

October 2012

Birding Observer



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

Calendar

* **Monday, October 1st:** Jim Brown will host the October board meeting.

* **Saturday, October 6th:** All-day field trip to Flesher Pass to visit Rob Domenech's raptor banding site. Meet at 6:00 AM in the middle of the UM field house parking lot. A strenuous 2-mile hike will be required to reach the banding site, but Rob may transport people on ATVs. Good hiking shoes are a must. Please dress appropriately for the weather conditions. The trip will be limited to 10 people. To sign up, call Cynthia Hudson at 722-0016 or e-mail her at bobcyn@live.com.

* **Monday, October 8th:** Jim Brown will give a presentation on birding in the Arctic at the October program meeting.

* **Monday, October 15th:** Submission deadline for the November edition of the *Birding Observer*.

* **Saturday, October 20th:** Beginning bird walk at Lee Metcalf NWR from 10AM-Noon. Meet the field trip leader, Debbie Leick, at the Refuge Visitor's Center.

* **Saturday, November 3rd:** Half-day field trip at Maclay Flat. Meet at the Maclay Flat parking lot at 10:00 AM.

Adventures and Birding in the Arctic



King Eider

At our program meeting on Monday, October 8, Jim Brown will describe and show photos of his many Arctic adventures, including birding in the Arctic. The

meeting will be at 7:30 p.m. in room L14 of the Gallagher Business Building on the UM campus. Jim will describe the wildlife and trials of trekking on a 26-day trip exploring the Mackenzie Mountains in the Northwest Territories and kayaking 410 miles on the Natla, Keele and Mackenzie Rivers. He will continue with the wildlife he encountered on the tundra of the Seward Peninsula, Alaska and the birds and lifestyle of Yupik Eskimos at Gambell on St. Lawrence Island in the Bering Sea.

Jim has made a number of trips to the arctic for birding and work when he was a forest scientist with the U.S. Forest Service. He has been a birder for 58 years and has birded extensively in North and Central America. He has served as president of the boards for Montana Audubon and Five Valleys Audubon Society.



Peeps From the Board: A Brief History of Time and Life

(Apologies to Stephen Hawking) by Bill DeCou



Most scientists believe the universe began suddenly billions of years ago in what is referred to as the Big Bang Theory. Subsequently, galaxies, solar systems and planets formed, including the earth. Earth's early atmosphere of methane, nitrogen, carbon dioxide and ammonia was not conducive to life.

Several billion years ago the first primitive algae appeared, followed by primitive plants. These released oxygen into the atmosphere until finally sufficient oxygen was present for animal life. Protozoans were the first animal life, followed by mollusks, arthropods, fish, reptiles, mammals, and finally humans. During the same lengthy period within which life evolved, the earth went through dramatic geologic and climatic changes, including continental drift. Continental drift and other geologic and climatic changes continue today. These changes are usually so slow that they go unnoticed.

Several times in the distant past [hundreds of millions of years ago] many earlier life forms disappeared in massive extinctions. Such extinctions are natural. About 135 million years ago, dinosaurs became extinct - perhaps due to a large asteroid which hit the earth near Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula at about the same time.

Over 5 million years ago the first primates appeared. The first humans are believed to have existed 500,000 to 1.5 million years ago. The last of a number of ice ages ended 10,000 to 12,000 years ago. The glaciers lowered sea levels enough so that a land bridge existed between Siberia and Alaska. The first humans to arrive in the new world are believed to have used this land bridge to migrate from Asia. At about the same time, mastodons became extinct. Spear points found embedded in mastodon fossils show that they were hunted. Some biologists believe human overhunting caused the mastodon extinction. In all probability, human-caused extinctions have been going on for thousands of years.

Skipping forward to 1492, Columbus "discovered" America. The North American population at that time was believed to have been in the range of 20 to 25 million. These European explorers brought with them diseases to which the Native Americans had never been exposed, including measles, smallpox, plague, hepatitis, polio and tuberculosis. Huge numbers of Native Americans died, as they had no resistance. Within 200 years, 90 to 95% of the native population died from these new diseases. Contrary to what many of us were taught in elementary school, colonists arriving in Massachusetts in the early 1600's did not have to hack through the wilderness, they just used fields abandoned by the Native Americans. (This is well documented in the book *1491 A New world History Prior to Columbus*.)

