

January 2021

Birding Observer



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

Status of Chapter Board Meetings

Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, Five Valleys Audubon Society Board meetings will be conducted via Zoom.

When: 1st Monday of the Month, from 7:00 to 9:00 PM

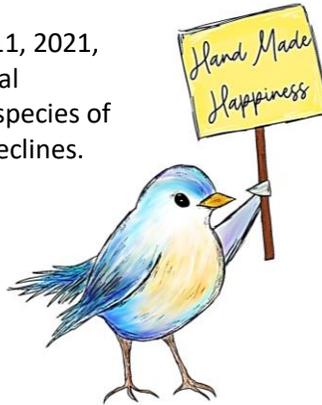
Where: Zoom Meeting

Contact: To join, contact Andrea Stierle at andrea.stierle@mso.umt.edu in advance.

Audubon Zoom Meetings

Great Blue Herons:

Please join us on Monday, January 11, 2021, 7:00-9:00pm, to learn about our local populations of Great Blue Heron, a species of concern due to recent population declines. Montana Audubon staff members, Carmen Borchelt and Bo Crees, will describe their recent project surveying for heron rookeries via high-resolution satellite imagery. Some of their review included our own grass valley area!



Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2401474617>

Meeting ID: 240 147 4617

Find your local dial-in number:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/kerE45fWQV>

Sustaining Plants and Animals that Sustain Us:

Sacajawea Audubon Society recently hosted a program titled, Nature's Best Hope: Sustaining Plants and Animals that Sustain Us – with Doug Tallamy. To watch the recorded presentation, visit:

https://www.gotostage.com/channel/1c8878c1033747db_a0cd82e9b5e6146f. Doug's talk begins at 29:20 minutes.

Birds Linked to Happiness

Source: EcoWatch

A new study from the German Center for Integrative Biodiversity Research indicates greater bird biodiversity is linked to greater happiness levels amongst people.

To come to this conclusion, the researchers utilized data from the 2012 European Quality of Life Survey to explore the connection between species diversity around homes, towns, and cities, and how it relates to satisfaction. More than 26,000 adults from 26 European countries were surveyed. What they found was a correlation between the specific number of bird species and the happiness felt by European residents.

Although the focus was on birds, the researchers do state that birds are the best indicators of biological diversity and that living near natural green spaces is linked with greater happiness.

"According to our findings, the happiest Europeans are those who can experience numerous different bird species in their daily life, or who live in or near-natural surroundings that are home to many species," said Joel Methorst, a doctoral researcher at the Senckenberg Biodiversity and Climate Research Center who served as lead author of the study.

During the pandemic, bird-watching became quite a popular hobby amongst many more people than usual as it is an accessible activity that can be done with social distancing in mind. If you want to feel a bit happier, perhaps it's time you take up the hobby yourself if you haven't already done so!

"Nature conservation therefore not only ensures our material basis of life, but it also constitutes an investment in the well-being of us all," says Methorst.

Peeps from the Board: Migrating Birds in Missoula By Jim Brown



Lately, I have been thinking about the amazing migration of birds through the Missoula Valley. Our Chapter has been using knowledge of bird migration in efforts to protect key habitats needed by migrants. More about

that later. Not surprisingly, we have learned through bird surveys and scientific studies that the Missoula Valley lies in an important bird migration corridor. Some migrant species are breeding birds, some are wintering birds from the north and some are just stopping off briefly on their way to other places. We have recorded a large diversity of species in the Clark Fork River--Grass Valley Important Bird Area (IBA) that occupies the bottom lands along the Clark Fork and Bitterroot Rivers. Since Chapter volunteers began bird surveys in 2002, through 2019, we have recorded 242 species in the IBA and 212 species just in the Knife River ponds and adjoining area. These ponds are being acquired by the City of Missoula from the Knife River Corporation now that they have completed their gravel operations.

In addition to migrant species that breed in the Valley, many are stopping to rest and refuel as they continue on their journey. Some of the unusual observations include Common and Pacific Loons, Horned and Red-necked Grebes, American White Pelican, Black-crowned Night Heron, White-faced Ibis, Surf and White-winged Scoters, American Avocet, Sabine's gull, Bewick's Wren, Magnolia Warbler, and Scarlet Tanager. During early spring in just the past two years large flocks of Snow Geese and ducks have been stopping off at the Knife River ponds to rest as they continue their journey. Wintering birds from the arctic tundra that regularly visit here, include American Tree Sparrow, Rough-legged Hawk and Northern Shrike.

