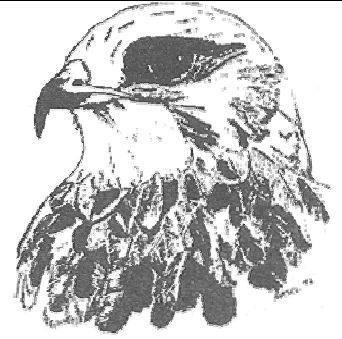


November 2010

Birding Observer



Five Valleys Audubon Society

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

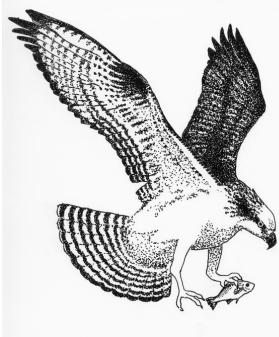
Calendar

- * Monday, November 1st, 7pm: Joyce Nave will host the board meeting.
- * Saturday, November 6th: Half-day field trip at Maclay Flat. Meet in the Maclay Flat parking lot at 10am.
- * Monday, November 8th, 7:30pm: Ospreys are the subject of the November program meeting.

- * Friday, November 12th: Submission deadline for the December edition of the *Birding Observer*.
- * Sunday, December 5th: Full-day field trip to the Mission Valley. Meet in the middle of the UM field house parking lot at 8:00 AM.
- * Saturday, December 11th: Owl trapping with Denver Holt. Location and meeting time to be announced in the December newsletter.

Conservation Advocacy Opportunity

We are looking for someone to become the chairperson for the Conservation Advocacy Committee. Vick Applegate, who currently chairs the Committee, would like to pass the baton on to a new chairperson. The purpose of the Advocacy Committee is to encourage the chapter to act as a voice in the community for conservation of birds and other wildlife. The job involves informing the Board and Chapter members about conservation issues that might merit their concern and possible advocacy action. This involves attending some board meetings, writing occasional articles for the newsletter and helping draft chapter position statements.



If you are interested, please contact Paul Loehnen or Jim Brown.

Ospreys in western Montana: Past, present, and future

The amazing natural history and ecology of osprey, those unique fishing raptors, will be summarized by Dr. Erick Greene at the Chapter's next program on Monday, November 8 at 7:30 p.m. in the Gallagher Business Building, room L14 (lower level) on the University of Montana campus. Erick will talk about ongoing osprey research in western Montana. A new study with the Environmental Biogeochemistry Laboratory, Raptor View Research Institute, and local high school students has found that ospreys in western Montana have exceedingly high levels of mercury (several orders of magnitude higher than the highest allowable levels in humans). The group is starting a long-term monitoring program to identify the sources of mercury. In addition, ospreys have a predilection for lining their nests with baling twine (polypropylene rope used to tie up bales of hay). In some areas about 10-15% of osprey chicks (and some of the adults) die because they become tangled in this indestructible baling twine. This information is shared with farmers and ranchers to reduce the amount of baling twine that is left in fields.

As treasurer, I am charged with providing your board with sound financial facts and advice that will allow us to fulfill our mission: to promote birds and birding in the five valleys region of Missoula, MT. This mission has four goals: protect bird habitat, provide stewardship for bird habitat, educate people about birds and nature, and provide chapter resources to achieve the mission.

Our financial activities to support our mission include a five year financial plan, an annual budget, and monthly income and expenditure reports. Starting in 2010 and over the next five years we will expend \$17,700 on programs, using our current \$32,700 in available funds, and retaining a \$10,000 reserve for new bird habitat activities and a \$5,000 rainy day fund. The expenditures are for Important Bird Area data and analysis, land conservation in the area, research on birds and other species, contributions to the "Phil Wright Fund", Swainson's hawk survey and analysis, and computer and projection equipment for our bird classes and other presentations. These expenditures are in addition to our annual expenditures.

Our annual expenditures are supported by income from the following sources: membership dues; dividend income from investments; contributions to our "Audubon Adventures" in-school program, our "Birdathon" survey, and other contributions to the Society; bird class fees; our share of National Audubon Society memberships in the area; trip fees; and brochure sales. The "Birdathon" accounts for over one-half of our \$15,000 annual revenue.

