

# April 2017

## Birding Observer



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

### Calendar of Events

---

- **Monday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6:00-8:30pm:** The April board meeting will be held at Larry Weeks's home, located at 2428 West Kent, Missoula, MT. Join us at 6:00 for a potluck dinner and the meeting will begin at 6:30.
- **Saturday, April 8<sup>th</sup>, 4pm:** Five-hour late day field trip to the Ninepipes area to look for Short-eared Owls. Meet at 4pm in the northwest corner of the Adams Center parking lot. We will return to Missoula after dark.
- **Monday, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 7:30pm:** Wildlife Biologist, Beverly Skinner will present on the Lost Trail National Wildlife Refuge at our April program meeting. Join us in the UM Gallagher Business Building, Room L14.
- **Saturday, April 15<sup>th</sup>:** The deadline for the May edition of the *Birding Observer*.
- **Saturday, April 15<sup>th</sup>:** All-day field trip to the Warm Springs Ponds. Meet at 7:00 am in the northwest corner of the Adams Center parking lot.
- **Saturday, April 15<sup>th</sup>:** Bird walk at Lee Metcalf NWR from 10:00am-Noon. Meet the field trip leader at the Refuge Visitor's Center.
- **Saturday, April 29<sup>th</sup>:** All-day field trip to Brown's Lake. Meet at 7:50 am in the northwest corner of the Adams Center parking lot.

### April Meeting: The Stunning Montana Wildlife Refuge You've Never Heard Of

---

At our Monday, April 10 meeting we'll learn about the Lost Trail National Wildlife Refuge from Beverly Skinner, wildlife biologist for the refuge. At over 9,000 acres, the refuge protects abundant wetlands and Dahl Lake, a shallow glacial lake. The refuge is located in northwest Montana approximately one hour west of Kalispell. We will meet at 7:30 p.m. in room L14 (lower level) of the Gallagher Business Building on the UM campus.



This introduction to a breathtakingly beautiful refuge will highlight some of its unique habitats. The lake and wetlands provide habitat for thousands of migratory birds as well as an abundance of amphibians including the rare boreal toad.

Due to its location, the refuge also helps protect an established wildlife corridor for several at-risk wildlife species including lynx and grizzly bears. The refuge is also home to a Federal threatened plant, Spalding's catchfly, which can be only be found in the Palouse prairie habitat.

Recently, several miles of county road were moved out of major wetland areas of the refuge. A portion of this project includes monitoring for vegetation and wildlife changes that may occur over time as wetlands are restored. As part of the restoration process, Beverly has used acoustic and ultrasonic monitors to document changes in wildlife sounds.

Beverly Skinner is a wildlife biologist for the US Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS), with a master's degree in Wildlife Management from University of Missouri - Columbia. She began her career working with birds and endangered plants in the Missouri Ozarks for the US Forest Service. She has now spent over 20 years with the FWS, beginning on the Innoko NWR, a 3.8 million acre refuge in interior Alaska. She also worked over 9 years at the Charles M Russell NWR in central Montana. She and her husband Bob currently live on the Lost Trail refuge with their five Tibetan mastiffs.

Also during the April Program Meeting, three recipients of the Philip L. Wright Memorial Research Awards will present for ten minutes each on their research:

- Aliccia Madison Deal: "Decoding the alarm calls of the Columbian ground squirrel."
- Mandy Slate: "Role of moss-dominated soil crusts as ecosystem regulators in Northern Rocky Mountain grasslands"
- Trevor L. Smith: "Investigating meso-predator release theory: the effect of cougar occupancy on meso-predator co-occurrence and prey availability in Northeastern Washington."

## Peeps From The Board: Changing Patterns of Survival By Andrea Stierle

---

There is overwhelming consensus among scientists that climate change is happening. The Union of Concerned Scientists has posted statements from numerous scientific associations affirming that the climate is changing and the changes are associated with human activities. Studies have shown that the distributions of many organisms are currently shifting to higher latitudes at a median rate of 16.9 km/decade or higher elevations at a rate of 11.0 meters/decade in response to changing climate. These rates are approximately 2-3 times faster than previously reported.<sup>1</sup>

Species differ in the way they adapt to climate change. Range shifts by animal populations can create problems with animals that remain in their historical ranges. Changes in seasonal timing can knock animals out of sync with the seasonal appearance of the plants and prey they need to survive. It can also affect access to nesting sites, both of which affect the timing of offspring hatching and their chances of survival.