Our knowledge of Missoula's bird migration has gained more significance from recent studies of nocturnal flight calls conducted by Project Night Flight in close cooperation with the MPG Ranch and the University of Montana Bird Ecology Lab. Some 50 acoustical recorders were placed in the Bitterroot Valley with the northern most recorder established in the Missoula Valley by Five Valleys Audubon on the Line Ranch a short distance from

the end of Whitaker Drive. It is named the Meadowlark unit. These recorders capture bird calls up to 600 meters above the recorder and 300 meters to the side. During the fall of 2018, approximately 6000 individuals of 30 species were recorded at the Meadowlark site. Many individuals likely used this area as stopover habitat. The most common vocalizations were from 11 species of sparrows, 10 species of warblers and 3 species of thrushes. Some unusual birds for Missoula were Upland Sandpiper, Canada Warbler and Lapland Longspur. The study found that during the fall most birds migrate at lower elevations especially as food resources become scarcer at higher elevations. The highest detections occur at pinch points in the valleys. About one-half hour before sunrise vocalizations stop, and migrants then drop down to the ground to rest, refuel, and avoid predators.

We are using knowledge of migration to pursue conservation efforts in protecting McCauley Butte from development and in encouraging the City to manage the Knife River ponds as a natural area for all citizens to enjoy. This coming year the City will be seeking public input on the best use for the ponds. Five Valleys Audubon, the Clark Fork Coalition, Montana Natural History Center and the University of Montana Natural Area Committee have joined together to urge the City to manage the ponds area as a natural area that gives priority to protecting its natural values. We may need your help in this process by lending your voice in support of the natural area opportunity. You will hear more about this as the public process begins. Stay tuned.



The Winter Bird By Jones Very (1813-1880)

Thou sing'st alone on the bare wintry bough,
As if spring with its leaves were around thee now;
And its voice that was heard in the laughing rill,
And the breeze as it whispered o'er meadow and hill,
Still fell on thine ear, as it murmured along
To join the sweet tide of thine own gushing song.
Sing on—though its sweetness was lost on the blast,
And the storm has not heeded thy song as it passed,
Yet its music awoke in a heart that was near,
A thought whose remembrance will ever prove dear;
Though the brook may be frozen, though silent its voice,
And the gales through the meadows no longer rejoice,
Still I felt, as my ear caught thy glad note of glee,
That my heart in life's winter might carol like thee.

Welcome New Members

Phoebe Bean Sarah Elsasser
Kristin Freeman Alan Goddard
Elizabeth Johns Virginia Knight
Claudia LaRance Kim McGuire
Todd J. Murdock Peter Rice
Luwana Ripley Jennifer Rusk
Alicia Schwarz Marianne Spitzform
Burke & Karen Townsend Mike A. Young

Dear Readers,

Our membership totals are down for the year, due to the pandemic and our current lack of in-person programming. But our work continues in the background, we can assure you. We hope you will renew your membership soon, to help us in our mission of supporting conservation and bird habitat in our local area. We promise you will feel empowered when you do!

**Thank you for your support,
Your local Chapter Board.**

Five Valleys Audubon greatly appreciates those who renewed their membership this past month. We generally encourage members to receive their newsletter via email (to conserve resources and expenses), which is the default mailing option if provided by new members. If you want to change how your newsletter is delivered or have any changes to your mailing preferences, please contact the Membership Promotion, Scott Kluever at sjkluever@gmail.com.

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

\$ _____ \$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!

Please be aware that membership in Five Valleys Audubon Society (FVAS) alone does not confer membership in the National Audubon Society (NAS). FVAS and NAS are separate 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations. To become a new member of NAS and receive Audubon magazine (or to renew a current or lapsed membership) visit the website: fvaudubon.org/nas. Using this website will ensure that FVAS receives a \$20 one-time credit for your NAS membership. All NAS members become members of FVAS. A third organization, Montana Audubon (MTA), is also an independent organization and receives no financial support from NAS. MTA handles statewide issues and is responsible for its own fundraising. To assist in this important statewide work you may contact MTA through their website: <http://mtaudubon.org/>. Please give generously to each organization. Although independent, we work together to protect what we all love.

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