

November 2016

Birding Observer



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

Calendar of Events

- **Saturday, November 5th:** All-day field trip to the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge. Meet in the northwest corner of the Adams Center parking lot at 8:50 am.
- **Monday, November 7th, 6:45-8:45pm:** The November board meeting will be held in the Missoula Public Library's Board Room.
- **Monday, November 14th, 7:30pm:** Sally Hickman will present on backyard birding and painting at the November program meeting.
- **Tuesday, November 15th:** The submission deadline for the December edition of the *Birding Observer*.
- **Saturday, November 19th:** Bird walk at Lee Metcalf NWR from 10:00am-Noon. Meet the field trip leader at the Refuge Visitor's Center.
- **Sunday, December 4th:** All-day field trip to the Mission Valley to look for raptors. Meet in the northwest corner of the Adams Center parking lot at 7:50 am or at the Cenex Gas Station in Ronan at 9am.
- **Saturday, December 17th:** Missoula Christmas Bird Count. See page 2 for details.



Painting by Sally Hickman

The Backyard Bird Project

Sally Hickman has learned a lot from her backyard in the last 30 years. Her notes of birds that appeared in her backyard, which is in a developing neighborhood, offer insight into the changing bird species and vegetation and the loss of open space. As the bird habitat changes, the numbers of individual species change and their continuing adaptation to the environment is obvious.

Sally recorded this change in species with 40 paintings in oil, as well as aerial photos of nearby housing developments, and observations of common plantings used in the landscaping of new homes. The changes continue. As the 39th painting was completed, a new bird, the Lewis's Woodpecker, showed up in the yard.

At the next chapter meeting on Monday, November 14 at 7:30 p.m. we'll hear and observe Sally's backyard story. The meeting is in Gallagher Business Building room L14 (lower level) on the UM campus.

Sally spent her childhood in Butte and the Bitterroot, eventually settling with her family in Stevensville, where her grandparents were early ranchers. With a strong minor in the natural sciences at the UM, a lifetime of outdoor activities was Sally's natural lifestyle. Living and teaching in a rural environment emphasized the connection with natural surroundings. She was a teacher and Elementary Principal at Stevensville for 25 years.

After retirement, her enrollment in the School of Fine Arts at the University continued a lifelong enthusiasm for learning and an appreciation of living close to the University of Montana. This experience supported artwork that consistently records events in the natural world around us.

Peeps From The Board: Financial Update

By Jean Duncan

Here's the run down on the financial condition Five Valleys Audubon Society (FVAS) for fiscal year (FY) 2015-2016 ending on June 30, 2016.

Our operating income for the year was \$15,599 with expenses of \$16,104, which generated a loss of \$505. However, the loss was offset by income from our investments of \$748 bringing the year \$243 into the black.

This fiscal year, FVAS proudly donated total of \$11,314 to the following groups: MT Audubon Society, The Owl Institute, Raptors of the Rockies, Raptorview, Five Valleys Land Trust for conservation easements, and Audubon Adventure Kits for Missoula area classrooms. Our donations make up the majority of our expenses.

A huge thanks to all who contributed to the 2015 Birdathon. Your support of the Birdathon brought in \$7,864!

Our income from memberships and member donations were \$3,307 which covers our hard copy newsletter expenses of \$2,564. Please send your

email address with a request to receive our newsletter via email if you wish to save trees as well as reduce FVAS newsletter expenses. Thank you!

At the end of June 2016 FVAS had assets of \$115,695 of which \$74,727 is The Phil Wright Endowment. This endowment provides research awards for UM student bird related research projects. In 2015 \$3,635 was awarded.

We're looking forward to another year of supporting birds and their habitat in Montana!

Please direct any questions about FVAS finances to Jean Duncan, Treasurer, at jeanclaire@montana.com.

Missoula Christmas Bird Count

By Larry Weeks



The Missoula Christmas Bird Count (CBC) will be held on Saturday, December 17, 2015. The Count area is a circle with a 7.5 mile radius which is centered at the intersection of Reserve St. and I-90. The area within the circle will be covered by small groups and individuals. These areas will be assigned ahead of the Count day. You can participate by joining a group in the field or by being a feeder watcher. If you would like to take part in the field Count, contact Larry Weeks at 549-5632 (540-3064 cell) or bwsgenea@gmail.com. Larry will provide different options for you to choose from. If you are interested in being a feeder watcher, contact Rose Leach at 370-1999 or rleach-2@bresnan.net. She will provide you with instructions on how to tabulate your bird sightings. We also tally unusual birds not seen on Count day that are seen during Count week. Count week includes the 3 days before and 3 days after Count day.

The Count day will end with a potluck dinner at the home of Larry Weeks, 2428 West Kent, which is near Rosauers. Potluck guests are welcome to arrive at 6:00 PM. Dinner will commence at 6:30 PM. Please bring your favorite potluck offering, or A-L, bring a salad or dessert, and M-Z, a hot dish. After the potluck, we will tabulate the results of the field Count.

