

May 2021

Birding Observer



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

Calendar

- **Monday, May 3rd:** The FVAS board meeting will once again be conducted via Zoom on May 3rd, from 7-9pm. To join, contact Andrea Stierle at andrea.stierle@mso.umt.edu in advance.

Good news everyone! We are resuming field trips!

- **Saturday, May 1st:** All-day field trip to Brown's Lake led by Jim Brown. Meet at 7:50 am in the Missoula College parking lot at 1205 East Broadway. Minimal hiking involved.
- **Sunday, May 16th:** All-day field trip to the Bandy Ranch. Meet at 8:00 am in the northwest corner of the Adams Center parking lot. Two miles of moderate hiking involved.
- **May 22nd – 23rd:** Two-day field trip to Freezout Lake and Benton Lake. Meet at 7:00 am in the northwest corner of the Adams Center parking lot. Participants need to make reservations at the Stage Stop Inn (406-466-5900) in Choteau for the 22nd. Minimal hiking involved. People going to Freezout/Benton Lake need to contact Larry Weeks so he can arrange for carpooling. There is a \$10 charge per individual for multi-day field trips.
- **Saturday, May 29th:** Half-day field trip to Bass Creek area to look for Bobolinks led by William Boggs. Meet at 8:00 am in the northwest corner of the Adams Center parking lot. One mile of moderate hiking.
- **June 10th – 13th:** Four-day field trip to Bowdoin. See write-up in the right-hand column.

**Hooray
for
Field Trips**

Field Trip Safety Protocol

To ensure the health and safety of our field trip participants, we ask that everyone adhere to the following COVID-19 protocol. Please note that these guidelines apply to every participant, even if you have received the COVID-19 vaccine.

- Carpooling can occur among vaccinated people or with those in your immediate family pod.
- Maintain a distance of 6 feet from other people as much as possible.
- Wear a securely fitting mask or face covering over your nose and mouth when outside your vehicle.
- Masks should be worn inside your vehicle based on the passengers' level of comfort.
- Sharing spotting scopes and binoculars among non-family members is discouraged, but it can be done with the owners' consent. Please ask first.



Four-day Trip to Bowdoin NWR

We will camp at James Kipp Recreational Area on June 10th and spend the next 2 nights in Malta. Options in Malta are to camp in Trafton Park or stay in a motel. The motel options are the Maltana (406-654-2610) or the Country Inn (866-925-4143). We will leave Missoula at 7:00 am on June 10th and drive to James Kipp. Then bird our way to Malta on June 11th, bird Bowdoin and Nelson Reservoir on June 12th, and return to Missoula on June 13th. If you are planning to attend, call Larry Weeks at 406-549-5632 (home) or 406-540-3064 (cell). You can also email him at bwsgenea@gmail.com. Larry will plan potluck dinners and coordinate carpooling. Participants need to plan their own breakfasts and lunches. There is a \$10 charge per individual for multi-day field trips. There is only room for one more person to go on the Bowdoin field trip. If interested, sign up as soon as possible.

Attend Our Program Meeting on May 10th to Hear Wildlife Biologist, Dr. Wenfei Tong Discuss Bird Behavior

Please join us on Monday, May 10th at 7:00 PM for our final chapter meeting until Fall. You won't want to miss our speaker, author and biologist Dr. Wenfei Tong.



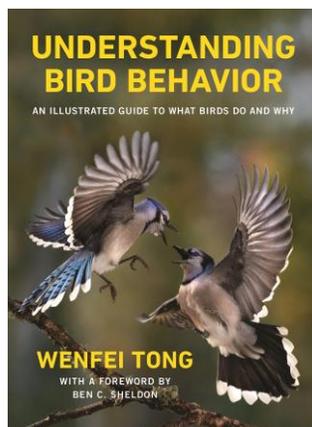
Birds are intelligent, sociable creatures that exhibit a wide array of behaviors—from sabotaging budding romances to outsourcing childcare duties.

Why do they behave as they do? Bringing to light the remarkable actions of birds through examples from species around the world, including some of her own research in Kenya and Zambia, Wenfei will be presenting vignettes about the private lives of birds in an evolutionary context. She will also discuss stories from her books that highlight Montana's breeding birds, and the work of community scientists and other female or minority biologists.

As her website, <https://www.wenfeitong.com>, states, "My books, *Bird Love*, *Understanding Bird Behavior*, and *How to Read A Bird*, use scientific discoveries to show how much humans and birds share, including some of art and literature's most basic themes. My ultimate aim is to inspire as many people as possible to relate to and care for the natural world."

"Birdwatching offered me an early and very personal connection with urban nature as a child in Singapore, and I have been a keen supporter of grassroots conservation ever since. My time as an undergraduate at Princeton and Oxford was where I first got hooked on field biology and the history and philosophy of science and the environment.

I am currently a research associate at Harvard, where I got my PhD in biology. Whether it has been studying zebras in Kenya, catching mice in Bulgaria, or observing birds in the grasslands of Zambia and Montana, I owe a deep debt of gratitude to the natural world, and to human friends from many cultures. My hope is to share some of these biocultural connections with others."