The native die-off caused significant changes in the environment. Previously cleared fields used for crops went back to forest in the East. By 1700, settlers had to clear the forests which had regrown. Buffalo were no longer found in the east. Passenger pigeons thrived in the new forests. Later, clearing of the same forest was one reason for the demise of the passenger pigeon.

We know the rest - increasing human population, westward expansion, and, more recently, great loss of habitat has led to an increasing number of plant and animal extinctions. Now we face global warming, possibly of catastrophic proportions, caused, at least in part, by humans. Earth will survive. Humans may not.

Species numbers and diversity have been changing since the first algae grew. Extinction is a natural process. What is natural is a matter of perspective. Dinosaurs were natural at one time. So were great glaciers, seas where there is now land and vice versa. To Native Americans in the 16th and 17th centuries, great epidemics (far beyond anything experienced by Europe) were natural. Now we have deforestation in the American west, while the forests regrow in the east.

Skipping forward again, our sun has a finite life and will eventually burn out. First, it will swell as a red giant incinerating the planets. Later, it will shrink to a white dwarf and the planets will go cold - perhaps too cold for life to arise again. In the longer perspective, species extinction is as natural as geologic change.

Birdathon Results by Jim Brown



Western Bluebirds

In early June, two teams birded from dawn to dusk in their efforts to tally birds and raise funds to support our chapter. For the most part the two teams went quietly about their planning with some bantering and probing of the other team to uncover their strategy. The Chit Chats birding team of Larry Weeks, Paul Loehnen, Cynthia Hudson, and Rose Leach birded from Missoula to the Freezout Refuge. They tallied 142 species for the long day. The Coffee Swallows team of Jim Brown, Amy Cilimborg, Gary Knudsen, Vick Applegate and Terry Toppins birded from Missoula to the Browns Lake area and tallied 124 species.

The Chit Chats won hands down for funds raised by collecting \$6,062. The Coffee Swallows raised \$3,423. The total money raised by the birding teams and a mail appeal to members who could not be reached by phone was \$9,485. This was an outstanding response by members of the Five Valleys Audubon Chapter and some non members too. A huge thanks goes to the 154 people who generously made donations to the birdathon. And, a huge thanks also goes to the group that made phone calls to members, including Beth Loehnen, Rocky Healy, Betsy Griffing, Cynthia Hudson, Larry Weeks, Gayle Knudsen, Bill DeCou, Carolyn Goren and Jim Brown.

These funds allow our Chapter to support conservation of bird habitat in the Clark Fork-Grass Valley Important Bird Area (IBA), the Community Naturalist Program, the Audubon Adventures program for middle aged grade school students, and research awards for high school and college students. To highlight the past year, we provided about 30 school classrooms with four Audubon Adventure kits that included materials for each student and a guide for teachers. We donated \$2,000 toward the purchase of a conservation easement by Five Valleys Land Trust of a key wetland and agricultural property located in the IBA near Frenchtown. Our birding surveys helped secure about \$450,000 of grant money to help purchase this easement. We testified about the impact of a proposed

subdivision in the IBA and were successful in getting the no build riparian setback changed from only 25 feet to 100 feet. We made presentations about birds and where they live to a number of grade school classrooms. We paid for the bus and conducted a day long fire ecology field exercise for two fourth grade classes.

Look out--next year the Coffee Swallows might resort to Espresso!