Welcome To Our New Chapter Members

Jody Chritton
Rial Cummings
Marjie Glenn Heyman
Deborah Hoagland
James Kieronski
Amy Andrew Martin
William & Robin Nichols
Annie Jade & Watson Siefert
Barbara Simon
Dana E. Warren

Community Naturalist Program

By Larry Weeks

During the September Board meeting, Rose Leach and Larry Weeks signed an agreement in which Larry will serve as the coordinator for the CNP during the 2016-17 fiscal year. This agreement requires that Larry will provide classroom presentations and field trips for Missoula area teachers as requested and to implement the beginning/intermediate birding workshop. The Chapter will pay Larry a \$750 stipend upon receipt of the Program's final report. During the summer, Larry did a bird presentation and a cattail decoy exercise for the Montana Natural History Center's summer program for 1st-5th grades, and a bird walk and bird presentation for K-1st grades at the Clark Fork School. During September, Larry gave 5 bird presentations to 3rd or 5th grade classes at Bonner, DeSmet, Target Range, and Sussex Schools.



Field Trips

By Larry Weeks

October 1, 2016: It was raining as the group negotiated the parking restrictions at the University at the homecoming football game. By the time we

reached the old Smurfit-Stone plant site, the clouds were breaking up and the rain had stopped. It turned out to be a very nice day. The shorebird pond yielded 12 Long-billed Dowitchers, 3 Pectoral sandpipers, and several Killdeer. There were many American Pipits flitting around and several Western Meadowlarks, but the ducks were missing. The lack of ducks was probably due to the first day of duck hunting. The passerines were hard to find along the river, but we did see several Belted Kingfishers and a lingering Osprey. When we got to the well field, there was a large flock of bluebirds which contained both Western and Mountain Bluebirds. A walk through a stand of pine trees yielded a cooperative Red-breasted Nuthatch, a Black-capped Chickadee, a Yellow-rumped Warbler, a Downy Woodpecker, and a few Pine Siskins. We had to share the south habitat with some cows because the local rancher was allowed to open the gates to two previously protected habitats. The author didn't have a vote.

However, we did see a soaring Sharp-shinned Hawk, White-crowned Sparrows, American Goldfinches, more Yellow-rumped Warblers, and a Pileated Woodpecker. During the 5-hour field trip, we had close to 15 Red-tailed Hawks, and the author almost drove by the best bird of the day; a Prairie Falcon. My initial reaction was that it was another red-tail. A good diversity of ducks were finally found on some water furthest from the river. There were 12 people on the trip, and we saw 54 total species.



Red-tailed hawk

October 8, 2016: Participants on the field trip to Rob Domenech's raptor banding sites were separated into two groups: John Pike (a Texas birder, who spent a week in Montana) and Rose Stoudt went to the Roger's Pass site; and Glen Grandjean, Tarn Ream and the author went to the Nora Ridge site. On the walk into the Nora Ridge site, we heard a couple of elk bugling close to the trail. As we got closer, we were able to see a large bull elk defending his harem of about 14 cows and calves from a second bull. We were able to watch the herd from several different vantage points. The top of the mountain was obscured in low clouds and we had to wait until about noon before the clouds lifted. Overall, it was a mostly cloudy day and there weren't many birds migrating. We had a Golden Eagle hit a lure bird but it didn't stop. A Sharp-shinned Hawk also made a similar pass. About mid-afternoon, our trapper caught a hatch-year Red-tailed Hawk at the main blind. Then it was slow until about 4 pm when the upper blind at Nora Ridge caught a first-year Golden eagle. It was the trapper's first eagle which is a significant achievement. After taking several measurements, a blood sample and attaching wing tags, the trapper had his picture taken with the eagle and then he released the bird. Just as we were leaving, the upper blind caught a hatch-year Northern Goshawk. The Roger's Pass team caught 2 Golden Eagles and a Cooper's Hawk. They had a flight of over 30 Golden eagles. Other birds seen during the trip included Common Raven, Rough-legged Hawk, Merlin, Clark's Nutcracker, and Steller's Jay.

The Legislature Migrates Back to Helena

By Amy Seaman

The 2017 Montana Legislature will convene January 2nd in Helena. As we have since 1981, Montana Audubon will lobby at the Capitol in our efforts to protect birds, other wildlife, and their habitats. This year, as in 2015, Amy Seaman, our Associate Director of Bird Conservation, will step up as the lead lobbyist with the help of a new legislative intern.

During the last (2015) Legislative session Montana Audubon testified on 68 bills, opposing 24 and supporting 44. Our efforts helped defeat 10 anti-environmental/anti-wildlife bills, and helped pass 20 bills aimed at strengthening our environmental and wildlife laws. We anticipate 2017 to be just as much work, and with so much on the table, we are going to need your help.

