

April 2015

Birding Observer



Five Valleys Audubon Society, a Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Calendar of Events

- **Monday, April 6th, 7:00pm:** The next board meeting will be held at the Naturalist's Mercantile at 131 E Main St. in Missoula.
- **Monday, April 13th, 7:30pm:** Join us for our April program meeting to hear Bob Martinka speak about the rich wildlife of the Antarctic Peninsula. The meeting will be held in the Gallagher Business Building, room L14 at UM.
- **Wednesday, April 15th:** Submission deadline for the May edition of the *Birding Observer*.
- **Saturday, April 18th:** Bird walk at Lee Metcalf NWR from 10am-Noon. Meet the field trip leader at the Refuge Visitor's Center.
- **Saturday April 25th,** Field trip to Warm Springs Ponds led by Gary Swant. Meet in the Northwest corner of the Adams Center Parking Lot at the UofM for carpooling departing at 7am or meet at the McDonalds at the I90 exit in Deer Lodge at 815am, returning to Missoula around 4pm. Bring a lunch. For info call Terry Toppins at 214-1194.
- **Saturday May 2nd,** Field trip to Brown's Lake led by Jim Brown. Meet in the Northwest corner of the Adams Center Parking lot at the UofM for carpooling, departing at 8am and returning to Missoula by 5pm. Bring a lunch. For more info call Terry Toppins at 214-1194.



Audubon Program Heads Way Way Down Under

The Antarctic Peninsula and associated islands are arguably the most remote, spectacular, and wildlife rich region remaining on earth. Bob Martinka and his wife Kathy took a 19-day cruise to the Falkland Islands, South Georgia Island, and the Antarctic Peninsula. Bob's presentation at our Monday, April 13 meeting will highlight the history, scenery, and wildlife of the region. Our meeting will be in room L14 at 7:30 p.m. in the Gallagher Business Building on the UM campus. Bob and Kathy's tour followed parts of a route that Antarctic explorer Earnest Shackleton and his men traversed on their 1914-1917 expedition. A quick Wikipedia review of the Shackleton Expedition by attendees would add to their appreciation of this remote area of the world.

Born and raised in Pennsylvania, Bob migrated west to obtain degrees in Wildlife Biology and Ecology from Colorado State, Purdue, and a PhD from Montana State in 1970. Bob retired in 1997 after 30 years with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Bob began his career as a field biologist and worked his way up to Deputy Director. In retirement, Bob is an avid birder, photographer, and world traveler. He has served as a member of the Montana Audubon Board of Directors for the past 9 years, and is also a member of the Montana Bird Records Committee. Many of the bird photos in various Montana Audubon publications were donated by Bob.

Preceding Bob's program, two recipients of last year's Philip L. Wright Student Research awards will briefly present their research results. Bennett Bursick, a senior in wildlife biology, will speak on "The effects of wildfire on terrestrial subsidies to stream food web dynamics in the Bitterroot basin, Montana." Jason Hanlon, a senior, will answer the question, "How do small mammals change along a gradient of grazing intensity?"

Photo: Crabeater Seal



The Five Valleys Audubon Society will offer a workshop for beginning and intermediate birders. This workshop should appeal to birders who are just getting started and to birders who want to improve their identification skills.

The workshop will consist of four classroom sessions and one field trip. The classroom sessions are scheduled for Thursdays on April 2nd, 9th, 16th and 23rd, 2015 and will be held at the Fish, Wildlife & Parks Regional Office at 3201 Spurgin Road. They will start at 7:00 PM and last until 9:30 PM.

The program will include a full session on hawks, eagles and owls, and also include 30- to 60-minute sessions on bird anatomy, migration, waterfowl, woodpeckers, shorebirds, warblers, sparrows and birding-by-ear. The field trip will be held on Saturday, April 25th. There will be a \$35 charge for the workshop. To sign up, call Larry Weeks at 549-5632 or email him at bwsgene@gmail.com. The workshop will be limited to 30 participants.



"Peep! Whatcha doin?"

Well, I waited till the last moment to write this article. In fact it is 2 am. When I volunteered to write it I thought it was going to be a piece of cake. Now I am confused. Am supposed to be writing about 'peeps'? And from the 'Board'? No, no, who can I check with? I think they mean 'birds' not a 'board'.

Well, I have heard bird chips, and chirps, and cheeps, and chirrups. Oh, and yes, songs, and warbles, and calls. But I can't say I have heard 'peeps'.

