

October 2016

Birding Observer



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

Calendar of Events

- **Saturday, October 1, 2016:** Five-hour field trip to the old Smurfit-Stone plant site to look for late migrating shorebirds and early winter arrivals. Meet in northwest corner of the Adams Center parking lot at 8:20am or at the intersection of Mullan and Pulp Mill Road at 9am.
- **Monday, October 3rd, 7-9pm:** The board meeting will be held at Jim Brown's house, located at 1504 Woods Gulch Road in Missoula.
- **Saturday, October 8, 2016:** All-day field trip to Rob Domenech's golden eagle banding sites east of Lincoln. RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED. The trip will require steep 2-mile hike to reach the banding stations. The trip will be limited to 9 participants; 6 will go to the Nora Ridge site and 3 will go to the Roger's Pass site. Participants will meet in the parking area at the intersection of Orange St. and I-90 at 6:30 am. For more information and to make a reservation, call Larry Weeks at 549-5632 or 540-3064 (cell).
- **Saturday, October 15th:** Submission deadline for the October edition of the *Birding Observer*.
- **Saturday, October 15th:** Bird walk at Lee Metcalf NWR from 10:00am-Noon. Meet the field trip leader at the Refuge Visitor's Center.
- **Saturday, October 29th:** All-day field trip to Brown's Lake to look for scoters and loons. Meet in the northwest corner of the Adams Center parking lot at 8:50 am.
- **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.

Ireland: Birds, Pubs, & Culture through Irish Eyes



If you are interested in the ecology of Irish birds, pubs, and related culture, then check out this presentation. Bird ecology and adventure are right up there in Terry McEaney's list of life's priorities. On Monday, October 10th he will combine these interests at our program at 7:30 p.m. in the UM Gallagher Business Building, room L14.

Terry is neither a democrat nor a republican, but he is proud to be called a "publican", meaning his life involves having fun in the atmosphere of Irish pubs and the Irish landscape. And there is no better place to have this type of fun (aka "craic") than in Ireland.

A dual citizen of both the United States and Ireland, he has been birding and leading birds-by-day and pubs-by-night trips to Ireland for many a day. Terry is a retired staff ornithologist for Yellowstone National Park. He has authored three books (*Birds of Yellowstone*, *The Uncommon Loon*, and *Birding Montana*). A field ornithologist with decades of experience, he is currently a bird guide for the world bird tour company Field Guides Inc. based in Austin, Texas.



Peeps From The Board: Summary of Five Valleys Audubon Accomplishments, July 1, 2015-June 30, 2016

By Rose Leach

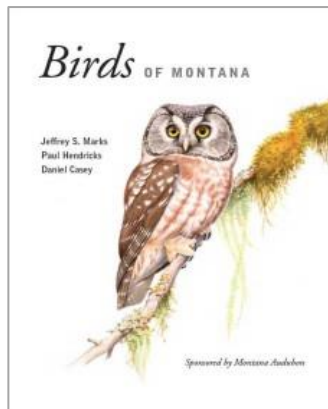
Your Chapter and Board have been busy this year implementing our many planning goals. Chief among them are activities related to conservation, education, habitat protection, and land-use planning. Here is what we have accomplished. If you would like to be more involved in these activities, or in shaping the Chapter's future activities, please let a Board member know.

Bird Festival 2016, Missoula

The Annual Wings over the Big Sky Bird Festival, co-hosted with Montana Audubon was a big success. We had approximately 350 attendees, 40 field trips, and a couple of top-notch presentations by Dr. Erick Greene and Kate Davis. We raised over \$6,000.00 for our Legacy Fund. Local members who received awards included:

- Larry Weeks - Environmental Educator of the Year
- Beverly Orth-Geoghegan - Lifetime Achievement Award; and
- Jeff Marks, Dan Casey, and Paul Herdricks - 2016 Outstanding Achievement Award for the book *Birds of Montana*.

See our September newsletter for more information.



Conservation Easements and Planning.

Support of conservation efforts, particularly those located within our Grass Valley Important Bird Area (IBA), is a key part of our Mission in our five-year plan. Because of its importance, we prioritize many of these items with financial support.

➤ The Board finalized payment of \$5,000 to Five Valleys Land Trust's (FVLT) Conservation Easement purchase at the Boyer Property, approved last year. While our financial contributions might be considered small compared to the total cost of an easement, our support demonstrates local community support from volunteer organizations with limited means. Thus, our dollars are invaluable in leveraging contributions from other sources. Supporting conservation easements and various

forms of land protection is a key part of our mission in our five-year plan.