"I enjoy teaching university students in Montana and Alaska, fundraising for conservation organizations, and guiding natural history tours in Tanzania, Central Asia, the Galapagos, and Montana, where I take visitors birding on horseback. I also work with writers like Pat Mora to champion environmental appreciation and literacy across ages and cultures, and actively support organizations like BirdLife International, Nia Tero and the Clark Fork Coalition to promote an inclusive and grassroots driven form of conservation for diverse cultural and ecological communities to coexist sustainably."

To Attend Dr. Tong's Presentation, please tune in on May 10th, shortly before 7pm, Mountain Time.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://umontana.zoom.us/j/95848362269>

Meeting ID: 958 4836 2269

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The World's Most Intelligent Birds

Crows

Kea

Ravens

African Grey

Macaws

Cockatoo

Amazon Parrots

Jays



Peeps from the Board: Field Trips During the Pandemic By Larry Weeks

I have continued to lead limited field trips during the pandemic by requiring people to wear face masks and to social distance in the field. On September 12th, 9 people visited Pablo Reservoir to look for fall shorebirds. The reservoir had 4 Black-bellied Plovers, 2 Black-necked Stilts, Killdeer, American Pipits, and good variety of water birds. The best shorebirds were at some small ponds along highway 93 before Ronan; lots of Long-billed Dowitchers, Wilson's Snipe, Lesser Yellowlegs, Spotted, Pectoral and Baird's Sandpipers.

The trip to Brown's Lake was originally scheduled for October 24th, but an unusually cold spell froze up the lake and the trip was rescheduled for one week later. Most of the ice was gone when we visited the lake on October 31st. The best birds were a Surf Scoter and a Long-tailed Duck which were close to the picnic area. Other birds included 3 gulls (California, Ring-billed and Bonaparte's), 3 grebes (Horned, Eared and Western), Snow Geese, and Bohemian Waxwings. We did not see any loons. We stopped at a residence near Potomac that had 3 Blue Jays.



Surf Scoter

On November 7th, we visited the Lee Metcalf NWR and found both Trumpeter and Tundra Swans, 13 species of ducks, a Northern Shrike, a Bonaparte's Gull, 3 sparrows (Song, White-crowned and American Tree), 2 Great Horned Owls, and a porcupine.

I did 2 field trips to the Mission Valley at the beginning of December. On December 5th, we had 54 Red-tailed Hawks, 29 Rough-legged Hawks, 12 Bald Eagles, 8 Great Horned Owls, 3 American Kestrels, 1 Prairie Falcon, and 1 Northern Harrier. On December 6th, the tally of raptors was very similar except there were 3 Prairie Falcons, 1 Sharp-shinned Hawk and 1 Merlin. Both trips had Blue Jays at the Town Pump in Polson.

I continued with the field trips to the Mission Valley in 2021. On January 9th, there was the predictable variety and quantity of raptors, but the unique bird of the trip was the Virginia Rail. We stopped at a Wildlife Management Area near Moiese and there were several rails foraging in some open water at very close range. The photographers were having a great time. On February 28th, an adult

Ferruginous Hawk at close range made this a special trip. The other raptors included 51 Red-tailed Hawks, 1 Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk, 22 Rough-legged Hawks, 6 American Kestrels, 1 Merlin, 2 Prairie Falcons, 10 Northern Harriers, 30 Bald Eagles, 7 Great



Ferruginous Hawk

Horned Owls, and 2 Short-eared Owls. Although Flathead Lake was partially frozen, there was some open water near Polson. The water birds included both goldeneyes, Lesser Scaup, Common Merganser, lots of American Coots, a flock of Ring-billed Gulls, and 1 California Gull. We found Gray Partridges in two locations and a Northern Shrike.

The March field trip was to the Metcalf NWF and it turned out to be a beautiful day. The surprise birds were 2 Eurasian Wigeons; one on Pond 8 and one on Pond 10. There was a flock of 17 Snow Geese that circled around but never landed where we could re-find them. There were 14 species of ducks and both Trumpeter and Tundra Swans. Thanks to Paul Hayes' previous sighting, he found us a Great Horned Owl at the Wildlife Viewing Area. We ended up with 45 species of birds and 2 porcupines.

Twelve people joined the author for a late afternoon and evening field trip to the Ninepipes area on April 3rd. The primary focus of this trip was to observe the mating flight of the Short-eared Owl. At 6:45 pm, we had 4 owls flying and displaying along Duck Road. After a lull in the action, we moved to Ninepipes Road south of Olson Road. We estimated that there were 8 owls in this area and several were actively displaying. Some of the owls rose to a height that was estimated to be at least 1000 feet. Earlier in the trip, we found 2 nesting Great Horned Owls.