Field Trips: Ninepipes Birding by Jim Brown

Twenty birders participated in the field trip to the Ninepipes area on Saturday, September 8th. Two birders from Polson, MT, two from Plains, MT, and three from Ottawa, Canada joined the Missoula birders. Except for the crisp early morning, the day was classical summer with cloudless sunny skies and no wind. Ninepipes and Kicking Horse Reservoirs were like mirrors dotted with many ducks, coots and grebes. Large numbers of Redhead ducks, American Coots and Western Grebes occupied Ninepipes. Fewer shorebirds were present than we had hoped for but we had nice views of Greater and Lesser yellowlegs and thanks to Rose Leach a Solitary Sandpiper sitting quietly at the back of a small pond. Perhaps the most unusual sighting for the Ninepipes area was a Swainson's Hawk spotted by Scott Hampton. He also located a pair of Sandhill Cranes that had molted into their all gray plumage. This was interesting to several of our group because most of the year Sandhill Cranes in Montana show considerable rusty plumage, which they acquire from their habit of digging in the ground with their bill. Soil and water stains, often containing ferric oxide, are transferred to their feathers during preening. We observed a total of 58 species.



Western Grebe

Board Highlights

By Pat Little

- Larry Weeks has stepped down as our Field Activities Chair. We thank him very much for the fabulous job he has done over a number of years, organizing our field trips and leading so many of them. Larry will continue running the Christmas Bird Count and the Community Naturalist Program. The board elected Terry Toppins to be our new Field Activities Chair.
- Clare Kelly has stepped down as our Web Site Chair, and Pat Little is temporarily taking over. Many thanks to Clare for all she has done for our Chapter over the years.
- We have vacancies for Vice President, Secretary, and Newsletter Circulation Chair.
- We amended our Bylaws where they govern the date of annual meeting, so as to bring them into line with our recent practice. The annual meeting will be held in March, and the nominating committee will form in January.
- We also amended the quorum requirements in the bylaws. Now the annual meeting will require 3% of the membership present in order to have a quorum (was 5%); and quorum for a board meeting remains at 5 people but now we can count committee chairs as well as directors and officers.

October is nature's funeral month. Nature glories in death more than in life. The month of departure is more beautiful than the month of coming - October than May. Every green thing loves to die in bright colors.

~ Henry Ward Beecher

Listen! the wind is rising, and the air is wild with leaves, We have had our summer evenings, now for October eves!

~ Humbert Wolfe

Venison & Pumpkin Chili

By Beverly Orth Geoghegan

- 2 lbs ground venison (Beef and sweet Italian sausage also work with this recipe.)
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 yellow, medium-sized onion – chopped
- 2 cups, fresh chopped pumpkin or butternut squash
- 1 tbsp chili powder
- 1 tbsp cumin
- A pinch of red pepper flakes
- 1 can cannellini beans - drained
- 1 can diced tomatoes, with the juice (fire-roasted, if possible)
- 1 green bell pepper - chopped
- 1 can of pureed pumpkin
- Salt, to taste
- Grated Monterey jack or cheddar cheese

Brown meat with olive oil in a large pot. Stir in onion, fresh pumpkin, chili powder, cumin and a pinch of crushed red pepper flakes; cook until the pumpkin is softened. Stir in cannellini beans, tomatoes with their juice, bell pepper and canned pumpkin. Add salt to taste and water, as needed to thin the sauce. Simmer for 15 minutes more. Serve with cheese sprinkled on top.



Hi Friends! Go Green!

View your *Birding Observer* newsletter even sooner, only on-line. Just send us an email request with your name to Vick Applegate at k7vk@arrl.net. We will alert you each month when the newsletter becomes available on-line. You can find the Five Valleys Audubon web site at: <http://www.fvamisoula.org/>



Welcome New Members:

- Susan Batiuchok
- Tottie Parmeter
- Megan & Brandon Robson
- Angie Stephens

Special note to our members: The Five Valleys Audubon Society board has decided to print only the names of new members from now on.

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: _____

€ \$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*, as well as participate in all local Chapter activities. I understand that my dues are shared between NAS and my local Chapter.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

€ \$20 for a one-year membership for an individual or family

Please make the check payable to National Audubon Society and mail to: National Audubon Society, Membership Data Center, PO Box 422250, Palm Coast, FL 32142-2250. **C2Z N53 OZ**



TO:

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