

June 2014

Birding Observer



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

Calendar of Summer Events

- **June 6th – 8th:** Don't miss Montana Audubon's *Wings Across the Big Sky Festival* in Bozeman, Montana. For more information, go to www.mtaudubon.org, or call the Helena office (406-443-3949).
- **Saturday June 21st:** Full day field trip to Georgetown Lake led by Nate Kohler to look for high mountain birds. Meet in the northwest corner of the Adams Center Parking Lot for carpooling departing at 6:30am or at the Lodgepole Campground at Georgetown Lake at 8:15am, returning to Missoula around 430PM. For more information call Terry Toppins at 214-1194.
- **Saturday June 21st:** Beginning bird walk at Lee Metcalf NWR from 10am-Noon. Meet the field trip leader at the Refuge Visitor's Center.
- **Saturday June 28th:** Conservation and Birds in the Upper Blackfoot Valley led by Jim Brown. Meet in the northwest corner of the Adams Center parking lot for carpooling, departing at 7:00am. On this all day field trip, participants will view and learn about conservation and enhancement of natural resources and the rural way of life accomplished through the community based Blackfoot Challenge. We will visit a private ranch and USFWS ownerships to view extensive protected wetlands and grasslands. A half mile hike through sagebrush to an overlook of Kleinschmidt Lake will be involved. Expect to see a variety of water birds and songbirds utilizing the Browns Lake Area. Call Jim Brown at 549-8052 for more information.
- **Saturday July 19th:** Beginning bird walk at Lee Metcalf NWR from 10am-Noon. Meet the field trip leader at the Refuge Visitor's Center.
- **Saturday July 26th:** Nate Kohler will lead a field trip to the Seeley Lake area for a day of viewing Dragonflies and Damselflies. It is possible to see up to 30 species of these fascinating insects. Rubber boots are recommended along with sunscreen, insect repellent, collecting nets (if you have them) and a lunch. Meet in the northwest corner of the Adams Center parking lot for carpooling departing at 6:30am or at the Clearwater Junction Rest Stop at 8:00am. For more information call Terry Toppins at 214-1194.
- **Friday, August 15th:** Submission deadline for the September edition of the *Birding Observer*.
- **Saturday, August 16th:** Beginning bird walk at Lee Metcalf NWR from 10am-Noon. Meet the field trip leader at the Refuge Visitor's Center.
- **Saturday August 23rd:** Field trip to the old Smurfit-Stone Plant led by Larry Weeks to look for migrating shorebirds and late summer birds. Meet in the northwest corner of the Adams Center parking for carpooling departing at 8:00am or at the intersection of Mullan Road and Pulp Mill Road at 8:30am for a 6 hour trip. For information call Terry Toppins at 214-1194.
- **Tuesday, September 2nd:** The next board meeting will be on Sept 2nd (the Tuesday following Labor Day) at Betsy's office - Axilon Law Group, 257 W Front St, downtown Missoula.



Peeps From The Board: More Eponymous Birds of Montana

By Clancy Cone



Say's phoebe

The following is a continuation of my list of eponyms, bird names that include a person's name.