Now it is 5 am. I will open a window, sit in my recliner, and try to hear peeps. Maybe a glass of pinot noir will help improve my hearing. (That's a lie. I was just trying to impress you. I drink whiskey). And, low and behold the birds are active, but I don't hear peeps. Another 15 minutes, and another glass of whisky... still no peeps. Finally, way off in the distance, I hear it ...a peep.

Wow - what a great way 'to bird'! If you want to follow my example, sit back and let the birds come to you. Then build a bird sanctuary in your backyard. It has to look and feel--wild. So plant some berry bushes in front of trees like mountain ash and spruce. Then some wildflowers in front of the bushes. Oh, the birds need water, preferably with some sort of dripping system.

But you will have to do some thinking and planning for the placement of the feeders. While you probably want them close to a window(s) for viewing all year, you might want to consider having a bench outside to view a feeder or two during the spring and summer. Watching the different species approach a feeder from someone else's yard will give you an idea on placement in your own plan. Make sure you take into consideration squirrels and cats. Plus what kind of window coverings will be needed so that you don't scare the birds feeding close to a window.

While there are lots of different bird feeders, the most fun choices you have are the different types of food (especially seeds) that attract the different species. Say you want the chickadees and finches, go with sunflower chips. Then you want to see doves, juncos, and sparrows, so use cracked corn. But sometimes you want to see woodpeckers and nuthatches, then its peanut kernels.

So enjoy watching the seasonal variety and listening for 'peeps' all from your Lazyboy.

Are you a big game hunter in Montana? Do you use lead ammunition when hunting? Lead ammunition fragments on impact, losing between 20-40% of its mass when it hits an object. As many as 200 fragments disperse throughout the carcass, and are often too small to see. The fragments may permeate the meat you bring home, and often riddle the gut piles and carcasses left in the field.



X-ray images of lead (top) and non-lead (bottom) ammunition shot into a ballistics gel.

Photo courtesy Jeremy Roberts, Conservation Media.

Why are lead fragments a problem? Mammalian and avian scavengers feeding on carcasses may inadvertently ingest the lead fragments. Overwintering eagles in many parts of Montana test positive for elevated lead levels, and several die each year from acute lead poisoning. Raptor View Research Institute tested 32 Golden and 11 Bald Eagles from the Bitterroot Valley during the winter, from 2011-present. The majority (86%) had elevated blood-lead concentrations. Evidence from multiple studies points to lead fragments as the culprit behind elevated lead levels in eagles and other avian scavengers.

What can we do about this issue? Luckily, this problem has a relatively easy solution: hunters can switch to non-lead ammunition, namely copper.



Adult Bald Eagle found in March 2014 outside of Hamilton, MT, with a blood lead level of $> 65\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$ ($> 20\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$ is considered clinical lead poisoning). He died within 2 days of admission.

Photo courtesy Brooke Tanner, Wild Skies Raptor Center.

Many hunters don't realize the impacts that lead ammunition may have. Or they may be aware of the issues, but are deterred by the price of copper ammunition. For these reasons, I am interested in forming a working group with two goals:

- To provide the public with information on the impacts of lead ammunition and the benefits of using copper ammunition.
- To develop a **voluntary** incentive program that works to remove barriers to the use of non-lead ammunition.

This project will only be effective if it encompasses a broad range of values and expertise, including input from biologists, wildlife conservation advocates, and particularly sportsman's groups. I invite anyone interested in this issue to participate in the Non-lead Working Group.

Will such a program work? Fortunately, such non-regulatory programs have been implemented in other areas, with success both in the voluntary switch to non-lead ammunition, and a resulting decrease in lead levels in avian species. For example, multiple agencies in the Jackson Hole area, such as the Wyoming Game and Fish, Bridger-Teton National Forest, and National Elk Refuge, encouraged a voluntary switch to non-lead ammunition, and in some instances, provided hunters with free or discounted copper ammunition. Decreased use of lead ammunition corresponded with a decrease in blood-lead levels in eagles during the 2009 and 2010 hunting seasons (Source: Craighead Beringia South wildlife research and education institute). In Arizona, Arizona Game and Fish teamed up with the Arizona Deer Association, Arizona Antelope Foundation, Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society, and Arizona Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation to

promote the voluntary switch to non-lead ammunition, largely out of concern for California Condors. These examples show that multiple-stakeholder partnerships can work, and that voluntary efforts can make a big impact on the health of our wildlife.