These annual funds are used to support our programs and activities: the "Audubon Adventures" in-school program; the "Community Naturalist Program" supporting youth education about birds; contributions to bird research organizations such as the Owl Institute, Raptor View and Raptors of the Rockies; contributions to the Montana Audubon Society for legislative advocacy, educational activity and bird habitat support; our monthly newsletter; "Phil Wright Fund" research awards to college and



high school students; monthly meeting speaker expenses; and administrative expenses.

Every month we track our progress in attaining our income and expending our funds via a treasurer's report to the board at our monthly meeting. Before the end of our fiscal year in June, we adopt a new budget for the upcoming year. Your Society is blessed with a solid asset base, having over \$7,000 in liquid funds and almost \$24,000 in long-term investments as of September 30th of this year.

I hope this explanation of how we garner funds and implement programs assures you that your contributions to Five Valleys Audubon are wisely used.

Rocky & Wal-Mart Support AA & CNP

For the sixth consecutive year, Rocky Healey applied for a grant from The Wal-Mart Foundation to support the Chapter's education programs called Audubon Adventures and the Community Naturalist Program. Rocky presented a check for \$250 to the Chapter at the September general meeting. Rocky and his wife Suzi both work for Wal-Mart's Supercenter on Mullan Road. Thanks again to both Rocky and The Wal-Mart Foundation.

Byron Weber Scholarship Fund

The Montana Natural History Center has established a scholarship fund, in the memory of Byron Weber. This will help children who are not able to afford participating in their educational programs. Five Valleys Audubon Society has contributed \$500 to this fund.

Saturday, October 2, 2010: Larissa Berry, Administrative Officer at Montana Audubon, and her dad met seven people from Missoula at the Meek property on highway 279 near Flesher Pass at 8:15 AM. The group hiked up the trail to Rob Domenech's banding site and reached the blinds before Rob and his crew arrived on their ATVs. On the hike up the hill, we heard an elk bugle but it turned out to be a bow hunter that was set up next to an elk decoy. I'm sure that the hunter didn't realize that he had set up within 200 yards of an active ATV trail. After Rob and his crew of three set up the bow net traps, the participants entered the 2 blinds. During our 5-hour visit, Rob and his crew captured 6 raptors; 3 sharp-shinned hawks, 2 red-tailed hawks and a northern goshawk. Both of the red-tailed hawks were Harlan's, and one of those was a spectacular light-phased Harlan. For the fifth year in a row, they failed to capture a golden eagle. The golden eagle flight during our visit was very sparse. They did capture 3 golden eagles the day before we arrived, so we should have been there yesterday. They almost captured a bald eagle that landed on one of their rock pigeons which are used to lure the big raptors. However, the eagle was able to escape before the bow net closed. The pigeon paid the ultimate sacrifice. Several raptors also made passes at the lure birds without landing. Other good sightings included a broad-winged hawk and a dusky (blue) grouse. We saw 14 bird species on the trip.

PS: As of October 9th, Rob and his crew banded 102 raptors which included 21 golden eagles.

Saturday, October 9, 2010: Paul Loehnen led the Chapter's field trip and the author assisted with Montana Natural History Center's (MNHC) Master Naturalist's field trip. Both of these field trips were at the Lee Metcalf NWR. The Chapter's field trip hiked the full length of the Denali trail and the trails to the Bitterroot River at the Wildlife Viewing Area. They identified a trumpeter swan with a red neck band in the pond at the North end of the Denali trail. Wayne Tree had emailed Mike Schwitters the neck band number (5T1) and Mike reported back that the swan was from the Blackfoot. As the swan fed on underwater vegetation, the neck band would slide down to it's head and then slide back to

it's body when it raised it's head. The same pond also contained 2 American white pelicans. Other birds seen along the Denali trail included a Wilson's snipe, marsh wren, white-crowned sparrow, northern harrier, and 2 adult bald eagles. At the Wildlife Viewing Area, they found a flock of migrating ruby-crowned kinglets and all 3 nuthatches. The Chapter had 9 participants and recorded 40 bird species. MNHC's field trip arrived at the visitor's center at 8:00AM and the visibility was poor due to the fog. While we waited for the fog to lift, Bob Danley passes out duck wings and identification booklets, and had the naturalists identify their wings, state some facts about the duck and imitate the duck's call. By the time the exercise was completed, the fog had lifted and it turned out to be a beautiful day. The MNHC's field trip saw most of the same birds that the Chapter field trip saw. However, they did see an immature golden eagle, a merlin, a yellow-rumped warbler, and heard a Virginia rail, which were birds not on the Chapter's bird list. The MNHC's field trip had 12 participants and also had 40 bird species.