Certain migratory birds are arriving at their breeding grounds earlier as global temperatures rise. Scientists examined records of migrating bird species dating back almost 300 years. The study included species that travel long distances, such as the British swallow (barn swallow, *Hirundo rustica*) and pied flycatcher, as well as those with shorter migrations, such as the lapwing and pied wagtail. They drew upon records from naturalists and scientists, including notes from 19th-century American naturalist Henry David Thoreau. They looked at hundreds of species across five continents and found that some birds were arriving at their summer breeding grounds on average about one day earlier per degree of increasing global temperature.<sup>2</sup>

A warming climate does not affect all birds equally, however. Long-distance migrants are less responsive to rising temperatures, and generally do not alter the timing of their migrations as much as birds with shorter migrations. This can have serious consequences. If short distance migrants change their arrival time by only a few days, they will have an advantage in selection of prime nest sites.<sup>2</sup>

Some animals have altered their diets as they try to adapt to new circumstances. Dwindling Arctic sea ice has limited access of polar bears to ringed and bearded seals, their preferred fat-rich diet, so they are turning to other animals for food. Over the past five years there has been a sharp increase in their reliance on caribou and nesting Arctic geese and duck eggs for food. As climate change accelerates ice melt in the Arctic, polar bears may find caribou and snow geese replacing seals as an important food source.<sup>3</sup>



It is not clear, however, what the long-term effects of shifting polar bear diets will have on nesting bird populations. Barnacle goose populations on the Svalbard Archipelago had almost rebounded from a brush with extinction 40 years ago. In 2004, however, a female polar bear and her cub all but wiped out the eggs and newly hatched chicks on one of the islands. The mother ate over 900 goose and duck eggs. Polar bears had never been seen on the breeding islands during nesting season, but today they are increasingly present.<sup>3</sup>

A warming environment has also been devastating for reindeer living in the Svalbard archipelago, one of the world's northernmost inhabited areas.<sup>4</sup> Large herds of reindeer travel hundreds of miles every year, in search of food, minimal warmth, and escape from mosquitoes. A warm spell in spring can be catastrophic for reindeer. They dig through deep snow to reach lichen-encrusted rocks, their main food source in winter, but they cannot break through a crust of ice. If it rains during the day then freezes at night, an ice layer will form that is almost impossible for the reindeer to penetrate. More than 60,000 reindeer starved to death during such a weather event in 2013 and those animals that survived were greatly weakened. The odds of such an event occurring in the future are high. Since 1990, the mean temperature in January has risen by nearly 10° C, and in July, it has risen by 1.5° C. Both changes have had profound effects. The slightly warmer summers have crossed an important threshold for plant life, so there is now a great deal more nourishment available in the fat times. But this seems to be outweighed by food rendered inaccessible due to wintertime warming. Warm summers mean more adults, but the warmer winters mean malnourished mothers that have fewer successful pregnancies and weaker babies if they are carried to term.<sup>4</sup>

1. I-Ching Chen et al. (2011) *Science*, 333, 1024-1026.
2. Usui, T. et al. (2017). *J. Anim. Ecol.*, 86: 250-261.
3. Gormezano L.J.; Rockwell R.F. (2015). *PLoS ONE* 10(6): e0128520.
4. Albon, S. D. et al. (2016) *Glob Change Biol.* doi:10.1111/gcb.13435

## Two-Day Field Trip To Freezout Lake By Larry Weeks

The two-day field trip to Freezout Lake and the Rocky Mountain Front has been scheduled for May 20 and 21, 2017. The plan is to leave Missoula at 7:00 am on May 20<sup>th</sup> and drive to Freezout Lake. The group will bird Freezout on Saturday and the Rocky Mountain Front on Sunday. We will spend the night in Choteau and the motel options include the Stage Stop Inn (1-888-466-5900), Bella Vista Motel (1-406-466-5711), Gunther Motel (1-406-466-5444), and Big Sky Motel (1-406-466-5318). Participants are asked to make reservations in advance. Most of the participants will be staying at the Stage Stop Inn. Please call Larry Weeks if you wish to attend, and he will coordinate carpooling. Plan to bring lunches for both days. There is a \$10 charge for multi-day field trips.



