

May 2014

Birding Observer



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

Calendar

- **Saturday May 3rd:** Field trip to Brown's Lake led by Jim Brown. Meet in the northwest corner of the Adams Center parking lot for carpooling, departing at 8am and returning to Missoula by 5pm. Bring a lunch. For more info, call Terry Toppins at 214-1194.
- **Monday, May 5th, 7pm:** The board meeting will be held at the Naturalist's Mercantile, located at 131 East Main Street.
- **Monday, May 12th, 7:30pm:** Please join us at our program meeting for a presentation on pesticides at the UM Gallagher Business Building (at the corner of Connell and Arthur streets), room L14.
- **Thursday, May 15th:** Submission deadline for the June edition of the *Birding Observer*.
- **Saturday, May 17th:** Beginning bird walk at Lee Metcalf NWR from 10am-Noon. Meet the field trip leader at the Refuge Visitor's Center.
- **Saturday May 24th:** Riparian Habitat and its birds field trip led by Brian Williams. Meet in the Northwest corner of the Adams Center parking lot for carpooling departing at 7:30am or at Council Grove State Park at 8:00am to learn about the importance of Riparian Habitat and the associated birds. For more information call Terry Toppins at 214-1194.
- **Sunday May 25th:** Field trip to the old Smurfit-Stone Plant led by Larry Weeks. Meet in the Northwest corner of the Adams Center parking lot at 8:00am or at the intersection of Mullan Road and Pulp Mill Road at 8:30am for a 6 hour trip. For more information call Terry Toppins at 214-1194.
- **Saturday May 31st:** Half day Field trip to visit at large colony of Bobolinks in the Bitterroot Valley led by William Boggs. Meet in the Northwest corner of the Adams Center Parking Lot for carpooling departing at 8:00am, returning around 1:00pm. For more information call Terry Toppins at 214-1194.



A Conversation with the Northwest Center for Alternatives to Pesticides

More than one billion pounds of pesticides are applied annually in the United States. There is increasing awareness by scientists, doctors, policy makers and the public about the deleterious effects of pesticides for people and wildlife, especially vulnerable populations like children and pollinators such as birds and bees. In response, the Northwest Center for Alternatives to Pesticides (NCAP) works to protect people, children, and wildlife from exposure to pesticides by promoting solutions that advance ecologically sound alternatives. NCAP has projects specifically aimed at eliminating pesticide use in areas where people are most vulnerable. Primarily, these are areas where children are at risk for exposure: first environments, K-12 schools, public parks, and subsidized housing.

Please join us at 7:30pm, on Monday, May 12th, at our May program meeting to hear NCAP's Executive Director, Kim Leval, and Assistant Director, Shelly Connor. They will explore the problems of pesticides; review the latest pesticide science; and explain what they are learning and doing to advance alternatives. They will also share many resources and ideas that you can put to work at home and in your community. The meeting will take place at the Gallagher Business Building, room L14, on the UM campus.

Kim Leval has served as Executive Director of NCAP since 2009. For 25 years, Kim has worked in the nonprofit community with the last 19 years focused on advancing alternatives to pesticides through federal and state policy reforms.

Shelly Connor is the Associate Director of NCAP. She previously worked as the associate director for Appalachian Voices, an environmental nonprofit based in Boone, NC. She was also the co-founder of the first Montana Farm to College Program at the University of Montana.

Peeps From The Board: Bird Migration

By Andrea Stierle

Migration is one of the adaptations used by birds to cope with the cold temperatures and scarcity of food that winter can bring. As scientists and naturalists we are interested not only in where birds go, but in HOW we know where birds go in search of more hospitable conditions. Traditionally, scientists captured, tagged and released individual birds and hoped that someone, somewhere, would find this bird and report its whereabouts.



Godwit in Flight

In recent years, satellite transmitters have provided an unprecedented opportunity to track birds around the globe. Once a bird is equipped with a transmitter, it emits signals that are picked up by space satellites and reported to a computer back on earth. Using this technique, scientists have documented a Peregrine Falcon migrating from Alberta, Canada, to Mazatlán, Mexico and Swallow-tailed Kites from Florida and Georgia to previously unknown wintering grounds in Brazil over 5,000 miles away. A Swainson's Hawk traveled from California to the pampas of Argentina, where it joined thousands of other Swainson's Hawks, including hawks that had been banded in California, Colorado, and Saskatchewan, Canada.