Update on P.L. Wright Awards

For many years, Five Valleys Audubon has been granting awards to students in memory of P.L. Wright. Looking back on how these awards have helped the students has been astounding! The awards have helped to jump-start the careers and research of many of these students, and Erick will give a brief summary of where they are now, and what they are up to.

Erick Greene is a professor in the Division of Biological Sciences and in the Wildlife Biology Program here at The University of Montana. His research projects focus on animal communication, evolution and conservation biology. He loves teaching, and has been awarded The Distinguished Teacher Award and The Most Inspirational Teacher Award of the University of Montana, as well as the Outstanding Teacher Award by the Mortar Board National Honor Society, The Dobzhansky Prize (the highest honor of the Society for the Study of Evolution), and the Canadian Medal of Bravery.

Missoula Christmas Bird Count

The Missoula Christmas Bird Count (CBC) will be held on Saturday, December 18, 2010. The count area is a circle with a 7.5 mile radius which is centered at the intersection of Reserve St. and I-90. The circle will be divided up and covered by individuals and small groups. You can participate by being a feeder watcher or joining a group in the field. If you would like to take part in the field count, contact Larry Weeks at 549-5632 or bwsgenea@onlinemt.com. If you are interested in being a feeder watcher, contact Elizabeth Johnston at 327-1525 or birder@bigsky.net. We also tally unusual birds not reported on count day that are seen during count week. This year, count week runs from Wednesday, December 15th through Tuesday, December 21st. If you see an unusual bird species during count week, be sure to report it to Larry.

The count day will end with a potluck dinner that will be held at the home of Ruth & Russ Royter, 520 Highland Park Dr. (telephone # 728-7984) which is up on Farviews on the East side of the golf course. Potluck guests are welcome to arrive at the Royter's starting at 6:00 PM. Dinner will commence at 6:30 PM. Please bring your favorite potluck dish, or A-L, bring a salad or dessert, and M-Z, a hot dish. After the potluck, we will tabulate the count results. Besides being a fun day, the results are published in the American Birds magazine, and along with other counts throughout the hemisphere, contribute base information for a variety of studies. The CBC is an expensive production and participants are encouraged to contribute \$5.00.



Waterworks Hill bluebirds take flight again!

One hundred and six baby bluebirds fledged from 28 Mountain Bluebird Trails (MBT) boxes in the North Hills of Missoula in 2010. Forty-six Western Bluebirds, 60 Mountain Bluebirds and an undetermined number of Tree Swallows fledged from the boxes. Seventeen baby bluebirds (10 WBB, 7 MBB) succumbed to the elements, mostly cold wet weather, and did not survive to fledging.

Of the 28 MBT boxes in the North Hills, eight were used by westerns. Thirteen were inhabited by Mountain Bluebirds. Eight were claimed by Tree Swallows. House Sparrows attempted to use one box (and the eggs and nest were removed). If the numbers don't seem to add up, this is because of two "shared" boxes. One box hosted westerns for a first clutch and Tree Swallows for a second clutch. Another box had a first clutch of Mountains and a second clutch of westerns.

This year's fledgling numbers are down from a record 142 bluebird fledglings in 2009. During that season, fewer nestlings were lost to cold weather and more parents produced 2nd clutches. In 2008, 92 bluebirds fledged from MBT boxes in the North Hills. In 2007, 13 birds fledged from these boxes.

