

# January 2022

## Birding Observer



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

#### Calendar

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- **Monday, January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6:00-8:00 pm:** Please join us in Cooper Room A, at the Missoula Public Library, for the Five Valleys Audubon Society Board Meeting.
- **Monday, January 10<sup>th</sup>, 7:00pm:** Attend our monthly chapter meeting to hear Naomi Alhadeff, of National Wildlife Federation, discuss gardening for wildlife. We will meet in Room 110 of the Interdisciplinary Sciences Building (ISB) at UM.
- **Saturday, January 15<sup>th</sup>:** Beginning Bird Walk at the Lee Metcalf NWR from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. Meet the field trip leader at the Refuge Visitor's Center.
- **Saturday, January 29<sup>th</sup>:** All-day field trip to the Mission Valley to look for raptors. Meet in the northwest corner of the Adams Center parking lot at 8:00 am or at the Cenex in Ronan at 9:00am. This is a driving trip with frequent stops to look at birds. We will spend some time outside the car so be prepared for cold temperatures, wind and snow or rain.

#### Creating a Wildlife-friendly Garden

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Naomi Alhadeff

Please join us for our annual joint meeting with the Native Plant Society on Monday, January 10, 2022, at 7:00 PM. Our speaker, Naomi Alhadeff, will be presenting her talk on the Garden for Wildlife™ program and how the five elements of gardening can improve your space to be more wildlife-friendly, especially for birds. Naomi will discuss some native plants which aid in attracting insects, ultimately

bringing in our feathered friends. When all five elements are joined, in some capacity, our Montana wildlife benefit. Studies show even small connections of native land and enhanced habitat can improve North America's wildlife. She welcomes all your questions to help you garden for wildlife in your own backyard!

Naomi Alhadeff is the Montana Education Manager for the National Wildlife Federation in Missoula, Montana. She also serves as the Montana Project WET Coordinator and executive board member for the Montana Environmental Education Association. Her passion lies in communicating with the public about Montana's wildlife and the habitat we all share. She graduated from University of Montana's Wildlife Biology program and has been involved in environmental education, both in and out of classroom, with state agencies, conservation districts, and non-profit organizations in Nebraska and Washington before returning to Montana. The National Wildlife Federation's goal to protect our nation's wildlife and build upon our conservation heritage blends well with her work with the Garden for Wildlife program, Eco Schools USA, and the WildlifeXing Program. Through a blend of science and education, she enjoys sharing her love for wildlife with kids and adults everywhere she roams.

The meeting will be held in Room 110 in the Interdisciplinary Sciences Building (ISB) on the University of Montana campus. The building lies on the south end of campus on Beckwith Avenue between Maurice and Mansfield avenues. We will continue to meet in-person unless increasing COVID numbers require us to switch to a virtual meeting. Please check your email regularly and monitor our website for updates. Masks are required based on university policy and social distancing will be practiced. We will zoom the meeting as well:

Time: Jan 10, 2022, 6:30 PM Mtn Time

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://umontana.zoom.us/j/98379465613>

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## Peeps: New brochure highlights Clark Fork River - Grass Valley Important Bird Area

### By Poody McLaughlin

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Our home, the Missoula Valley, is a place where native plants and animals are a vital part of the living landscape. In large part, these natural values bring us and keep us here. Several bird species of concern call the Missoula Valley home for much of the year. The habitats they need are increasingly threatened. The Lewis's Woodpecker, while a common summer resident in cottonwood habitats, is one of those species of conservation concern.



Lewis's Woodpecker

That's why members of Five Valleys Audubon began, in 2002, to monitor breeding birds (wetlands, grasslands, and brushy draws) on private lands in the Missoula Valley. In the ensuing years these surveys were expanded to include three tracts of cottonwood gallery forests along the Clark Fork River between Kelly Island and Huson. As a result, in 2006, the area was designated an Important Bird Area (IBA). The IBA program is a global initiative to identify a network of sites that are critical for the conservation of birds. Then in 2009, the Clark Fork River-Grass Valley IBA status was raised to one of continental significance due to the high numbers of Lewis's Woodpeckers.

IBAs focus attention on habitats but have no legal or regulatory authority. The concept is to identify areas that sustain healthy populations of birds, especially species of concern, then focus attention on these sites to encourage conservation through various stewardship options. Informing landowners about conservation options is an important part of the process. This in turn can contribute significantly to bird conservation over large areas. Since work began on recognizing this IBA, 1,600 acres have been protected by conservation easements and 160 acres have been purchased for public use.

