

March 2013

Birding Observer



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

Calendar

- **Monday, March 4th, 7pm:** Naturalist's Mercantile will host the March board meeting. It is located at 131 E Main Street, in downtown Missoula.
- **Monday, March 11th, 7:30pm:** Pat Little will discuss his raptor research at the March program meeting. Assemble at 7:30 p.m. in room L14 (lower level) of the Gallagher Business Building on the UM campus.
- **Friday, March 15th:** Submission deadline for the April edition of the *Birding Observer*.
- **Saturday, March 16th:** Beginning bird walk at Lee Metcalf NWR from 10AM-Noon. Meet the field trip leader, at the Refuge Visitor's Center.
- **Sunday, March 17th:** Meet at the Waterworks Hill trailhead at 2pm for bluebird trail maintenance. Help replace and repair bluebird boxes. Bring a portable drill, if you have one. Contact Kathy Heffernan for more information or to RSVP at 543-4097 or kjohnheff@gmail.com. (We will postpone if it pours.)
- **Sunday, March 24th:** All day field trip, led by Terry McEaney, to Freezout Wildlife Management Area (WMA) near Choteau for the Snow Goose and swan migration. It is possible to see over 100,000 Snow Geese. Meet in the middle of the UM Adams Center Parking Lot at 6:00am for carpooling. Please note, the group will return after dark. Suggested donation of \$20 to your car pool driver to cover gas. For more info call Terry Toppins 214-1194.
- **Saturday, March 30th:** Terry McEaney will lead field trip to Lee Metcalf NWR looking for early spring migrants. Meet in the middle of the UM Adams Center Parking Lot at 8:00am for carpooling, returning at 400PM. For more info call Terry Toppins at 214-1194.
- **Monday, April 1st:** April Fools half-day field trip led by Terry Toppins. Meet in the Northwest corner of the UM Adams Center Parking Lot at 8:00am for carpooling - destination is a surprise, returning at noon. For more info call Terry Toppins 214-1194.
- **April 11th, 18th, 25th & 27th:** Workshop for intermediate birders. See article on page 2 for details.

Raptor Studies in Washington State

Pat Little, President of Five Valleys Audubon Society, will describe his raptor research in Washington state from 1994 to 2008, which included monitoring a Peregrine Falcon nest on a Seattle skyscraper, surveying hawks in winter, banding peregrines and monitoring their nests in Seattle and the San Juan Islands, and fall ridge trapping of migrating hawks. **The chapter's March meeting is on Monday the 11th at 7:30 p.m. in room L14 (lower level) of the Gallagher Business Building on the UM campus.**

Pat grew up in England and came to the United States in 1980, pursuing a career in aeronautical engineering. One day he got tired of working for large companies, quit his job, and started volunteering at The Nature Conservancy. Eighteen months later they hired him, and he worked for them, in Seattle, for 11 years. In 1994 he took a hawk ID class, which opened his eyes to the world of birds, and changed his life. Pat has spent many autumns since then sitting in cold, drafty blinds on mountain ridges trying to trap and band hawks.

Following Pat's presentation, Zoe Glas, a recipient of a Philip L. Wright Memorial research award in 2012 will tell us of her investigation of "Mountain Plover Nest Attendance Habits".

Board Update: Also during the March 11th program meeting, Five Valleys Audubon Society will hold its Annual Membership Meeting. The nominating committee is recommending Andrea Stierle for Secretary and Ed



Monnig as Director. These candidates plus any nominations from the floor will be voted on by the membership at the meeting.

Peregrine falcon

Peeps from the Board

by Paul Loehnen



Lemur

In October 2012, Beth and I went on a birding trip in Madagascar. I had heard that this would be a different experience, but to be honest we were overwhelmed. Madagascar has been described as the “Eighth Continent”. Between 510 and 150 million years ago, Gwondona, a massive land mass, existed. Eventually it split up, creating South

America, Africa, Australia and the Indian subcontinent. When this splitting and re-arrangement of the continents occurred, a chunk of land was left floating between Africa and India, now known as Madagascar. This island is 1,000 miles in length. Its flora and fauna have been isolated for over 65 million years, and evolution has resulted in some unique specimens.

The birding was amazing! There are five families of birds that do not exist anywhere else in the world, and fortunately, we were able to observe most of them. We were also blown away by some of the other creatures.

It is postulated that primitive primates, precursors of monkeys arrive on the shores of Madagascar possibly on floating debris. These primates have evolved into Lemurs, which occur nowhere else on earth. If you ever have the opportunity to go, I highly recommend Madagascar as a birding and wildlife viewing destination.

