

MONTANA  
Audubon



eNewsletter — September 2011



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**September Events & News from Montana Audubon**

**New Video!**

Fall may be just arriving, but at Montana Audubon we haven't forgotten the summer of flooding rivers and streams. Check out our latest video creation about building a home too close to a Montana stream. And peruse our Image Library of homes placed where they simply shouldn't be. All [here](#)...

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Upcoming Events Around Montana

**MOVING PLANET AND NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS DAY**

Saturday Sept 24. Moving Planet Events taking place in over 175 countries! We are cosponsoring the day in Missoula; there are also great events in the [Flathead](#) and [Helena](#).



**Join us** to help move our planet away from fossil fuels. September 24 is a worldwide rally to demand solutions to the climate crisis and it is National **Public Lands Day**. Help us plant natives, beautify Missoula and ask our elected officials to get to work. We'll be building bikes and weeding gardens, parks and open space. Saturday 10 - 2 pm. Ride Your Bike, take the bus, walk!

We have all the details on our [events page](#).

We can restore our bird-rich riparian areas and have fun doing it!.

**BRIDGER RAPTOR FESTIVAL**

We have new information on our website about TAR SANDS, KEYSTONE XL PIPELINE, and OIL. [Check it out!](#)

Support Montana Audubon:



Interested in local Audubon Chapter activities this summer? [Visit each Chapter's website.](#)

Montana Audubon and Sacajawea Audubon Society will have booths at the Bridger Raptor Festival, October 8-9, 2011. Mark your calendar. Clean your boots for a hiking up to the ridge-top observer post. Plan to bring the family to this free event. The birds will be there! More info at [bridgerraptorfest.org](http://bridgerraptorfest.org).

Learn more from Montana Audubon about [Raptors and Migration](#).

### LOOKING FOR LOONS

Montana Audubon and Montana Wilderness Association are cosponsoring a leisurely birding trek to catch the fall loon migration at its peak, and with luck we may see as many as 100 Common Loons! The hike starts at Departure Point at the east end of Holter Lake where we "bird" our way south above the shoreline, then drop to the Ox Bow.



- Date – Saturday, October 15
- Meeting Time/Place – 1:00 pm at Paris Gibson Square in Great Falls or 2:00 pm at the parking area where Wolf Creek Bridge crosses the Missouri River on Rte 87 Recreation Road.
- Trail Miles/Difficulty – 3-4 miles, moderate
- Reservations by – October 14
- Leaders – [Beth Hill](#) (452-4931) ; [Dan Bennett](#) (452-7657)

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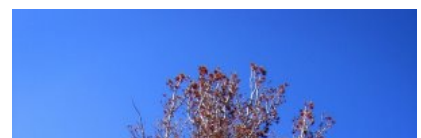
### Clark's Nutcracker ~ September Bird-of-the-Month

If you spend time in country where prairie and mountains come together, you probably have observed Clark's Nutcrackers. This striking bird, a member of the family *Corvidae*, (crows, ravens and jays) is a well-known inhabitant of the Rocky Mountain West. Like other Corvids, they are gregarious, vocal and highly intelligent.



Much of Nutcracker ecology revolves around their extraordinary capacity for storing conifer seeds. ... Nutcracker's are listed as a Species of Concern by the State of Montana.

The bird has mutualistic relationships with two species of five-needle pines: Whitebark and Limber. The high elevation Whitebark Pine is



entirely dependent on animal-based seed dispersal since its cones cannot open any other way, and the Clark's has a stout, sharp bill which makes quick work of collecting. The Limber Pine is not so limited but similarly benefits from the work of the Nutcracker. Each fall, the birds will transport pine nuts in a sublingual (under-the-tongue) pouch to cache locations, sometimes miles apart over a large territory. They can recall *several thousand cache sites* up to nine months later and are capable of retrieving them even through snow.



Although they do have a more varied diet during other seasons, Clark's Nutcrackers absolutely depend on the energy of stored pine nuts for their winter and early spring survival. Invariably however, some birds will die or simply not use all of its food stores and this is how the trees benefit, since the bird is essentially planting a future generation each year.

Clark's Nutcrackers are thought to have inhabited North America for about 2 million years. The Blackfeet called this creature, "Gum Eater" for the prodigious quantity of pitch on its bill while visiting the pines in late summer. It is important to note that the Whitebark Pine is in precipitous decline in the West....

**The full story is [HERE](#)**

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## Audubon Center Happenings

If you haven't visited our Center in Billings here are several reasons to place it on your fall "to do" list. Over the last two months we've made great changes around the Center's grounds - a new lawn area, irrigation, and fire pit.



Restoration is happening! We've implemented weed management protocols in order to gain a leg up on the various noxious weed populations around the Center. This is just the beginning of a long term (never ending) management program for the Center. We're getting a good handle on various treatment methods and how they interact with each other and the environment.

More accomplishments: refurbishing and hanging signage on the marsh kiosks, planting shrub understory near the entrance, installing park benches, began blazing a new trail to Moosewood kiosk, propagation and planting of various native wildflowers and grasses, using GIS to begin mapping various aspects of the grounds, and giving the Center building a top-to-bottom cleaning. It certainly has been a whirlwind of a summer out here, and it shows no signs of slowing down this fall. Just the way we like it.

More about Center fall activities: [www.mtacec.org](http://www.mtacec.org).

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## Would you like to help with our Annual Festival?

We are presently looking for an intern in our Helena Office to assist Montana Audubon in the planning, publicity, and implementation of our **Annual Bird Festival**, to be held in Kalispell, June 8–10, 2012. This could be a great way to get communications and marketing experience (possible stipend available). For details see our [website](#).

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Enjoy fall and thanks for all you do.

Amy and the Montana Audubon Staff



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