

March 2022

Birding Observer



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

Calendar

- **Monday, March 7th, 6:00-8:00pm:** Please join us in the Ellingson Room of the Missoula Public Library, for the Five Valleys Audubon Society Board Meeting.
- **Monday, March 14th, 7:00pm:** Attend our monthly chapter meeting to hear a presentation by Angela Hornsby, Curator of the Philip L. Wright Zoological Museum at the University of Montana. We will meet in Room 110 of the Interdisciplinary Sciences Building (ISB) at UM.
- **Saturday, March 19th:** Beginning Bird Walk at the Lee Metcalf NWR from 10AM to 1PM. Meet the field trip leader at the Refuge Visitor's Center. We will continue to practice social distancing. There is an outdoor toilet at the Visitor's Center.
- **Saturday, March 26th:** All-day field trip to the Lee Metcalf NWR. Meet at 8:00 am in the northwest corner of the Adams Center parking lot. There will be about 3 miles of level hiking. Due to the on-going pandemic, please wear a mask if you carpool with people other than your household members and practice social distancing in the field.
- **Saturday, April 2nd:** Five-hour late day field trip to the Ninepipes area to look for Short-eared Owls. Meet in the northwest corner of the Adams Center parking lot at 4:00 pm. Please wear a mask if you carpool with people other than your household members and practice social distancing in the field.



Angela at work at the UMZM

125 years at the Philip L. Wright Zoological Museum

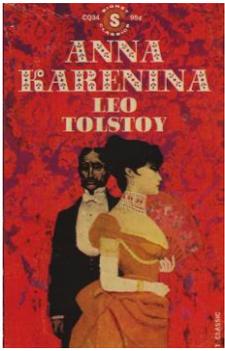
Join us Monday, March 14, 2022, at 7PM to hear Angela Hornsby, Ph.D. present her fascinating talk on A library of biodiversity: 125 years of research, education, and outreach in the Philip L. Wright Zoological Museum at the University of Montana (UMZM).

2022 marks the 125-year anniversary of the UMZM, and the 25-year anniversary since its dedication in honor of Dr. Phil Wright. Curator Angela Hornsby will walk the audience through the history and growth of the UMZM, highlighting how specimens still occupy central roles in our scientific understanding of bird life and in the training of future wildlife biologists, ecologists, conservationists, and more. A small diversity of the UMZM's over 6,000 specimens of bird study skins, skeletons, nests, and eggs will be on display to view after the presentation.

Angela received her Ph.D. in Ecology, Evolution, and Conservation Biology at the University of Nevada-Reno in 2016 and was a post-doc at Virginia Tech until joining UM in 2019. Her research included small mammal evolution, biogeography in response to climate change, and the evolution of dietary toxin resistance in birds and reptiles. At the museum, Angela expands the collections, improves accessibility of biodiversity data, and assists researchers in their use of the collections, which number over 23,000 specimens of birds and mammals representing life from the 1880s to the present.

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 will continue to be required based on university policy and social distancing will be practiced. **(ATTENTION: To attend the meeting virtually, see Zoom details on page 4.)**

Peeps from The Board: A Tale of Anna's Hummingbirds By Edward Monnig



Leo Tolstoy's novel *Anna Karenina* begins with the lines "Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." In Tolstoy's novel, Anna acts with fierce independence against the strictures of her society and her family. She travels beyond the confines of her home in her search of love, fulfillment, and a new reality. Her story can be imagined as a rough parallel to the experience of Anna's Hummingbirds in Missoula this winter.

The home range of the Anna's Hummingbirds is generally along the west coast, west of the Cascades and the Sierras. Unlike the three more common hummingbird species in western Montana (Calliope, Rufous, and Black-chinned), Anna's Hummingbirds are not long-distance migrants. They may move upslope in the mountains during breeding season, but do not escape winter with long migrations south to Mexico or southeastern US.

Anna's Hummingbirds have been spotted in the Missoula area in the summer and fall on occasion over the past several years, part of the long-range expansion of their home range to the north and east. Cornell Laboratories reports that in the late 1800's the breeding territory of Anna's was confined to southern California and northern Baja California.

My friend Tom first observed two Anna's in the middle of November, as they tried to feed on an empty artificial nectar feeder still hanging outside his kitchen window. He dutifully filled it and retrieved it every night to keep it from freezing. The system worked well, and the birds visited regularly for several weeks. Then the serious cold hit, and the daytime temperatures rarely climbed above freezing. Not to be outdone, Tom, the creative engineer, rigged a heater that he attached to the feeder.