### Field Trip Summary by Larry Weeks

**Saturday, February 25th:** This was the second field trip in February to the Mission Valley. The route went up the valley from Ronan to Polson, and down Valley View Rd. and Moiese Valley Rd. Raptors are the primary focus of a winter field trip to the Mission Valley and we had 83 raptors. The breakdown included 28 Red-tailed Hawks, 26 Rough-legged Hawks, 24 Bald Eagles, 5 Great Horned Owls, 1 Merlin, 1 Northern Harrier, and 8 buteos. Three of the Red-tails were Harlan's and one of the Great Horned Owls was on a nest. One of the best stops was at a ranch to look at a Great Horned Owl and a Merlin. Mike Krantz, the rancher, came out to talk with the group. We discovered that he was a falconer and had a Peregrine Falcon by the name of Katie. Unfortunately, Katie took off about a month before and he was not able to locate her. He also told us that he sees a Gyrfalcon occasionally. The Polson sewage ponds had large numbers of Barrow's Goldeneyes and Lesser Scaup, 2 Redheads, 2 Bufflehead, and several Mallards. We found an American Dipper in Crow Creek where it empties into the Flathead River. We also got good looks at a flock of Gray Partridge. Other birds included 2 Trumpeter Swans sleeping on the ice, Townsend's Solitaires, and Common Mergansers in the Flathead River. There were 18 people on the trip and we had 32 species.

## Workshop for Beginning & Intermediate Birders

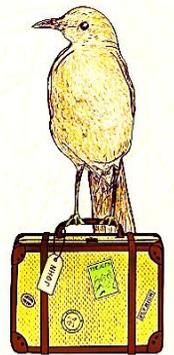
The workshop will consist of four classroom sessions and one field trip. The classroom sessions are scheduled for Thursdays on April 6th, 13th, 20th, and 27th and will be held at the Fish, Wildlife & Parks Regional Office at 3201 Spurgin Rd. They will start at 7:00 pm and last until 9:30 pm. The program will include bird anatomy, migration, waterfowl, raptors, woodpeckers, shorebirds, warblers, sparrows, and birding-by-ear. The field trip will be held on Saturday, April 22nd. There will be a \$35 charge for the workshop. To sign up, contact Larry Weeks at 549-5632 (540-3064 cell) or bwsgene@gmail.com.

### Bird Migration Facts

Migration peaks in spring and fall, but in reality, there are birds migrating 365 days a year. The actual dates of when birds migrate depend on many factors, including species, migration distance, travel speed, route, climate and more.

Before migrating, many birds drastically increase their body weight to store fat to use as energy while traveling. Some bird species may double their body weight in the weeks leading up to migration. This time period is when extra food sources, such as backyard feeders, are especially critical.

Hawks, swifts, swallows and waterfowl migrate primarily during the day, while many songbirds migrate at night, in part to avoid the attention of migrating predators such as raptors. The cooler, calmer air at night also makes migration more efficient for many species. Birds that migrate during the day most often take advantage of solar-heated thermal currents for easy soaring so they can fly further using less energy.



Migrating birds travel at speeds ranging from 15-50 miles per hour depending on the species, flight pattern and prevailing winds that can increase or decrease speed.

While most migrating birds fly at heights lower than 2,000 feet, birds have been recorded migrating at up to 29,000 feet high. The height of a bird's migration flight depends on wind patterns and landforms that may create obstacles, such as mountain ranges.

Source: [www.thespruce.com](http://www.thespruce.com)

June 9-11, 2017 - Great Falls, Montana

The annual Bird Festival is fast approaching. You should have received your registration brochure by now, so please register early by mailing the registration page or go online at [www.mtaudubon.org](http://www.mtaudubon.org). Field trips are already filling up—while still plenty of options available, but you may not get your first choice. If you're registering online, you only choose one field trip per day as the system will not allow you to register for a trip that is full; if you are registering by mail, be sure to include 1st, 2nd and 3rd choices.

Rooms have been blocked at the Best Western Plus Heritage Inn. Call 1-406-761-1900 or 1-800-548-8256 and mention you're with Montana Audubon to get the discounted rate.

Register soon and join us in Great Falls in June. Check out your brochure for Upper Missouri Breaks pre- and post-trips, email the chapter at [umbaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:umbaudubon@gmail.com), or call either of the following for more information: Candace Beery 907-306-6320 or Kay Silk 406-453-0545.

#### Montana Audubon Conservation Awards

Each year Montana Audubon recognizes outstanding 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 at [www.mtaudubon.org/about/awards.html](http://www.mtaudubon.org/about/awards.html). Nominations are due at the office by May 19, 2017. Mail completed forms to Montana Audubon, PO Box 595, Helena MT 59624.

## Recent Board Activities By Rose Leach

Your Five Valleys Audubon Society Board of Directors meets monthly. We often discuss and plan projects related to bird and habitat conservation in our area. We like to partner with other groups or agencies in the vicinity, which helps us leverage our support for conservation projects of interest. Our support can take many forms—from performing bird surveys, to helping with funding, participating in habitat restoration projects, writing comments on local proposals, or providing letters of support. Recently, the Board was presented information from the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes Wildlife Program (Dale Becker) and Legal Department (Brian Upton) regarding the Tribes' proposal to manage the National Bison Range.