Some birds engage in truly epic migratory flights. Biologist Robert Gill has studied bird migration for over 30 years. In 1976 he was studying migratory birds on the southeastern coast of Alaska. He was impressed by the fat stores on a bar-tailed godwit. Scientists knew that bar-tailed godwits spent their winters in places like New Zealand and Australia and probably took a series of flights through Asia to reach their destinations. Gill wondered why this little bird had such a heavy layer of fat and if it accommodated longer flights than those of other birds. For thirty years Gill managed as best he could, building a network of bird-watchers who looked for migrating godwits over the Pacific Ocean.

In 2006, technology finally caught up with Gill's hypothesis. He implanted satellite transmitters in bar-tailed godwits and tracked their flight. Nine satellite-tagged birds departed Alaska in the fall and transmitters sent their location to Gill's computer. He sometimes stayed up until 2 AM to watch the signals

on the Google Earth program running on his laptop. The godwits flew south across the Pacific Ocean and did not stop along the way. They traveled up to 7,260 miles in nine days — the longest nonstop flight ever recorded. Godwits leave Alaska between late August and early November and generally wait for large storm systems with strong southerly winds to start their journeys. Gill clocked average speeds of 35 miles an hour for the migrating godwits, with storms, gusts and cyclones boosting them south.

Long migrations can be incredibly stressful. Some birds do not feed during their journeys and must rely on stores of fat – and antioxidant rich berries - to see them through to their destinations. Despite the incredible amounts of energy expended by birds in their epic migrations, the primary advantage of migration is actually conservation of energy. Birds generally fly farther north (or farther south, south of the equator) to take advantage of the explosion of vegetation that accompanies long summer days farther from the equator. Extended daylight hours allow diurnal birds to produce larger clutches than those of related non-migratory species that remain in the tropics year round. As the days shorten in autumn, the birds return to warmer regions where the food supply varies little with the season.

Much of the mechanics of migration are under genetic control. These include timing and response to important physical stimuli like duration and intensity of light. These changes are also related to hormonal changes in the birds. In the days before migration even caged birds display restlessness in their behavior. This heightened activity is accompanied by other physiological changes including increased eating behaviors and fat deposition.

As the days lengthen and the return of spring is ever more imminent, the vocalizations of these winged travelers will again greet our ears. If only we could understand those voices, for they just might tell a tale or two of their migratory adventures great and small.



Swainson's Hawk

Coffee Swallows vs. Chit Chats

by Jim Brown

These teams of birders will soon be vying for the honor of seeing the most birds during an all day, dawn to dark, competitive Birdathon. This old rivalry is akin to the Griz vs. the Bobcats although the team names are not quite as fierce sounding. This fun event is Five Valleys Audubon's annual fund raiser to support our conservation and education efforts. We seek pledges from Chapter members of so much per species observed or whatever contributors wish to donate. After the full day of birding is completed and weary eyes have recovered we mail out a reminder of your pledge and a list of species seen by the team you supported. The teams begin by searching varied habitats in the Missoula Valley then usually go to other localities that remain secret until the birding is done. About 120 species or more will be observed depending on weather and luck.

Your tax deductible contributions are used to support these Chapter activities:

- Phil Wright Research Awards granted to qualifying high school and college wildlife biology students
- Audubon Adventures, a quarterly newsletter and lesson guide for teaching environmental education in elementary grades (3-6)
- Community Naturalist Program--Chapter volunteers provide classroom presentations and field trip learning experiences
- Wildlife habitat conservation projects that protect habitat in Missoula County particularly in the Clark Fork River--Grass Valley Important Bird Area. We inform Missoula citizens, land-owners, developers and city/county planners of the special importance of habitat in this area for birds and other wildlife. We review all subdivision proposals in Missoula County and testify at hearings in favor of adequate protection of riparian areas.



If we miss you by phone or letter please consider a contribution to FVAS and we will mail a species list to you. We certainly appreciate your support.

Philip L. Wright Memorial Research Awards

The awards committee received eight proposals in 2014. Four undergraduates and four graduate students proposed studies of birds (2), mammals (4), insects (1), and fish (1). We made the following awards:

- Sara Berk, a graduate student, \$815 to study consequences of nest box placement for post-fledgling period and adult condition in Mountain Bluebirds.
- Bennett Bursick, a junior, \$894 to study effects of wildfire on terrestrial subsidies to stream food web dynamics in the Bitterroot basin.
- Jason Hanlon, a junior, \$900 to study how small mammals change along a gradient of grazing intensity on a Nature Conservancy ranch.
- Tyler Kelly, a senior, \$540 to determine Mountain Plover corticosterone levels induced by breeding habitat characteristics.

In accordance with established tradition, the recipients have been invited to report how they used the grants and the results of their investigations at a Five Valleys Audubon meeting during the coming winter.