This outfit worked for another week or two until the very cold northeast winds spilled over the Lincoln saddle near his house. Soon after, Tom noticed a small ball of ice encircling the end of one of the bird's beak, likely the result of dipping its beak in near-freezing feeder solution. Just like the hummingbird that jabs a bee or wasp and cannot extract its beak, this bird seemed doomed. Again, Tom was not deterred. He took a hair dryer and slowly approached the feeder. The bird sensed his good intentions and stayed while Tom defrosted its beak. He repeated this routine a second time later that day. Hope returned.

Those of us who have lived in Montana for a while know that these northeast winds are harbingers of the bitter cold. Soon the temperature fell below zero Fahrenheit. And the morning came when the Anna's hummingbirds did not reappear.

Their adaptations to the wet, moderate weather of the Pacific Northwest had not prepared them for this unrelenting core cold. Like Tolstoy's Anna and her lover, Vronsky, these hummingbirds had ventured into strange lands beyond their capacity to adapt. Unlike Anna they did not have the means to retreat.

It is, of course, too easy to anthropomorphize these wild creatures. Our nature sheds empathy for their distress and compels us to provide for them as we can. And we mourn their individual loss

There is some solace in knowing that, as a species, Anna's Hummingbirds are doing well. According to the North American Breeding Bird Survey Anna's Hummingbirds populations had increased by over 2% per year between 1966 and 2014.

The drive that pushed these two pioneers into Montana has served the species well as it expands into new and more hospitable territory. Yet that success as a species has come at the expense of some individuals, these tiny equivalents of the lone wandering wolf.



Most hummingbirds retreat south in autumn, but Anna's Hummingbirds can be found in northern latitudes throughout the year. But how do they survive the northern cold? They suspend their high rate of metabolism by entering a state of torpor – a sort of nightly hibernation, where heart rate and body temperature are reduced to a bare minimum. (Source: Birdnote.org)

Mission Valley Field Trip Summaries

Summary #1

By Larry Weeks

Saturday, January 29th: The January field trip to the Mission Valley ended up being very complicated. When the group assembled at the Cenex in Ronan, there were 25 people and 13 cars. So, I split up the group into 2 separate field trips and I had Alex Kearney lead one and I led the other. The following write up is for Larry's group. The fog conditions were terrible in the morning which severely limited the birding. We worked our way north from Round Butte Road to Polson and found a few Red-tailed Hawks, 3 Northern Harriers, 3 Great Horned Owls, and a flock of about 50 Common Redpolls. Clancy Cone, who had come down from Dayton, reported that the fog conditions were better at Dayton and north. Therefore, we decided to go to Somers to look for the Snowy Owl. On the way, we stopped at the Dayton Bay on Flathead Lake and had Trumpeter Swans, Redheads, one Canvasback, Hooded and Common Mergansers, Common Goldeneyes, Buffleheads, Mallards, and Ring-billed Gulls. We then stopped at Clancy's cabin for hot chocolate and lunch. There was a Red-breasted Nuthatch and a Black-capped Chickadee at his bird feeder and a large flock of birds that flew that were most likely Pine Siskins. We then drove to the Somers area, but we were unsuccessful in locating the Snowy Owl along Farm and Manning Roads. Thomas Kallmeyer and the Stierles had already planned to go to Kalispell, so they decided to look for the Long-eared Owl that had been reported at the airport. (They did not see the Long-eared Owl). The remaining participants returned to Polson. The birding conditions had improved, and we had excellent birding on Valley View and Moiese Valley Roads. The highlights included about 25 Red-tailed Hawks, 3 Rough-legged Hawks, 12 Bald Eagles, 5 Great Horned Owls, 2 Prairie Falcons, 2 Northern Harriers, and 1 American Kestrel. Our group ended up with 34 species which included 74 raptors.

Summary #2

By Alex Kearney

Saturday, January 29th: The large number of people who arrived at the Northwest corner of the Adams Center parking lot at the U of M allowed Larry Weeks to ask me for help leading this trip, I agreed. I consider myself a novice birding person, and even less than a novice leading a field trip. Anxiety had set in enroute, compounded by the weather upon arrival which was overcast, visibility of 100ft(+/- 5ft), and the visual experience of ice needles resembling an old man's beard covering everything, everything that is that could be seen. Without any preparation I was able to determine a direction into the frozen Mission Valley in search for raptors. What I discovered to be really helpful was, to search for birds as

though I were doing this solo. The anxiety began to lift but not the fog, poor visibility remained. The birding was very difficult but as we continued moving, I was able to hatch a plan. Shortly, both the weather and the birding began to cooperate, Great Horned Owls began flying across the road. Bald Eagles were seemingly gathering in anticipation of our arrival. Pileated Woodpecker's