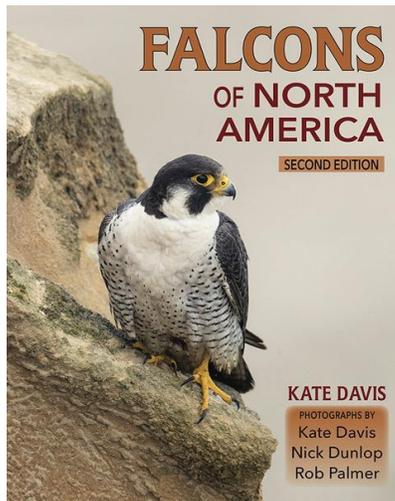
The summary for the 2020-2021 Montana Christmas Bird Count is now available on our Chapter's website: <http://fvaudubon.org/conservation/cbc/montana-cbc-results-2020-21/>.

In spite of COVID precautions and fewer areas participating, you'll see that it was fairly successful in terms of bird numbers and variety of species found.

Falcons of North America

Kate Davis's second edition of *Falcons of North America* is now available from Mountain Press Publishing! Bold and beautiful, falcons hold a special place in the hearts of people. In *Falcons of North America*, Kate Davis opens a door into the lives of these extraordinary, enigmatic birds of prey.

Since the publication of the first edition 13 years ago, advances in technology have revolutionized the study of falcons. This updated and revised second edition contains completely new classifications of the six North American falcon species based on DNA studies. Population trends are explored, with discussions of the mysterious decline of the American Kestrel and the impact of global warming on



falcons, particularly the arctic-dwelling Gyrfalcon. Davis also includes fascinating details on one of the greatest conservation success stories—that of the Peregrine Falcon—from a brush with extinction in North America to greater populations than ever before, even thriving as city dwellers across the continent.

Book details:

- 264 Pages, 7 ½" x 9 ½" from Mountain Press Publishing Company, Missoula
- 13 YEARS OF NEW SCIENCE
- MORE THAN 260 PHOTOS
- 160 NEW ACTION IMAGES
- \$28 for a signed copy or \$35 includes shipping and handling (A portion of proceeds to benefit Raptors of the Rockies education program.)
- To buy the book, please contact Kate Davis at raptors@montana.com.

"It should be no surprise if many people buy this book for the photos alone, because they are superb—both stunning and unique. But a glance at the text, which is eminently worth reading, draws a reader further into a raptor's world. The considerable amount of interesting information new to this edition makes it an excellent survey of the biology of North American falcons, written in a style that transmits the author's passion for the fascinating creatures that they are." —HANS PEETERS, Author, Artist, Naturalist

Wings Across The Big Sky 2021 Update

While Montana Audubon cannot hold a large gathering this year, that doesn't mean we can't celebrate and get outside safely and bird together! In lieu of a large annual gathering, Montana Audubon is holding a hybrid virtual and in-person event on Saturday, June 5th 2021.

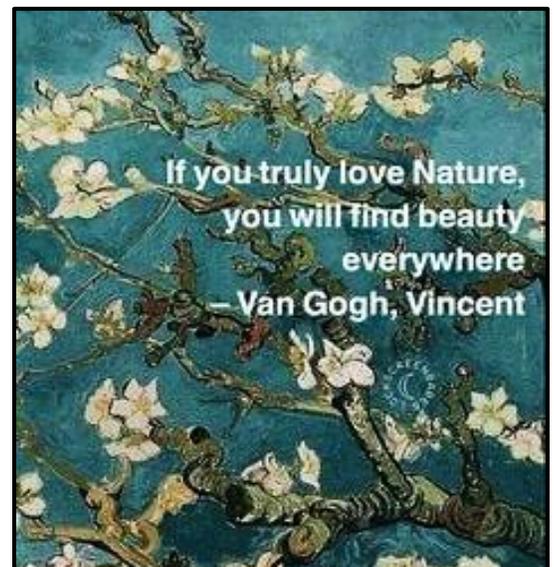


Visit [Montana Audubon's website](#) to register for The Wings Across the Big Sky Festival. The registration fee for the event is \$55.00 per person. The ticket price includes:

- Access to Virtual Workshops and Seminars – Links will be sent to the emails of registered participants the week of June 1st and may be viewed at your convenience.
- A field trip of your choice with a Montana birding expert in the region of your choice. To review the list of field trips, please visit <https://wingsacrossthebigsky.regfox.com/wings-across-the-big-sky>.
- Copies of the *Montana Audubon Bird Guide to Familiar Species* and other goodies will be given to field trip leaders to disperse at the beginning of each field trip.

Virtual Workshops include:

- Backyard Birding and Montana E-Bird
- Bird Songs 101 – Learn bird calls for some of our most common species
- Rare Bird Hot Spots – What and where to find the most elusive species
- The Benefits of Citizen Science – How you can help with upcoming projects in Montana



Welcome New Members

Edward Callaghan
Todd Kowalski
Warren Midyett
Molly Morrison
Linda Papke
Margery Smith
Mari Von Hoffmann

Eileen Chontos
David Kraus
Paula Morin
Rita Marie Norton
Bibiana Reh
Roderick Snyder



**To be an environmental and fiscal heroine or hero,
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 only, includes newsletter sent via email.

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

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

\$ _____ 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.

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

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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