Our Chapter has a long history of interest in bird and habitat conservation in the Mission Valley, and we have participated in many projects in the area throughout the Chapter's history. In fact, our Chapter had participated in the "adopt a refuge program" at Ninepipe Refuge during the 1980s. The Board voted unanimously to support the tribal proposal, and we wrote a letter of support to the Tribal Chairman for inclusion in their packet of information to the Fish and Wildlife Service and to members of Congress. In so doing, we joined two of our sister Audubon Chapters—Mission Mountain (Polson) and Flathead (Kalispell) Chapters in providing letters of support.

Other projects from the last three months that we are working on include bird surveys in our Important Bird Area (contact Jim Brown), placing vent screens on vault toilet pipes (contact Ed Monnig, if you would like to help), letter of support for Habitat Montana (contact Amy Seaman, Montana Audubon), and comments on the Gentry Estates Subdivision, Missoula County.



## New Members

Janet R. Allison  
Mary Hauser  
Becky Latray  
Deborah Norheim

Terry Dokken  
Chris Hilzendeger  
Nancy Mori  
Victoria Pennington



Receive your newsletter  
electronically. It's Easy!

Just email Vick at [k7vk@arrl.net](mailto:k7vk@arrl.net)  
and give him your email address.

We promise – we don't share emails  
with anyone except Montana Audubon.

### Five Valleys Audubon Society Membership Application

Please support Five Valleys Audubon Society (FVAS). There are several ways to donate. Any method ensures that you will receive our *Birding Observer* newsletter and may participate in all chapter activities. Please help us reduce our \$3,700 annual newsletter cost by signing up for email delivery. FVAS is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit.

Make checks out to Five Valleys Audubon Society and mail to: PO Box 8425, Missoula, MT 59807  
Or donate on our website: [fvaudubon.org/join](http://fvaudubon.org/join)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ \$15 FVAS membership only, includes newsletter sent via email.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Legacy Fund, creating and supporting local urban bird habitats for citizen enjoyment without leaving the city.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ \$25 FVAS membership only, includes newsletter sent via USPS.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total contribution

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ General Fund, use as needed for conservation, field trips, education and outreach.

\_\_\_\_\_ Volunteer - Please contact me. I would like to know more about how I may help birds and FVAS.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Phillip L. Wright Fund, small grants for student research.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: (Required to receive the newsletter and birding alerts via email.) \_\_\_\_\_

Please note: FVAS does not share email addresses with anyone except Montana Audubon. Your email address is safe with us!

To become a new member, renew a lapsed membership or renew a current membership of National Audubon Society (NAS) and receive Audubon magazine, go to this website: [fvaudubon.org/nas](http://fvaudubon.org/nas). This will ensure that FVAS receives a \$20 one-time credit for your membership. All NAS members become members of FVAS. The other financial support we receive from NAS is \$1,300 annually for being a chapter in good standing. Montana Audubon (MTA) is an independent organization and receives no financial support from NAS. MTA is responsible for its own fundraising and FVAS donates \$3,000 to MTA annually. There are various tax advantages for donating to MTA, you may contact them through their website: [mtaudubon.org](http://mtaudubon.org). Please give generously to each organization, as we work collaboratively to protect what we all love.

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



NON-PROFIT ORG.  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
MISSOULA, MT  
59807  
PERMIT NO. 490

TO:

Five Valleys Audubon Society  
PO Box 8425, Missoula, MT 59807  
[www.fvaudubon.org](http://www.fvaudubon.org)

**OFFICERS:**

|                |                   |          |  |
|----------------|-------------------|----------|--|
| President      | Rose Leach        | 721-0779 | <a href="mailto:rleach-2@bresnan.net">rleach-2@bresnan.net</a>                   |
| Vice President | Catherine Goodman | 549-5404 | <a href="mailto:catherine.goodman08@gmail.com">catherine.goodman08@gmail.com</a> |
| Secretary      | Andrea Stierle    | 782-6419 | <a href="mailto:andrea.stierle@mso.umt.edu">andrea.stierle@mso.umt.edu</a>       |
| Treasurer      | Linda Holtom      |          |  |

