduction, and more.

Dr. Steve Running, Nobel Laureate and University of Montana climate scientist, was Saturday evening's banquet keynote. He gave an informative, yet sobering commentary about the threats of climate change. He concluded with an inspiring appeal urging us all to help solve this challenging problem facing all the Earth's inhabitants (*see page 3*).

Many thanks to all the volunteers who made the festival such a tremendous success!

Bird Festival Thank You

We want to thank the following individuals for organizing an outstanding festival: Paul Loehnen, Joyce Nave, Pat Little, Jerry Dirnberger, Larry Weeks, Campbell Massey, Peter & Helen Allen, Bill Boggs, Theresa Parkis, Kathy Martin, and Kate Davis. Additionally, a great many people volunteered at the festival to lead field trips, give talks, help with registration and clean up, and much more. We greatly appreciate everyone's time and dedication!

We also want to thank the following individuals and businesses for donating items to make the silent auction and raffle a success:

Silent Auction Donors: Peter and Helen Allen, Pat Andrews, Sue Ashline, Bitterroot Audubon Society, Tom Bivens, Nan Breuninger, Jim and Sue Brown, Jeri Browne, Bob Bungarz, Cindy Butler, Dan & Susannah Casey, Amy Cilimburg, Jeanette Davis, Jerry Dirnberger, Janet Ellis, Mary Fay, KC Glastetter, Art Held, Cynthia Hudson, Sarah Jaeger, Beth & Lynn Kaeding, Latigo & Lace, Mr. & Mrs. Love, Harriet Marble, Missoula Ospreys, Don Murray, Bruce & Sue Newell, Deborah Richie Oberbillig, Suzi Parsons, Sherry Ritter, Martha Robertson, Angela Rozo, Carol Santos, Jean Setter, Elsie Tuss, US Forest Service, Virginia Vincent, and Beverly Weeks. A special thanks goes to the following individuals who donated custom tours to our silent auction: Jim Brown, Lou Bruno, Rob Domenech, Megan Fyelling, Steve Hoffman, Denver Holt, Jack Kirkley, Nate Kohler, Bob Martinka, Jim Sparks, Gary Swant, and Terry Toppins.

Raffle Donors: Birds & Beasleys, Bitterroot Audubon Society, Eagle Optics, The Frame Shop & Gallery, Image Ventures of MT LLC, Patagonia, REI – Missoula, and Rita Brockhasen.

Festival keynote speaker and Audubon's Conservationist of the Year, Dr. Steve Running.



Honoring Montana Conservationists

Montana Audubon announced the following awards at our 2010 Bird Festival for outstanding conservation work:

Jim Brown received our Lifetime Achievement Award for his long-time work on behalf of Five Valleys Audubon, Montana Audubon, Five Valleys Land Trust, and others. His background as a professional researcher, keen understanding of land management practices, and generosity in sharing his expertise have led to many conservation achievements, including significant protection of the Clark Fork River-Grass Valley Important Bird Area. We applaud Jim's inspiring vision towards the future—and his calm, persistent, unassuming manner.



Dick Hutto and **Sue Reel** jointly received our Educators of the Year Award for their tireless dedication to connecting people of all ages to birds and science. Since 1977 Dick has taught at the University of Montana, connecting many individuals to the wonders of birds, ecology, and science. Additionally, he founded the Avian Science Center, which is dedicated to connecting the broader public to birds and science. Sue also has a distinguished career as a conservation educator. During her 20 years working for the Lolo National Forest she has shared her excitement for birds, bugs, and native plants with everyone participating in her programs. She also notably helped found the Montana Natural History Center, an effective nature education center focused on schoolchildren and the public.



Steve Running was awarded our Conservationist of the Year Award for his achievements on climate change research and education. His internationally known work and tireless presentations explain the science and implications of climate change—and includes testifying at hearings and regularly meeting with elected officials and the media. Steve is a professor at the University of Montana, and he serves on the Board of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change which shared the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize.

Bitterroot Audubon was recognized with a Special Achievement Award for its work to conserve the Bitterroot River Important Bird Area (IBA), comprised of 31 miles of river and 30,000 acres of cottonwood forests, wetlands, and willows. Over 240 bird species, of which 115 nest, have been documented within the IBA, including several species of conservation concern. Chapter work includes conducting bird surveys and distributing IBA informational brochures to many of the 1,100 landowners within the IBA.