Help Science With Your Bird Observations

Did you record a list of birds on your latest outing? The Montana Bird Distribution project collects bird observations from around the state.

A simple web-based data entry tool is available for general entry of bird sightings. This form can be used from any web browser, computer platform, or connection speed. To use this form or check it out, go to: <http://mtnhp.org/observationform/>.

Workshop for Intermediate Birders

by Larry Weeks

The Five Valleys Audubon Society will offer a workshop for intermediate birders again this year. This workshop should appeal to birders who enjoy birding and want to improve their identification skills. It will consist of three classroom sessions and one field trip. The classroom sessions are scheduled for Thursday, April 11th, and Thursday, April 18th, and Thursday, April 25th. The field trip will be held on Saturday, April 27th at the Lee Metcalf NWR. The classroom sessions will be held at the Fish, Wildlife & Parks' Regional Office at 3201 Spurgin Road and 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 30-minute to 60-minute sessions on waterfowl, woodpeckers, shorebirds, warblers, sparrows, and birding-by-ear. There will be a \$35 charge for the workshop. To sign up, call Larry Weeks at 549-5632 or email him at bwsgenea@onlinemt.com. The workshop will be limited to 30 participants.

Field Trip

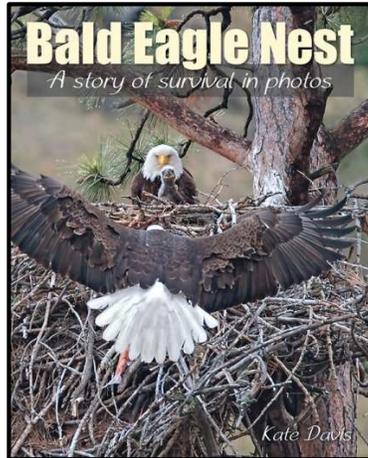
by Terry McEneaney

Saturday, February 9, 2013: Terry McEneaney led a group of 26 participants on field trip in the Mission Valley.



Snowy Owl

Our birdlist included a minimum of 37 species of birds. The list included: one Snowy Owl, one Golden Eagle, one Prairie Falcon, Gray Partridge, Great Horned Owl, Bald Eagle, Rough -legged Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk (including 2 Harlan's dark morphs), Red-winged Blackbird, Black-billed Magpie, Common Raven, American Crow, Rock Pigeon, E. Starling, Trumpeter Swan, Mallard, Northern Flicker, Northern Harrier, House Finch, Pine Grosbeak, Great Blue Heron, Townsend's Solitaire, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Black-capped Chickadee, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Downy Woodpecker, Lesser Scaup, Canada Goose, one Cackling Goose, Greater Scaup, Common Goldeneye, Barrow's Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Hairy Woodpecker, and Belted Kingfisher, Common Redpoll, American Goldfinch. We had quite a caravan of cars, but managed to get people on most of the birds. A good time was had by all.



Kate Davis's new book, *Bald Eagle Nest* is now available, and features an unusual eagle family in Western Montana. 132 photos by Kate illustrate courtship, nesting, neighborhood resident animals, parent eagles and the four babies growing up and fledging. Four young is very rare with only a

dozen nests ever reporting such success, remarkably six have been in Montana.

After a little introduction, she launches into the saga of the polite young, taking turns to be fed - everything from pigeons, ducks and goslings to squirrels, fish and deer. That story went worldwide on the internet when one of the adults dropped an eviscerated fawn on power lines which shorted out electricity to East Missoula in June; "Deer With Wings," claimed dozens of stories, caused by our diligent parents losing their hold on the fawn. A family of Eastern Fox Squirrels shared the nest, with curious young exchanging looks, then the post-fledging stories and lots of flying eagle shots, favorites being the attacks by mobbing Bullock's Orioles. One of these images won Audubon's Top 100 Photographs for 2012. Kate writes, "I never knew I would grow to admire Bald Eagles this much, and hopefully the readers will too."

Bald Eagle Nest is available at Fact and Fiction and Naturalist's Mercantile downtown Missoula.

WANTED: Nuthatches in your backyard!

Nora Carlson is continuing her research into nuthatches' responses to predators and wants to work with members who have feeders in their back yards. If you have nuthatches coming to your feeders and would like to provide Nora with access to your back yard for her research, please contact her ASAP so she can get going before the winter flocks break up. You can call her at (206) 915-0903 or email nora.0.carlson@gmail.com (that's a zero in her address, not a letter "o").