- Conservation Easement, Charlie Deschamps property—The Board partnered with Montana Land Reliance by providing a letter of support for obtaining grant funds for this site, located in our IBA. The Chapter also pledged \$2,500.
- Conservation Easement, Blue Heron Acres— The Board authorized \$500 - \$1,000 to leverage dollars for a conservation easement at the 75-acre Blue Heron property near Harper's Bridge fishing access, in our IBA.
- Conservation Easement, Iverson property—the Board finalized payment of \$1,000 to help secure a Conservation Easement purchase at the Iverson Property near Potomac, approved last year. The site supports a large population of nesting Bobolinks, among other species.
- Conservation Easement—closed on the Flemming property.
- Collaborative work by our chapter and FVLT was reported in the North America Bird Conservation Initiative's *All Bird Bulletin Winter 2016* <http://www.nabci-us.org>.
- Board member Gerhard Knudsen participated in updating Missoula County subdivision planning guidelines, to include a "scoping meeting" before the development of a preliminary plat. This preview planning approach idea also benefits the potential developer, because it would expedite the approval process by 3 weeks.
- Gerhard and Jim Brown reviewed six subdivision proposals, and provided comments on each.
- Several chapter and board members completed two bird surveys at important conservation properties during the planning period. One site in the Missoula valley had several Grasshopper Sparrows, which have become hard to find here in recent years.
- The Board provided a letter of support to Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) for selection of Alt B, purchase Rehbein property at Fish Creek, Oct 2015.
- The board was represented at planning meetings for our local BLM office, as well as at field trips sponsored by FWP to Fish Creek and Seeley Lake.
- Board members attended several planning meetings with our partners (National Wildlife Federation, Montana Natural History Center, Missoula City Parks, etc.) for developing micro-site habitats and water features in public spaces around Missoula with our Legacy Funds.

Conservation Education

- Larry Weeks, our Community Naturalist, presented 34 programs throughout the year, which reached 712 students and 219 adults.
- Larry taught an advanced birder's workshop, covering 7 classroom sessions on different bird groups, plus a field trip. Nearly 50 people attended 1 or more sessions. Topics included identification skills, taxonomy, birding by ear, conservation, etc., with a variety of speakers and bird skins available. Larry plans to teach more ID workshops this year, stay tuned for details!
- The Chapter received 11 applications for the Phil Wright memorial research award program. Bill Gabriel's review group awarded five students funds varying from \$540 to \$995. Students will report their findings during our monthly meetings.
- In June 2016, two teams conducted Bird-a-thons to raise money for our Chapter's conservation and education activities. We hope to equal or exceed our previous total of over \$6,000.
- As in past years, the Chapter sponsored Audubon Adventures in the schools during 2015-2016.

Birding Activities

- Chapter had the largest number of field participants in the state for the annual Christmas Bird Count—84 people! We tallied 82 bird species, about average for us, and the 2nd highest total in the state (behind Bigfork with 83).
- The Chapter sponsored 21 field trips during the period, including several overnight trips.



A Take a Trip Back in Time

Submitted by Jim Habeck & Jim Brown

For history buffs, Jim Habeck uncovered an interesting news article from the May 30, 1929, issue of *The Rocky Mountain Husbandman* of Great Falls. The Missoula Bird Club, the forerunner of today's Five Valleys Audubon Society, established a grove of trees and shrubs at the base of Mount Sentinel as a bird sanctuary in honor of Professor Morton Elrod. The following is an excerpt of the article written by Cora E. Van Deusen.

Birds of Missoula arriving from the sunny south lands in the spring and those that linger through the long winter months will find a sanctuary there where they will not only be safe but where food also will be provided. At the foot of Mount Sentinel on a corner of the university campus is the newly established sanctuary. It has been named the "Elrod Sanctuary for Birds", in honor of Dr. M. J. Elrod who has done much for the protection of bird life.

The sanctuary was established by the Missoula Bird club in an effort to provide refuge for birds. To provide an attractive place for the birds a large variety of shrubs and trees were planted in the area this spring and fountains and cement bathing pools will also be provided the feathered guests. Fifty bird houses were made and donated to the sanctuary by the Missoula Boy Scouts. It is hoped that in the future the entire university campus may be designated as a sanctuary.

That a sanctuary will be welcomed by our feathered friends is evident from the number that spend the winter months here. Following is a list of birds observed by the Missoula Bird Club during the winter: Brewer blackbird, magpie, flicker, Rocky mountain pine grosbeak, evening grosbeak, tree sparrow, Hungarian partridge, Chinese pheasant, chickadee, Rocky mountain creeper, mallard and other species of ducks, Bohemian wax wing, goldfinch, song sparrow, kingfisher, water ouzel, sharp shinned hawk, red breasted nuthatch, hairy woodpecker, downy woodpecker, Wilson snipe, and junco. Robins have also been seen during the winter months when the temperature was far below zero. The beautiful wax wings are perhaps the most numerous of any birds. A flock of these were observed by Dr. Elrod in which he estimated the number of birds at 2,500.