Are you interested in participating in a Non-lead Working Group? If so, please contact Kate Stone (381-1115).



June 5-7, 2015
Helena, Montana

The annual Bird Festival is fast approaching. You should have already received your registration brochure, so please register early by mailing the registration page or by going online at www.mtaudubon.org.

Rooms have been blocked at the Red Lion Colonial Inn. Call 1-406-443-2100 and mention you're with Montana Audubon Bird Festival to get the rate, or book online with the booking code MONT0604.

Last Chance Audubon, co-sponsors of the event are offering something different and fun this year. Read the following and then sharpen your pencils and create your own bird or birding-themed limerick or haiku masterpiece and submit for prizes.

*A limerick's not too hard to write
If you keep the rhyme sequence in sight;
Just let your mind go.
The ideas will flow.
So you don't want to try it? You might.*

Haiku is traditionally a 17-syllable poem arranged in 5 – 7 – 5 syllable lines without rhyme. Limericks are five lines with rhyming as illustrated above.

You may submit up to two of each. Be sure to keep copies for yourself and submit your entries to: Jo Lace at 210 S California St, Helena MT 59601. Or email Janice and Jo at jan2854@gmail.com NO LATER than May 1, 2015.

Register soon and join us in Helena in June. You will be treated to wonderful birding and non-birding tours, Friday evening and Saturday afternoon speakers, which include the keynote speaker, Scott Weidensaul, plus Vince Yannoni, Dan Ellison, and Andrea Silverman (Prickly Pear Land Trust.) Oh—and did we mention wonderful meals and beautiful accommodations?

Seeking Award Nominations

Each year Montana Audubon recognizes individuals who work for the conservation and protection of birds and other wildlife by presenting Awards at the Saturday evening banquet. We are currently seeking nominations in the following categories: Lifetime Achievement Award, Educator of the Year, Conservationist of the Year, Citizen Scientist of the Year, and Special Achievement Award. To make a nomination, download a nomination form from www.mtaudubon.org/about/awards.html.

Nominations are due at the office by May 22, 2015.
Mail completed forms to:

*Montana Audubon
PO Box 595
Helena MT 59624*

Seeking eBird Users

“Do you eBird? eBird is a free, web-based tool for sharing your bird observations, and is revolutionizing how citizen scientists contribute to our knowledge of birds. Currently, there are large geographic and species gaps within eBird for the state of Montana. To fill in these gaps, Kate Stone and Eric Rasmussen from MPG Ranch challenge you to share more of your observations. Our goal is to promote and incentivize eBird use in Montana. We will have fun prizes for monthly challenges and the eBirder with the most species and most counties at the end of the year. We'll also share tips for how you can use eBird to learn more about birds in Montana and elsewhere. For more information, contact Kate and Eric at montanachallenge2015@mpgranch.com.



Welcome New Members

Loren Barker
 Karen Francis
 Rhett & Valentyn Hoff
 Debbi Krieger
 Connie Murray
 Cindy Newberg
 Jim & Karen Stutzman

Michelle & Charley Cares
 Sherrill Herman
 Sigrun Kast
 Evy O. Leary
 Crystal Nelson
 Marianne Spitzform

Go Green and Save!

Do you want to help Five Valleys Audubon Society save money, paper and volunteer time? Please consider reading your *Birding Observer* online. Your online copy will contain content in color, and you will receive your newsletter much earlier than the mailed hard copy! If you wish to receive your *Birding Observer* via email, just send us a request with your name to Vick Applegate at k7vk@arrl.net. You can also find your current newsletter on the Five Valleys Audubon Society website at www.fvaudubon.org. Thanks!

Join 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: _____

Please note: The newsletter will be delivered electronically unless requested otherwise.

\$15 is enclosed for Chapter-only 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

Join National Audubon Society & Five Valleys 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*, and I may participate in all local Chapter activities. I understand that my dues are shared between NAS and my local Chapter.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Please note: The newsletter will be delivered electronically unless requested otherwise.

\$20 for a 1-year individual or family membership

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Please make the check payable to National Audubon Society and mail to:

National Audubon Society
 PO Box 422250
 Palm Coast, FL 32142-2250

Five Valleys Audubon Society
PO Box 8425, Missoula, MT 59807



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