The genes activated for human speech are similar to the ones used by singing songbirds, new experiments suggest.

These results, which are not yet published, show that gene products produced for speech in the cortical and basal ganglia regions of the human brain correspond to similar molecules in the vocal communication areas of the brains of zebra finches and budgerigars. But these molecules aren't found in the brains of doves and quails -- vocal birds that do not learn their sounds.

"The results suggest that similar behavior and neural connectivity for a convergent complex trait like speech and song are associated with many similar genetic changes," said Duke neurobiologist Erich Jarvis, a Howard Hughes Medical Institute investigator.

Jarvis studies the molecular pathways that songbirds use while learning to sing. In past experiments, he and his collaborators found that songbirds have a connection between the front part of their brain and nerves in the brainstem that control movement in muscles that make songs in birds. They've seen this circuit in a more primitive form related to ultrasonic mating calls in mice. Humans also have this motor learning pathway for speech.

From this and other work, Jarvis developed the motor theory for the origin of vocal learning, which describes how ancient brain systems used to control movement and motor learning evolved into brain systems for learning and producing song and spoken language.

Jarvis is an associate professor of neurobiology at Duke University Medical Center and a Howard Hughes Medical Institute investigator. He received his B.A. in biology and mathematics from the City University of New York, Hunter College, and his Ph.D. in neurobiology and animal behavior from the Rockefeller University.



Reprinted from *ScienceDaily* (Feb 14, 2013)

Zebra finches

Five Valleys Audubon Society Has a New Website

We are pleased to announce the launch of our new website, www.fvaudubon.org. The site has been developed to keep you—our members and friends—up to date with our chapter activities, and also with other bird-related happenings in and around Missoula. It is designed to work on smart phones and tablets, as well as regular computers, so you can check on our upcoming events while you're on the go.

Some of the things you can find on the site are:

- Recent bird sightings, from eBird
- Calendar of events – field trips, member meetings, classes
- What's that bird? – a guide to identifying common birds in our area
- Bird of the month – an article each month about a bird, or bird-related subject
- Reports from recent field trips and other events
- Birding hotspot maps for Missoula and the Bitterroot Valley
- A gallery of beautiful bird photographs



With the new design it's easy for us to add content—articles about birds and birding, images, event announcements—and we will be keeping it up to date with all the birdy stuff going on around Missoula and in western MT.

This is a work in progress, so please let us know if there is something you would like to see on the site, or if you have suggestions for improvements. There are many places on the site where you can add comments, or you can email us at info@fvaudubon.org.

We hope you enjoy the new website and find it useful.

Save the Date: The 14th Annual Wings Across the Big Sky Festival



The 14th Annual Wings Across the Big Sky Festival will take place June 7th – 9th, 2013 in Lewistown, Montana. You are invited to join Montana Audubon and Lewistown for dynamic birding field trips, great speakers, interesting presentations, and fun festivities as we celebrate efforts to conserve our birds and wildlife in the heart of Montana.

Keynote speaker Susan Bonfield of the International Migratory Bird Day and Environment for the Americas will share with us a glimpse into the Western Hummingbird Partnership and the world of hummingbirds. [Note the change in schedule for speaker John Marzluff. He will join us for the 15th Annual Wings Across the Big Sky Festival in Bozeman.]

Experience Central Montana and all this landscape has to offer either through festival field trips or your own exploration. There will be an art workshop, tours of the historic Lewistown and its architecture, and other things to do for those who choose to remain at the hotel during field trip outings. Lewistown has wonderful fishing too! Bring your rod and reel along with your binoculars!

- Lewistown Trail System
- Snowies, Moccasins, Belts, Judiths, and Highwoods
- Big Springs Trout Hatchery
- Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge
- Big Spring Creek Fishing
- An official Cornell Lab of Ornithology eBird Trail Tracker, the first and only in the state, will be available in the lobby of the festival hotel, the Yogo Inn, to record your sightings!

Registration will open on March 6, 2013! Visit mtaudubon.org for more information.

Welcome New Members:

Ken & Paula Barber
Cindy Newberg
Amy Rose
Sue Weidner

Anne Black
Caroline Reel
Duane Shinn
Celia C. Winkler

Michael Fredrickson
Sandra B. Roe
Julia Todd



GO GREEN and SAVE !



Do you want to help Five Valleys Audubon Society save money, paper and volunteers' time? Please consider viewing your *Birding Observer* online. In addition your online copy will have 'color' content and you will receive your newsletter much earlier than the mailed hard copy!