Wildlife Grant Funding Available

Once again Montana Audubon will be offering small wildlife grants in 2011. This money, generated by the Audubon Wildlife Fund of Montana, will be awarded to individuals, schools, or nonprofit organizations whose projects directly benefit the state's wildlife, with a preference given to projects targeting nongame wildlife and their habitats.

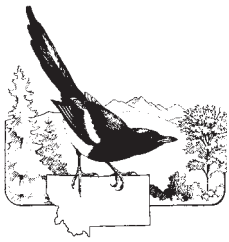
For a description of the application requirements, contact the Montana Audubon office (406-443-3949) or visit our website (under About Us: Wildlife Grants). Applications must be postmarked by December 17, 2010; grants will be awarded by February 1, 2011.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Montana Audubon's
2011 Bird Festival
June 3–5, Glasgow,
Montana

Wings Across the Big Sky, Montana Audubon's 2011 Bird Festival, is coming June 3–5 to Glasgow. The festival will feature a wide range of field trips to outstanding grassland and wetland birding areas in Northeast Montana. Registration information will be available by early March.





Join a Christmas Bird Count!

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is a great event for beginning birders—because there are a lot fewer birds to learn. It is also a great event for experienced birders—because it is an excellent excuse to go bird watching.

Please join one of this year's CBCs, where volunteers count every bird seen or heard during one day in a designated 15-mile diameter area. The information helps scientists monitor changes in the abundance and distribution of winter bird populations. Last year 661 volunteers participated in Montana's 32 Christmas Bird Counts, recording a total of 131 species of birds!



This year's CBCs will take place between Tuesday, December 14, 2010 and Thursday, January 5, 2011 (see map). If you don't know how to participate locally, call our Helena office or visit our website. The cost to participate is \$5/person.

Last Year's Montana CBC Highlights:

- ▼ Ten most common birds seen (beginners should study these!): Mallards, Canada Geese, House Sparrows, European Starlings, Bohemian Waxwings, Rock Pigeons, House Finches, Black-billed Magpies, Black-capped Chickadees, and Common Goldeneye.



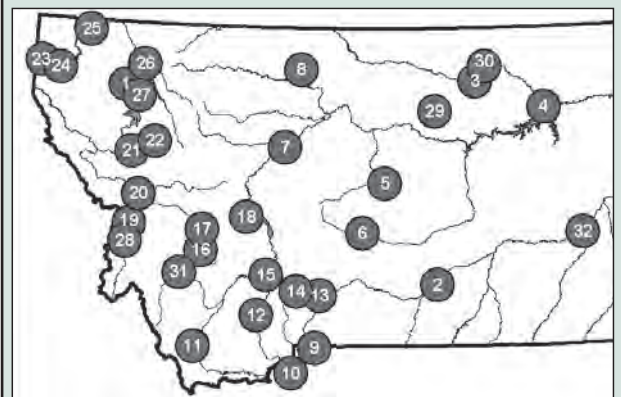
- ▼ Only bird seen on every CBC: Black-capped Chickadee.

- ▼ Most species seen: 82 species in Stevensville; fewest species seen: 15 species in the Little Rocky Mountains..

- ▼ Total birds counted: 159,228.

Thanks to Dan Casey, American Bird Conservancy, for compiling Montana's CBC report each year.

Montana Christmas Bird Counts for December, 2010 to January 2011

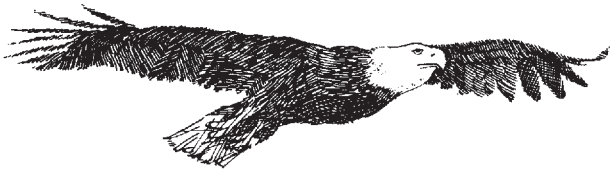


#	AREA	DATE	#	AREA	DATE
1	Kalispell	Jan. 2	17	Grant Kohrs	Dec. 20
2	Billings	Dec. 18	18	Helena	Dec. 18
3	Bowdoin NWR	Dec. 18	19	Stevensville	Jan. 2
4	Fort Peck	Dec. 18	20	Missoula	Dec. 18
5	Lewistown	TBA	21	Ninepipe NWR	Dec. 19
6	Musselshell Valley	Dec. 19	22	Upper Swan Valley	TBA
7	Great Falls	Dec. 18	23	Troy	TBA
8	Chester	TBA	24	Libby	TBA
9	Yellowstone NP	Dec. 18	25	Eureka	Dec. 18
10	W. Yellowstone	Dec. 19	26	Glacier NP	TBA
11	Clark Canyon Dam	Dec. 18	27	Bigfork	Dec. 18
12	Ennis	Dec. 14	28	Hamilton	Dec. 18
13	Park County	Dec. 19	29	Little Rocky Mtns	Dec. 14
14	Bozeman	Dec. 18	30	McNeil Slough	Dec. 15
15	Three Forks	Dec. 26	31	Big Hole	Dec. 17
16	Warm Springs	Jan. 1	32	Miles City	Jan. 2



Now and Forever

The greatest legacy of any conservationist is protecting outstanding habitats for native wildlife and fish in perpetuity. Places like Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, Owen Sowerwine Natural Area, and Freezout Lake are all lasting reminders of our reverence for birds and other wildlife in natural landscapes, joined with a deep concern for the well-being of future generations.