1. **Say's Phoebe** was named after Thomas Say (1787-1843). A naturalist and entomologist, he is considered to be "the father of descriptive entomology" in the United States. Prince Charles Lucien Bonaparte (1803-1857), a zoologist and nephew of Napoleon, named the bird after Say, who provided the first description of the bird and other species, following an expedition of the Rocky Mountains, from 1819-1820.
2. **Cassin's Finch, Cassin's Kingbird, and Cassin's Vireo** were named for John Cassin (1813-1869), Curator of Ornithology at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. He held this position unpaid for 25 years. During his tenure, Cassin described 198 species of birds.
3. **Steller's Jay** was named after George Wilhelm Steller (1709-1746), a German zoologist and explorer, who is known as the first European to step foot in Alaska. On an expedition with Danish navigator Vitus Jonassen Bering, of Bering Strait fame, he was the first to describe the Jay, among other animal and plant species.
4. **Bewick's Wren** was named after Thomas Bewick (1753-1828), an English wood engraver and natural history author, who wrote *A History of British Birds*. Shortly before he died, he met John James Audubon who named the wren after Bewick.
5. **Townsend's Solitaire and Townsend's Warbler** was named after John Kirk Townsend (1809-1851), an American naturalist, ornithologist and friend of Audubon. Townsend collected many bird species over the course of this life, and in fact, died of arsenic poisoning, the main preservative in bird specimens.
6. **Sprague's Pipit** was named after Isaac S. Sprague (1811-1895), a painter and illustrator, who served as Audubon's assistant on an ornithological expedition up the Missouri river. The Pipit was discovered on this trip and subsequently named after Sprague.
7. **McCown's Longspur** was named after John Porter McCown (1815-1879), a confederate soldier who rose to General during the Civil War. Since the military was often in unexplored frontier regions, many soldiers in the Army served as naturalists. Among them, McCown collected birds and sent them to collectors and museums back east. In 1851, while firing into a flock of horned larks, he also shot two unfamiliar brown birds. Later that year, George Newbold Lawrence published the first description of the birds that were new to science and named them after McCown.
8. **MacGillivray's Warbler** was named after William MacGillivray (1796-1851), a Scottish artist and professor of natural history at Marischal College. He was a friend of John James Audubon and helped him to write *Ornithological Biographies*. Audubon named the warbler after his friend.
9. **Blackburnian Warbler** was named after Anna Blackburne (1726-1793), an English botanist, who studied natural history and collected specimens. It is believed that her brother sent her a Blackburnian Warbler, during a visit to the United States, which she added to her collection and was later named after her by Thomas Pennant. Mrs. Blackburne never married, but went by "Mrs." because she believed it lent more standing and authority.
10. **Brewer's Blackbird and Brewer's Sparrow** were named after Dr. Thomas Mayo Brewer (1814-1880). He co-wrote *History of North American Birds* with Baird and Ridgeway. He preferred to study skins in museums, rather than conduct field studies. He defended the introduction of the House Sparrow into the U.S. Audubon named the Blackbird, and Cassin named the Sparrow.
11. **Baird's Sandpiper and Baird's Sparrow** were named after Spencer Fullerton Baird (1823-

1887), an American naturalist and ornithologist, who became the first curator of the Smithsonian Institution. He published more than 1,000 works during his lifetime.

12. **Nelson's Sparrow** was named after Edward William Nelson (1855-1934), an American naturalist who worked for the Bureau of Biological Survey and was the founding President of American Ornithologists' Union. He was also the creator of the Migratory Bird Treaty, which is still in force. The bird was named after him by Joel Asaph Allen, a zoologist and ornithologist.
13. **Lincoln's Sparrow** was named after Thomas Lincoln (1812-1883) a farmer and abolitionist from Dennysville, Maine. Lincoln shot the bird in Nova Scotia, while there with Audubon in 1834. Audubon named the bird in his honor. Lincoln described Audubon as, "a nice man, but as Frenchy as thunder."

Source material: Beolens, Bo and Watkins, Michael, *Whose Bird?*, published by Christopher Helm, 2003, London.

Board Update By Pat Little

Sarah Tarka Baer has resigned from the board to concentrate on her family business. Thank you, Sarah, for your great work and enthusiasm with the newsletter circulation. Hedwig Vogel-Wright will be taking over this role. Welcome Hedwig!

Jerry Dirnberger joined the board as Membership Promotion Chair. We're excited to benefit from his energy and enthusiasm. Welcome Jerry!

The board has been discussing the issue of lead poisoning of birds, which spikes during hunting season, and is looking for ways to encourage use of non-lead bullets for big-game hunting. If you have any thoughts, please get in touch with one of the board, or send email to info@fvaudubon.org.

Audubon Friends, Don't Forget !

The J Bar L Ranch in the Centennial Valley is offering Audubon Society members a 10% discount on lodging for a three or more night stay. You can also earn a 10% donation for your local chapter. This offer is good through September 2014. For more information, visit: <http://jbarl.com/content/conservation-group-discount-donation-package>.