You can support our legislative work!

- Donate to support face-to-face contact with legislators and our action alert network.
- Sign up for our action alert network by visiting www.mtaudubon.org*
- Join us for a Montana Audubon Lobby Day –free of charge, for any and all Audubon members. Come to the Capitol and participate directly in democracy. Learn about the legislative process, important Audubon issues, and help influence those making critical decisions about wildlife and the environment. Dates are set in early January.

*As the legislature faces tough problems concerning wildlife and the environment we need as many conservationists and Audubon Chapter members as possible calling their Representatives and Senators to encourage them to vote responsibly. When local input is needed, Montana Audubon will contact you by email, explain the issue, explain how and why to take action, and let you know which legislators need encouragement. We limit the use of the action alert program to the most critical issues, but they provide a powerful way to make our voice heard.

Why help with letters and phone calls?



Sage-Grouse. Fully funding Montana's Sage-grouse conservation program staff is a major issue in addition to securing specific authorization to spend the remainder of a \$10M Sage-grouse stewardship fund.

Habitat Montana. In 2015, Montana legislators put restrictions on MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks' main habitat program, largely preventing them from purchasing new parcels. We want to remove this restriction that negatively affects wildlife.

Renewable Energy. We will be supporting at least one bill on the topic of Montanan's generating their own electricity with alternative technologies like solar panels. It allows government buildings (including county courthouses and schools) to invest in solar systems large enough to save on future utility bills.

Colstrip. Global warming is the biggest environmental challenge we face, threatening to greatly disrupt birds, other wildlife and human communities. Numerous pieces of legislation will be introduced on coal and Colstrip. Montana Audubon will help ensure solutions address climate change, and preserve our constitutional right to a "clean and healthful environment."

Clean Water. Most of the controversy surrounding water rights focus on 'exempt wells' in residential housing developments. Montana's Supreme Court recently ruled that future large subdivisions need to change the way they acquire water. Since subdivisions impact wildlife, we will focus on the numerous bills anticipated on this issue.

Wetlands. Montana legislators will be exploring whether to take over the federal program that allows wetlands to be filled for development (Section 404 of the Clean Water Act). State management of this permit program does not make sense for many reasons, so we will lobby to maintain federal control.

Please assist us with our efforts! Visit our website (www.mtaudubon.org) or email Amy to sign up to be an Armchair Activist at (aseaman@mtaudubon.org).



Purple Honeycreeper
Photo by Peg Abbott

Celebrate Asa Wright Nature Centre's 50th Birthday in 2017

In 1967, Audubon members rallied behind three influential people -Don Eckelberry, a renowned wildlife artist; Erma Fisk, a prominent ornithologist and conservationist; and Russell Mason of Florida Audubon Society - to raise enough money to buy Spring Hill Estate and its famous Oilbird Cave in Trinidad, creating the first non-profit, conservation-focused trust and eco-lodge in the Caribbean. Fifty years later, the renamed Asa Wright Nature Centre has lived up to its mandate to protect and conserve habitat and wildlife, and to educate.

Highlighting the amazing role that the Centre has played in tropical conservation, a wonderful selection of celebrity birders, conservationists and artists will visit the Centre in 2017. Celebrities will offer presentations in their specialty, join tour groups on guided walks, and be available at the Centre for informal conversation and birding on the verandah.

If you have always dreamt of visiting the Centre, doing so in 2017 will benefit you as well as your chapter! In honor of the anniversary, Caligo Ventures (the US booking agent for the Centre), will provide a \$100 donation to their chapter for every Audubon member who books a tour as a result of seeing this article in their chapter newsletter or website.

And the birding is amazing! A visit to the Centre is one of the best introductions to tropical birding. In addition, modern hotel facilities, meals featuring local cuisine, and a wide range of field trips offered by highly trained Centre naturalists round out your stay. Time your trip to join a celebrity birder, and get even more out of your experience!

For more details about dates and tour options, please contact Caligo Ventures at 800.426.7781 or www.caligo.com.

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 for a 1-year, 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 *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: _____

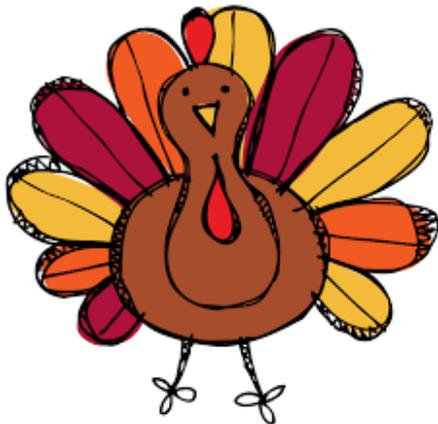
Please note: The newsletter will be delivered electronically unless requested otherwise.

\$20 for a 1-year membership

Chapter Code: N53

Please make check payable to National Audubon Society and mail to:
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Missoula, MT 59807

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