were scurrying for cover as a Sharp-shinned Hawk was in pursuit. Eventually, visibility improved. The buteo's, both Red-tailed Hawks and Rough-legged Hawks began to remain perched long enough to position a scope, to help determine either morph and/or subspecies. The American Tree Sparrows, Common Redpolls, and Horned Larks appeared in very large numbers, and we cannot forget the Cedar Waxwings, American Robins, and Townsend Solitaire's who were seemingly cheering us on. The Black-capped Chickadees choose to remain visually anonymous, but their calls were distinctive. Northern Shrikes appeared but much further down the road from all this activity in the junipers. The Prairie Falcon and American Kestrel remained content on their utility poles as we passed. These were just some of the birds that come to mind for this raptor field trip to the Mission Valley. I would like to thank Larry Weeks for asking me to help him, and I would also like to thank all the participants who came with. I had a great day! We had 29 species, which does not include a possible Golden Eagle, with a total of 101 raptors.

Workshop for Beginning & Intermediate Birders

By Larry Weeks

The Five Valleys Audubon Society will offer a workshop for beginning and intermediate birders. This workshop should appeal to birders just getting started and to birders who want to improve their identification skills. It will consist of four classroom sessions and one field trip. The classroom sessions are scheduled for Thursdays on March 31st, April 7th, 14th, and 21st, and will be held at the Fish, Wildlife & Parks Office at 3201 Spurgin Road. The program will include a full session on hawks, eagles, and owls and 30-to-60-minute sessions on bird anatomy, migration, waterfowl, woodpeckers, shorebirds, warblers, sparrows, and birding-by-ear. The field trip will be held on April 23rd. There will be a \$35 charge for the workshop. To sign up, contact Larry Weeks at 549-5632 (549-3064 cell) or bwsgenea@gmail.com.



Montana Audubon
2022 Long-Billed Curlew Citizen Science Survey
 By Amy Seaman, Director of Policy & Science

Are you ready to hear the 'currleeee' of the Long-billed Curlew? Well, grab your binoculars and get ready, because curlew season is just around the corner! These charismatic shorebirds will be trickling back into the state in early April, and we need your help finding as many as possible in and around the Mission, Blackfoot, and Helena Valleys!

Since 2013, volunteers have recorded curlew sightings in these three Montana valleys and this data helps inform statewide habitat models as well as highlight important tracts of intact grassland that are in need of conservation. We are hoping to revamp our efforts on this project, so please share this opportunity with anyone you think will be interested! As a species-specific survey, this is a great time for aspiring citizen scientists and veteran birders alike to contribute to the conservation of a treasured Montana bird species.

You can find everything you need to participate at <https://www.montanabirdsurveys.com/>.

The Long-Billed Curlew Citizen Science survey will take place from April 8th – May 7th and from May 8th – May 31st.

Please email Peter Dudley at peter@mtaudubon.org for more information and to sign up!



March 14, 2022, Program Meeting

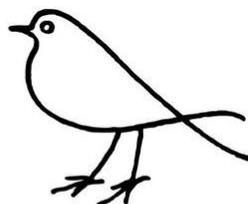
To attend the March 14th meeting and hear Angela Hornsby speak about the P.L. Wright Zoological Museum, note the Zoom details below.

Join Zoom Meeting at 7pm
<https://umontana.zoom.us/j/92401100963>

Meeting ID: 924 0110 0963
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 Find your local number:
<https://umontana.zoom.us/u/ahD4yv7oS>

Can you find all of the bird words in the puzzle?



Z B E A K P N N L Z
 W M B N M D J D Y V
 O F R E X U W I N G
 W E O S T C E G G F
 L A B T J K N O J J
 G T I K A F X M O H
 P H N G Y L B J S A
 V E K V V Y Q I I W
 F R T Z Z V J Y R K
 E Z K D B K E L U D

feather
 wing
 jay
 robin
 nest
 owl
 bird
 duck
 fly
 beak
 hawk

Bird Word Search Source: Sacramento Audubon Society

A Warm Welcome to our New Members

Evelyn Brugger	Vera Buckman
Julie Byram	Jan Carr
Jim Eglestone	Bob Frazier
Pam Hillygus	Christiane Holmquist
Elizabeth Marshall	Vanessa Mason
Steven Nuernberger	John Pennington
Greg & Judy Shafter	Margo Stoney
Gary Webber	



Please sign up for emailed newsletters!

If you subscribed to Audubon through National Audubon, we may not have your email address. To receive our newsletter and other bird news by email, saving trees and reducing FVAS newsletter expenses, please send your email address to Treasurer, Jean Duncan at treasurer@FVAudubon.org or Membership Promotion Chair, 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, 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 newsletter, 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. 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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