Browns Lake Field Trip

by Jim Brown

An exciting day of birding was enjoyed by the 22 people who joined the Browns Lake field trip on May 3. Lots of waterfowl had arrived and even migrant songbirds were moving through the area. The first excitement happened just as we turned off the highway into Ovando. A pair of mating Long-billed Curlews was observed close up--certainly an interesting event. Going south out of Ovando, we paused by a patch of willow and alder where Yellow-rumped and Orange-crowned Warblers, White-crowned and Song Sparrows and Cassin's Finch were observed. Next up, the small ponds produced good views of an unusual variety of ducks. In all for the day we identified 19 species of ducks. We easily found several Red-naped Sapsuckers in a patch of aspen but it took some sleuthing by Terry Toppins to locate a Williamson's Sapsucker.

Browns Lake was busy with people fishing but we still found many Red-necked Grebes and a good variety of migrants including Common Loon, Eared Grebe, Horned Grebe, Western Grebe and Bonaparte's Gull. The highlight was a pair of Western Grebes that performed their courtship display of running upright across the water. In the ponds south of the Lake a number of Marsh Wrens were singing and chasing one another. Several early arrival shorebirds that we observed were American Avocet, Wilson's Phalarope, Least Sandpiper and Lesser Yellowlegs, which produced some discussion of whether the yellowlegs were greater or lesser. Not far from the vehicles a pair of Sandhill Cranes performed their courtship dancing ritual. Finally, some controversy ensued over a glimpse of the seldom seen wild stump turkey. Over 70 species were observed.



Sandhill Crane

A Real Audubon Adventure

Submitted by Susannah Murphy

Last month, the kids in Susannah Murphy's fourth grade class at Frenchtown Elementary School had a "Happy Bird-Day," when conducting an *Audubon Adventures* lesson. As the class read together about hummingbirds and completed the corresponding activities, something WONDERFUL happened. A hummingbird flew into the window of a neighboring kindergarten classroom. As Ms. Murphy recalls, "Of course, the kindergarten students were freaking out, so our class, armed with our awesome *Audubon Adventures* magazines went down to listen to their stories and help them learn the facts about their new friend. By this time, the custodian had gently netted the tired little hummer and released it into the wild. Both classes were fired-up about this opportunity,



which grew into a chance for the kindergarteners to write about their hummingbird encounter and the fourth graders to help them out. It was an incredible day!"

One of Ms. Murphy's 4th graders helps a kindergartener write an essay about hummingbirds.

Curlew Survey

by Jim Brown

Long-billed Curlews, the big brown birds having a long decurved bill that can fly like the wind, are certainly one of the more exciting birds we find in Montana. It is a bird of the grasslands and prairies and is North America's largest shorebird. But its population has declined considerably over the past several decades due to conversion of suitable nesting and winter habitat to other uses. In Montana the population is strongest east of the divide but we know curlews also occur in western Montana where expansive grasslands can still be found such as in the Mission Valley and surrounding areas.

Montana Audubon is leading an effort to bring attention to this charismatic species and seek conservation of grasslands. To help accomplish this, Five Valleys Audubon has conducted two curlew surveys to find out where curlews are breeding. Our first effort was in the Jocko Valley. Terry McEaney, Rose Leach, Andrea and Don Stierle, Ed Monnig and Jim Brown scoured the area in two vehicles. But, we were unable to find any curlews. But knowing this is helpful to understanding the species.

Our next survey was in Camas Prairie and the Little Bitterroot River corridor east of Hot Springs. Clancy Cone, Rose Leach, Cynthia Hudson, Andrea and Don Stierle and Jim Brown left early on May 7, a chilly, wet morning hoping for success. The sampling plan was to stop about every half mile along selected rural roads and look and listen for curlews. Our excitement was jump started at the first stop in Camas Prairie when Andrea spotted a flying curlew. Cynthia quickly found two more so our spirits were pumped. We heard or observed curlews at 15 out of 31 stops. This area was definitely a home for curlews.