Discounts for Audubon Members

The J Bar L Ranch in the Centennial Valley has a special offer for local Audubon Society members.

The J Bar L Ranch is offering a 10% Discount & 10% Donation package to members of any Audubon Society chapter when they stay at the J Bar L between May and September 2014. Audubon Society members receive a 10% discount on lodging for a three or more night stay and earn a 10% donation for their local chapter from the J Bar L Ranch.

The J Bar L Ranch is a Holistically Managed, grass fed cattle ranch that focuses on grassland restoration and conservation. It is owned by noted conservationist Dr. Peggy Dulany and collaborates with the Nature Conservancy, Red Rock Lake National Wildlife Refuge, and the Bureau of Land Management

More information about the package and the rental cabins can be found on the J Bar L website - <http://jbarl.com/content/conservation-group-discount-donation-package>.

Wings Across the Big Sky
June 6th-8th, 2014 ~ Bozeman, Montana

IT IS NOT TOO LATE to register for **Montana Audubon's Wings Across the Big Sky Festival** in Bozeman, Montana on June 6-8, 2014. Register online at www.mtaudubon.org, or call the Helena office (406-443-3949). Checks can be made out to 'Montana Audubon' and can be mailed with registrations to: Montana Audubon, PO Box 595, Helena MT 59624. You may also email any questions to cerickson@mtaudubon.org or mtaudubon@mtaudubon.org.



We will be meeting at the **Best Western GranTree Inn** in Bozeman. We have available rooms blocked until May 20, 2014. Please call 1-800-624-5965 to reserve your room and be sure to mention that you are part of the Montana Audubon *Wings Across the Big Sky Festival*.

Sacajawea Audubon has planned a fun Friday night kickoff including an ever-popular bird identification event. Then, at the Saturday social hour prior to the banquet, you can hone your bird call skills while trying to stump fellow birders!

If you're a camper, consider staying in one of the many campgrounds near Bozeman. Check out the website at <http://www.allstays.com/Campgrounds/mt-bozeman-campgrounds.htm> for camping sites, both private and public. There is also camping at the Gallatin County Fairgrounds. Check them out at http://www.gallatin.mt.gov/Public_Documents/GallatinCoMT_Fairgrounds/FacilityRental/OpenCamping. Right across the main street from the hotel is a Walmart and they allow fee camping in their parking lot (no hook-up.)

We still have room for you on the **Field Trips** Saturday and Sunday, even though some of them have been filled. Call the Helena office and someone will be happy to help you choose an available fun trip.

We have a great variety of speakers for Saturday afternoon presentations. We'll have talks that focus on our local forests—researcher Vicki Saab will talk about birds, beetles and burns, and talks that take us around the world—Forrest Rowland will share his knowledge and images of bird migration in the Middle East. We'll also share conservation stories and highlights, and you can learn more about how we at Montana Audubon think Greater Sage-Grouse and other sage associated species will be around for our grandkids, and what Montana bird species might be moving north as the climate changes. And given that the Bridger Mountains are just outside Bozeman, Steve Hoffman will share the latest golden eagle migration stories from that long-term study site. There will be six great talks - the challenge will be choosing which ones to attend!



Each year Montana Audubon recognizes individuals who work for the conservation and protection of birds and other wildlife by presenting **Awards** at the Saturday evening banquet. We are currently seeking nominations in the following categories: Lifetime Achievement Award, Educator of the Year, Conservationist of the Year, Citizen Scientist of the Year, and Special Achievement Award. To make a nomination, download a nomination form from www.mtaudubon.org/about/awards.html. Nominations are due at the office by May 23, 2014. Mail completed forms to Montana Audubon, PO Box 595, Helena MT 59624.

Bluebird Trail Update

Submitted by Kathy Heffernan

Last spring, the University Congregational Children's Center dinosaur class in Missoula made two bluebird boxes and donated them to Mountain Bluebird Trails. The boxes are now part of Kathy & John Heffernan's bluebird "trail" on Waterworks Hill in Missoula. Thanks to teacher Jean Woessner and her class of Dinosaurs!



Welcome to Our New Members

thank
you!

Brandi Ashford
Karen Burton
Lynda Green
Joe Lamanna
Tom Melhuse
Diane Smith
Robert Springer
Antonia Wolf
Gary R. Zinn



After the boxes were built, each "Dinosaur" signed his/her name on the boxes. These boxes have been placed near the Waterworks trailhead to Waterworks Hill and are awaiting occupancy.

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:

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PO Box 422250
Palm Coast, FL 32142-2250

Five Valleys Audubon Society
PO Box 8425, Missoula, MT 59807



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