There is room for more bluebird boxes in the North Hills open space, especially on the old fence at its western border (north of Orange St Trailhead and south of Randolph-Moon homestead). Bluebird boxes should be monitored and maintained regularly. Please do not place new boxes within close proximity or within sight of existing boxes. Bluebird boxes placed too close together will result in territorial conflicts. Typically, when bluebird boxes are placed too close to one another, they are ALL taken by Tree Swallows, a "deserving-enough" native bird, but one that does not need our assistance in finding nesting spaces. In addition, bird boxes should be placed at least ¼ mile away from houses and barns to prevent use by House Sparrows. These insidious non-native pests kill bluebirds, chickadees, and other native birds.

Mountain Bluebird Trails supplies bird boxes and monitoring guides for a very reasonable yearly fee. Contact Kathy Heffernan @ 543-4097 for more information.

Welcome New Members:

Rosanna Akland
Suzanne Gonstad
Geraldine H. Kennedy
Ginny Therriault

Clarence Clark
Kathy Hale
Chris Olding
Katie Deuel Thomas

Stephanie M. Gilman
John Herring III
Sue Silverberg



Thanks to our Returning Members:

Victoria Balfour
Susan Blair
Judy Dammel
Ashley Jensen
Mary J. Mc Allister
Dr. & Mrs. John Owens
Thomas Robinson
Sara Simkowitz
Dale Thompson

Judy Bangert
Anita Cervenak
Beverly Evans
Tate Jones
Peggy Meinholtz
John Prange
Denice Rogers
Janet Simms
Missoula Physical Therapy

Beth Beringer
Vicki Cox
Susan M. Falsey
Rachel Kantor
Robert Mutch
Sheldon Reagan
Rocky Sehnert
Tim Spangler

Don Gillingham
Sharon Lukomski
F. Nordgulen
Christine T. Reck
Robin Paul Silverstein
Alex Taft

Hi Friends! Go Green!

View your ***Birding Observer*** newsletter even sooner, only **on-line**.
Just send us an email request with your name to Vick Applegate at k7vk@arrl.net.
We will alert you each month when the newsletter becomes available on-line.
You can find the Five Valleys Audubon web site at: <http://www.fvamisoula.org/>

Join The National Audubon Society

Please enroll me as a member of the National Audubon Society and my local Chapter. I will receive the *Audubon* magazine and the *Birding Observer*, as well as participate in all local Chapter activities. I understand that my dues are shared between NAS and my local Chapter.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

\$20 for a one-year membership
for an individual or family

Please make the check payable to National Audubon Society and mail to: National Audubon Society, Membership Data Center, PO Box 422250, Palm Coast, FL 32142-2250. **COZ N53 OZ**

Join The Five Valleys Audubon Society

Please enroll me as a Chapter member of the Five Valleys Audubon Society. I will receive the *Birding Observer* and may participate in all local Chapter activities. I understand that my dues remain entirely with the Chapter.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email (optional): _____

\$15 is enclosed for Chapter membership

An additional sum of _____ is
also included to support Chapter activities.

Please make check payable to the Five Valleys Audubon Society and mail to: Five Valleys Audubon Society, PO Box 8425, Missoula, MT 59807.

Five Valleys Audubon Society

PO Box 8425, Missoula, MT 59807

<http://www.fvamisoula.org>

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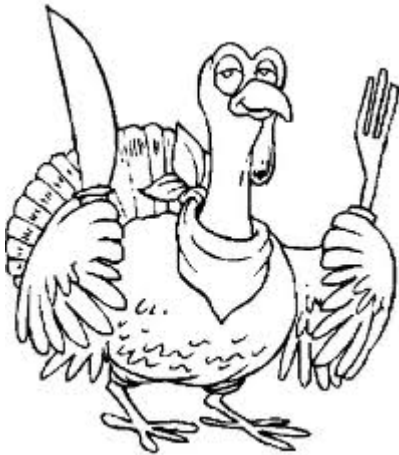
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Secretary	Char Murray	50 Brookside Way, Missoula, MT 59802	549 – 5223	murray555@bresnan.net
Treasurer	Alex Taft	332 S. 1 st St. W., apt. A, Missoula, MT 59801	218 – 8438	alextaft9@msn.com

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2010-2013	Bill DeCou	PO Box 8674, Missoula, MT 59807	728 – 5376	billdecou@bigsky.net

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