This IBA features a rich complex of cottonwood forests, willow bottoms, and grasslands with brushy draws. This habitat richness contributes to the rich diversity of identified bird species, 246, more than half of the bird species recorded for the entire state. In addition, there are 13 species of conservation priority within the IBA.

In updating this new brochure, Five Valleys Audubon partnered with the Five Valleys Land Trust, Montana Audubon, and Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks to highlight and focus on the importance of this IBA area. The brochure

features a new map, created by cartographer Clint Whittle-Frazier, that illustrates the boundaries of the IBA and types of land ownership within it. You can download a digital copy of the brochure at <https://fvaudubon.org/> or request a hard copy from me at [poodymc@gmail.com](mailto:poodymc@gmail.com).

Speaking of conservation success, look no further than the pair of Trumpeter Swans that nested for the first time in the Missoula Valley in 2016. Their nest was on a ranch, protected by a conservation easement within the Clark Fork River-Grass Valley IBA. Let's work towards more success stories like this in the future.

### Field Trip Summary

#### By Larry Weeks

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**Sunday, December 5<sup>th</sup>:** The Mission Valley field trip followed a now familiar route of Little Martin Rd., several dirt roads between Round Butte Rd. and Polson, Valley View Road and Moiese Valley Road. The birding was a little slow in the beginning, but a small falcon (probably a Merlin) was spotted flying while we were on Round Butte Rd. It is too dangerous to stop on this busy road, so we had to wait until we turned onto Cornelius. And then we were unable to locate the bird. We then turned onto Robertson and found our first Great Horned Owl, a Prairie Falcon, a Merlin, and several American Tree Sparrows. Then we started seeing several Rough-legged Hawks and more Great Horned Owls. After crossing Back Rd. on Carbine, we encountered a large concentration of buteos which included a second Prairie Falcon. At this point in the day, the number of Rough-legged Hawks exceeded the Red-tailed Hawks. The tour then swung by the Pablo Reservoir, and we searched for a Snowy Owl that had been seen the previous week, but no luck. There were at least 2 Blue Jays at the Town Pump in Polson. Valley View Rd. had more Great Horned Owls and a few buteos. A 3rd Prairie Falcon was found on Moiese Valley Rd. along with more buteos and 2 Townsend's Solitaires by Crow Creek. There was a flock of Bohemian Waxwings at Foust Slough alone with lots of Mallards and 2 Trumpeter Swans. The trip ended at a Wildlife Management Area by Mission Creek where we got a response from a Virginia Rail. We had 137 raptors for the day with the following breakdown:

Red-tailed Hawks 49,  
Rough-legged Hawks 44,  
Great Horned Owls 13,  
Bald Eagles 12, American  
Kestrels 6, Prairie Falcons  
3, Northern Harriers 2,  
Merlin 1, unid. Buteos 6,  
and unid, small falcon 1.  
There were 21 people on  
the field trip, and we had  
31 bird species.



Blue jay

## 2022 FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE

Date	Description
Sat, Jan 29 <sup>th</sup>	Mission Valley
Sat, Feb 26 <sup>th</sup>	Mission Valley
Sat, Mar 26 <sup>th</sup>	Lee Metcalf NWR
Sat, Apr 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Ninepipes – Short-eared Owls
Sat, Apr 30 <sup>th</sup>	Brown's Lake
May 28 <sup>th</sup> - 29 <sup>th</sup>	Freezout Lake/Rocky Mt. Front
Jun 9 <sup>th</sup> - 12 <sup>th</sup>	Bowdoin NWR
Sun, Jun 19 <sup>th</sup>	Wild Skies Raptor Center
Sat, Jun 25 <sup>th</sup>	Lee Creek
Sat, Jul 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Clearwater
Jul 7 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup>	Glacier
Sat, Jul 30 <sup>th</sup>	Deer Lodge
Sun, Aug 21 <sup>st</sup>	Freezout Lake
Sun, Sep 11 <sup>th</sup>	Pablo/Ninepipes
Sat, Oct 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Brown's Lake
Sun, Nov 13 <sup>th</sup>	Metcalf NWR
Sun, Dec 4 <sup>th</sup>	Mission Valley



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### 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, includes newsletter sent via email.

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

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

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

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Free for students, includes FVAS membership, sent via email.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ 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.

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](http://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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