In the Little Bitterroot River corridor we found curlews at only one of the stops. For the most part the landscape here did not have the grassland-wetland ingredients that make up good curlew habitat. During the survey other birds added to our enjoyment and included Swainson's Hawk, Trumpeter Swan and Golden Eagle, all species of conservation concern. A bonus of the outing was an illustrated presentation by Clancy Cone about the geology and history of discovery of Glacial Lake Missoula. We ate lunch while listening to Clancy and viewing the giant ripples created by the catastrophic floods from Glacial Lake Missoula. We all agreed that Five Valleys Audubon needs to organize a field trip next year to view the interesting geology and of course observe interesting birds.



Bluebird Trail Update

By Kathy Heffernan

In May, Sentinel High School Biology students made 10 boxes from kits cut by prisoners at the private prison near Shelby. The students roughened the inside to ensure Tree Swallows can escape the boxes. They screwed the boxes together, then added light finish to the outsides. The final touch was metal hole guards to protect the boxes from Northern Flickers. The boxes will be distributed by Mountain Bluebird Trails, a bluebird conservation organization.



Binoculars Available for Checkout

Missoula Public Library recently added something new to its collection: Binoculars. They are handy for birdwatching, sighting game and even stargazing. They come in two sizes: A smaller, lightweight pair good for hiking, and a larger, heavier pair that can see clearly at a greater distance. These binoculars can be checked out for free at the reference desk. For more information on these binoculars, please call the reference desk at 721-BOOK (2665).

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: _____

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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.

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

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Montana Audubon
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www.mtaudubon.org

OFFICERS:

President	Pat Little	493 – 7115	roughleg@gmail.com
Vice President	Rose Leach	721-0779	rleach-2@bresnan.net
Secretary	Andrea Stierle	782 – 6419	andrea.stierle@mso.umt.edu
Treasurer	Kit Stevens	721 - 3530	dogmakit@yahoo.com

DIRECTORS:

2014-2017	Carolyn Goren		carolyngoren@gmail.com
2014-2017	Gerhard Knudsen		gmk@bresnan.net
2014-2017	Scott Hampton	(417) 343-3499	wscotthampton@gmail.com
2012-2015	Clancy Cone		
2012-2015	Betsy Griffing		
2013-2016	Ed Monnig	549 – 0580	emonnig01@gmail.com

COMMITTEES:

Member Records	Vick Applegate	549 – 0027	k7vk@arri.net
Membership Promotion	Jerry Dirnberger	360 – 5133	
Program	Carolyn Goren		carolyngoren@gmail.com
Conservation Advocacy	Vacant		
Habitat Protection & Restore	Jim Brown	549 – 8052	brownjs2@bresnan.net
Field Activities	Terry Toppins	214 – 1194	tertop@aol.com
Publicity	Poody McLaughlin	543 – 4860	pmcregan@bresnan.net
Education	Larry Weeks	549 – 5632	bwsgenea@gmail.com
PL Wright Endowment	Bill Gabriel	273-6880	biograf@earthlink.net
University Liaison	Winsor Lowe	243 – 6364	
Newsletter Editor	Bev Orth Geoghegan	(406) 750-0149	orthbev@hotmail.com
Newsletter Circulation	Hedwig Vogel-Wright	549 – 7251	
Web Site	Pat Little	493 – 7115	roughleg@gmail.com
Archivist	Shirley Holden		
Audubon Adventures	Barbara Ross	552 – 0500	bjmross@gmail.com
Christmas Bird Count	Larry Weeks	549 – 5632	bwsgenea@centric.net
Past President	Paul Loehnen	721 – 7517	ploehnen@gmail.com

Steve Hoffman, Executive Director
shoffman@mtaudubon.org

Janet Ellis, Program Director
jellis@mtaudubon.org

Norane Freistadt, Development Director
norane@mtaudubon.org

Amy Cilimburg, Director of Conservation & Climate Policy
amy@mtaudubon.org

Darcie Vallant, Center Director
darcie@mtaudubon.org

Heather Bilden, Education Director
heather@mtaudubon.org

Amy Seaman, Bird Conservation Associate
aseaman@mtaudubon.org

Fred Weisbecker, Board President