For decades, Montanans have worked to protect diverse habitats across the state. You can carry forward the good work of these individuals and pass along an abundant natural heritage by investing in a Montana Audubon charitable endowment. Gifts to an endowment provide an enduring source of funds to ensure Montana Audubon's conservation efforts continue into the future. The principal of the endowment is preserved in perpetuity, while a portion of its annual earnings can be spent toward our efforts to achieve lasting protection of deserving habitats.

Gift annuities are one of the simplest ways to make a planned gift to Montana Audubon's endowment. In exchange for a transfer of cash or marketable securities, you can establish an annuity that guarantees annual payments to you or your beneficiary, or you may choose to defer those payments.

Significant tax advantages can be realized by Montana donors to our qualified endowment, as you may be eligible for the **Montana Tax Credit for Endowed Giving**—an incentive of 40% of the present value of a planned gift, up to \$10,000 annually, which can be taken as a direct credit (not deduction!) against your state income tax liability.

Wildlife and bird conservation work will always be needed—and gifts to Montana Audubon's endowment truly keep on giving. The Greater Sage-Grouse, Red Crossbills, and Trumpeter Swans win, the cottonwood and birch forests win, you win, and Montana Audubon's vital work continues.

For more information, please contact
Norane at 406-443-3949, or e-mail
norane@mtaudubon.org.

Birds of Montana Book Project Update

Senior author Jeff Marks, along with coauthors Dan Casey and Paul Hendricks, have written nearly 250 species accounts for *Birds of Montana*, which is well over half of the species that will be covered in the book. Sponsorship of 427 Montana bird species is complete, thanks to individuals and organizations statewide. Marks is now working with world-renowned wildlife artist Albert E. Gilbert to produce a small number of limited-edition prints of his Boreal Owl painting, which will be used for the book's back cover (signed and numbered artist prints on museum-quality, acid-free paper are anticipated to be available for purchase in January). Finally, Oregon State University Press has received Marks' proposal to publish *Birds of Montana* in 2012. Because this is Montana's first book solely on our birds, we are anxiously anticipating its debut. We continue to seek donations to help fund the project. For more information see our website or contact Jeff Marks at 503-774-4783 or jeff17_marks@msn.com.



Art by Albert Gilbert.





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Blue-crowned Motmot often seen on the Veracruz River of Raptors Tour.

National Wildlife Refuge in southwest Montana. New on our Montana tour list will be the Raptor Weekend where you can witness and participate in the banding of hawks and eagles.

Montana Audubon's Birding Tours

Take your pick of birding adventures in Montana, Alaska, Texas, Mexico, Peru and Africa!

Montana Audubon is known for its annual tours to great birding destinations, and the 2011 tour season is packed with eight different adventures offered close to home or as far away as Africa. You can explore the northeastern part of Montana by joining the Westby Tour (and then consider traveling on to Glasgow for the 2011 Bird Festival!), or marvel at the incredible abundance and diversity of birds at Red Rocks Lakes

Our tours also take birders to exciting places across the world to experience the global diversity of birds, habitats, and human cultures. Imagine discovering the "river of raptors" in Veracruz Mexico, African Finfoot in The Gambia, or Andean Cock-of-the-Rock in Peru.

With so many wonderful adventures to describe and choose from, look for our 2011 Tour Flyer in your mailbox soon!

SAVE THESE BIRDING TOUR DATES:

South Texas Birding: April 25 – May 2, 2011

Centennial Valley & Red Rock Lakes: May 27 – 29, 2011

Westby Birding: May 30 – June 2, 2011

Centennial Valley & Red Rock Lakes: June 10 – 12, 2011

Alaska: Denali/Kenai Peninsula: June 17 – 26, 2011

Raptor Weekend: September 24 – 25, 2011

Veracruz Mexico: September 29 – October 11, 2011

Birding in The Gambia Africa: November 2011

Birds & Wildlife of Peru: February 2012