If you can **Go Green** and wish to receive your *Birding Observer* only via email, just send us a request with your name to Vick Applegate at k7vk@arrl.net. You can also always find your current newsletter on the Five Valleys Audubon Society's 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: _____

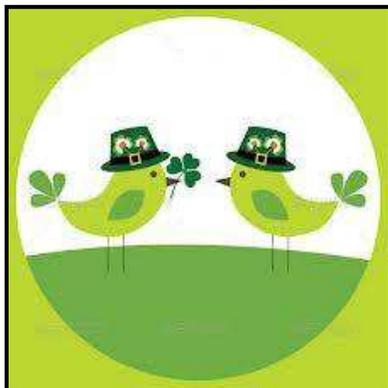
Please note: The newsletter will be delivered electronically unless requested otherwise.

___ \$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**



TO:

Five Valleys Audubon Society Board of Directors

OFFICERS:

President	Pat Little	1710 34th St., Missoula, 59801	493 – 7115	roughleg@gmail.com
Vice President	Sue Reel	3707 Creekwood Rd, Missoula, 59802	543 – 4827	reelhutto@gmail.com
Secretary	Vacant			
Treasurer	Kit Stevens	230 Bickford St., Missoula 59801	721 - 3530	dogmakit@yahoo.com

DIRECTORS:

2011-2014	Carolyn Goren	PO Box 7189, Missoula, MT 59807		carolyngoren@gmail.com
2011-2014	Gerhard Knudsen	4400 Scott Allen Dr, Missoula, 59803		gmk@bresnan.net
2011-2014	Lynn Tennefoss	8850 O'Brien Creek Rd, Missoula, MT 59804		ltennefoss@audubon.org
2012-2015	Clancy Cone	5604 Bridger Court #2, Missoula, MT 59803		
2012-2015	Betsy Griffing	257 W Front St, Ste. B, Missoula, MT 59802		

COMMITTEES:

Member Records	Vick Applegate	303 Rimrock Way, Missoula, MT 59803	549 – 0027	k7vk@arrl.net
Membership Promotion Program	Vacant			
Conservation Advocacy	Carolyn Goren	PO Box 7189, Missoula, MT 59807		carolyngoren@gmail.com
Habitat Protection & Restore	Terry McEaney	1215 Lolo Rd, Missoula, MT 59802	493 – 1438	ravenology@bresnan.net
Field Activities	Jim Brown	1504 Woods Gulch Rd, Missoula, MT 59802	549 – 8052	brownjs2@bresnan.net
Publicity	Terry Toppins	1210 Tower St, Missoula, MT 59804	214 – 1194	tertop@aol.com
Education	Poody McLaughlin	1629 Douglas Dr., Missoula, MT 59808	543 – 4860	pmcregan@bresnan.net
PL Wright Endowment	Larry Weeks	2428 W Kent Ave, Missoula, MT 59801	549 – 5632	bwsgenea@onlinemt.com
University Liaison	Bill Gabriel	PO Box 520, Florence, MT 59833		biograf@earthlink.net
Newsletter Editor	Dan Pletscher	University of MT, Missoula, MT 59812		dan.pletscher@umontana.edu
Newsletter Circulation	Bev Orth Geoghegan	310 W. 73 rd St., Apt. 1A, New York, NY 10023	(406) 750-0149	orthbev@hotmail.com
Web Site	Sarah Tarka Baer	1039 Palmer Street, Missoula, MT 59802	(717) 422-3453	sarah.tarka@gmail.com
Archivist	Pat Little	1710 34th St., Missoula, 59801	493 – 7115	roughleg@gmail.com
Audubon Adventures	Shirley Holden	2319 Valley Dr, Missoula, MT 59802		
Christmas Bird Count	Barbara Ross	215 Florence St, Missoula, MT 59801	552 – 0500	bjmross@gmail.com
Past President	Larry Weeks	2428 W Kent Ave, Missoula, MT 59801	549 – 5632	bwsgenea@onlinemt.com
	Paul Loehnen	11556 Bench Road, Missoula, MT 59808	721 – 7517	loehnen@gmail.com

Montana Audubon:

PO Box 595, Helena, MT 59624
 (406) 443-3949

www.mtaudubon.org

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 Bird Conservation: amy@mtaudubon.org
 Darcie Vallant, Center Director: dvallant@mtaudubon.org
 Mihail Kennedy, Land Stewardship Coordinator: mkenedy@mtaudubon.org
 Heather Bilden, Education Director: heather@mtaudubon.org
 Dan Sullivan, Board President