**DIRECTORS:**

|           |                 |          |  |
|-----------|-----------------|----------|--|
| 2017-2020 | Jim Brown       | 549-5632 | <a href="mailto:bwsgenea@gmail.com">bwsgenea@gmail.com</a>         |
| 2017-2020 | Jean Duncan     | 396-1171 | <a href="mailto:jeanclaire@montana.com">jeanclaire@montana.com</a> |
| 2017-2020 | Gerhard Knudsen |          |  |
| 2016-2019 | Ed Monnig       | 549-0580 | <a href="mailto:emonnig01@gmail.com">emonnig01@gmail.com</a>       |
| 2016-2019 | Rose Stoudt     | 880-8060 | <a href="mailto:ras120656@yahoo.com">ras120656@yahoo.com</a>       |
| 2016-2019 | Susie Wall      | 274-0548 | <a href="mailto:susiewall2@gmail.com">susiewall2@gmail.com</a>     |
| 2015-2018 | Paul Loehnen    | 721-7517 | <a href="mailto:ploehnen@gmail.com">ploehnen@gmail.com</a>         |

**COMMITTEES:**

|                        |                     |              |  |
|------------------------|---------------------|--------------|--|
| Archivist              | Shirley Holden      |              |  |
| Audubon Adventures     | Vacant              |              |  |
| Christmas Bird Count   | Larry Weeks         | 549-5632     | <a href="mailto:bwsgenea@gmail.com">bwsgenea@gmail.com</a>       |
| Conservation           | Amy Cilimburg       |              | <a href="mailto:amycili@gmail.com">amycili@gmail.com</a>         |
| Education              | Larry Weeks         | 549-5632     | <a href="mailto:bwsgenea@gmail.com">bwsgenea@gmail.com</a>       |
| Field Activities       | Larry Weeks         | 549-5632     | <a href="mailto:bwsgenea@gmail.com">bwsgenea@gmail.com</a>       |
| Habitat Protection     | Jim Brown           | 549-8052     | <a href="mailto:brownjs2@bresnan.net">brownjs2@bresnan.net</a>   |
| Member Records         | Vick Applegate      | 549-0027     | <a href="mailto:k7vk@arri.net">k7vk@arri.net</a>                 |
| Membership Promotion   | Jerry Dirnberger    | 360-5133     | <a href="mailto:dirnberger@aol.com">dirnberger@aol.com</a>       |
| Newsletter Circulation | Hedwig Vogel-Wright | 549-7251     |  |
| Newsletter Editor      | Bev Orth Geoghegan  | 406-750-0149 | <a href="mailto:orthbev@hotmail.com">orthbev@hotmail.com</a>     |
| PL Wright Endowment    | Bill Gabriel        | 273-6880     | <a href="mailto:biograf@earthlink.net">biograf@earthlink.net</a> |
| Program                | Susie Wall          | 274-0548     | <a href="mailto:susiewall2@gmail.com">susiewall2@gmail.com</a>   |
| Publicity              | Poody McLaughlin    | 543-4860     | <a href="mailto:pmcregan@bresnan.net">pmcregan@bresnan.net</a>   |
| University Liaison     | Chad Bishop         | 243-4374     |  |
| Web Site               | Pat Little          | 493-7115     | <a href="mailto:roughleg@gmail.com">roughleg@gmail.com</a>       |
| Past President         | Pat Little          | 493-7115     | <a href="mailto:roughleg@gmail.com">roughleg@gmail.com</a>       |

Montana Audubon  
PO Box 595, Helena, MT 59624  
(406) 443-3949  
[www.mtaudubon.org](http://www.mtaudubon.org)

Norane Freistadt, Interim Director  
[norane@mtaudubon.org](mailto:norane@mtaudubon.org)

David Cronenwett, Development Specialist  
[david@mtaudubon.org](mailto:david@mtaudubon.org)

Janet Ellis, Senior Director of Policy  
[jellis@mtaudubon.org](mailto:jellis@mtaudubon.org)

Cathie Erickson, Accounting Specialist  
[cerickson@mtaudubon.org](mailto:cerickson@mtaudubon.org)

Trinity Pierce, Land Stewardship Coordinator  
[restoration@mtaudubon.org](mailto:restoration@mtaudubon.org)

Dan Roper, Legislative Assistant  
[danroper@mtaudubon.org](mailto:danroper@mtaudubon.org)

Amy Seaman, Conservation Program Manager  
[aseaman@mtaudubon.org](mailto:aseaman@mtaudubon.org)

Carolyn Sevier, Center Director  
[csevier@mtaudubon.org](mailto:csevier@mtaudubon.org)

Sarah Chatwood, Teacher Naturalist  
[schatwood@mtaudubon.org](mailto:schatwood@mtaudubon.org)

Fred Weisbecker, Board President