Twenty-five different species of native birds were observed by some of the members of the Missoula Bird club who made a study of those nesting here in spring. They included the western robin, red-eyed vireo, yellow warbler, warbling vireo, Bullock oriole, American redstart, downy woodpecker, western house wren, calliope humming bird, tree swallow, western chipping sparrow, western wood pewee, cow bird, black headed grosbeak, catbird, mountain song sparrow, willow thrush, MacGillivray warbler, spotted sand piper, long tailed chickadee, pine siskin, cedar waxwing, red shafted flicker, and audubon warbler. Woodcocks are said to be a rarity there, although one, it is said, was seen in Greenough Park.

Contact Jim Brown for a copy of the whole article.



Field Trips

By Larry Weeks

August 20, 2016: Nineteen people joined the author for a tour of the old Smurfit-Stone mill site. On the drive to the mill, the birders that met at the UM stopped along Pulp

Mill Road to view 3 Swainson's Hawks; two adults and one juvenile. After getting the tour group organized, we visited a sludge pond to look for shorebirds which was the primary focus of the trip. We found Lesser Yellowlegs, Solitary, Baird's, Least, and Semipalmated Sandpipers, and Killdeer. Later in the field trip, we picked up a Greater Yellowlegs, Spotted Sandpipers and a Wilson's Snipe. A Peregrine Falcon flew by while we were looking at the shorebirds. A small piece of habitat near the river produced a variety of passerines, but we had to work for them. As we worked our way upstream, a Sharp-shinned Hawk flew across the river and two Northern Harriers were flying around the rock cliffs. Lewis's Woodpeckers were active and we heard a Pileated Woodpecker in the south habitat. On the north end of the habitat, we had 3 Sandhill Cranes and an immature Golden Eagle. Half of the people left around 1 PM and the other half returned to the sludge pond to see if any new shorebirds had arrived. The only thing new was a second group of three Sandhill Cranes which had different plumage from the first three. We ended up with 71 species for the trip.

September 10, 2016: The September field trip was to the Ninepipes Reservoir and surrounding area. The first stop was at a cattail marsh on Fish Hatchery Road where two Virginia Rails were enticed to the edge of the habitat but did not show themselves. Then we encountered a Swainson's Hawk on a cross arm a little further up the road. However, before everyone had a chance to look at the hawk, it flew off towards highway 93 but then turned around and returned to the same perch, giving everyone a satisfying look. We then went to Ninepipes and hiked to the edge of the reservoir. The water was teeming with all kinds of waterfowl; ducks, grebes, gulls, American Coots, White Pelicans, and Trumpeter Swans. As we scanned the flocks, we were able to identify some of the ducks. After we had been there awhile, two Black-bellied Plovers showed up for a few minutes. There were two Spotted Sandpipers near the dike. After a couple of stops for shorebirds without success, we went to the Pablo

Reservoir and had the best birding of the day. The water level was down and there was considerable mud flat. From the north end of the dike, we had 54 Sandhill Cranes, a variety of ducks and two Wilson's Snipes. At the south end of the dike, we had several shorebirds. There were five Baird's Sandpipers on the near shore and many more further out. We hiked out on the mud flat to get closer to the other shorebirds. We ended up with super looks at six Pectoral Sandpipers, two Semipalmated Plovers and 13 Black-bellied Plovers. A long-billed Dowitcher caused considerable discussion before we settled on the correct I.D. There were 12 people on the field trip and we had 68 species.

The following day, we learned that there was an American Golden Plover with the Black-bellied Plovers. It was an oversight on my part not to look for the American Golden Plover. So Rose Leach and I returned to the Pablo Reservoir on September 12th and we documented six American Golden Plovers and nine Black-bellied Plovers.

Birdathon

By Larry Weeks

There were two teams in the Birdathon again this year; Thomas Kallmeyer had the Coffee Swallows and I had the Chit Chats. I called the members in the first half of the membership list and Thomas' team called the last half. This is the only fund raiser that the Chapter does. This year, the Birdathon raised \$7900. In addition to seeking pledges, the teams also attempts to find as many birds as they can in a 24-hour period. Some of the pledges are for so much a bird, so the more birds that are found, the higher the pledge. The Chit Chats Birdathon team consisted of Cynthia Hudson, Craig Hollenberger, Tony Leukering, and my son Ron Weeks. They birded for 24 hours on June 4th and it was a Big Day effort. Their route included Missoula, Sanders and Flathead counties and Highway 2 to Bowdoin NWR. They tallied 193 birds which was just short of the Montana Big Day record of 197. I want to thank everyone who contributed to the success of the Birdathon.



Western Meadowlark

Welcome New Members

Mima Barrett
Emily A Deschamps
Stephen Harris
Catheryn Quinn
Lucia Young

James R. Beery
Nora Lee Drew
Cindy Hockelberg
Karen Renne

Richard Billstein
Nancy Rice Fritz
Victoria Pennington
Suzy Archibald-Wilson



HELP WANTED

We are in the beginning process of implementing phase one of our legacy fund project in enhancing birding opportunities around the urban area. Both the Lewis & Clark and DeSmet schools have agreed that we can improve their wildlife habitat gardens by installing bird feeders and have a class monitor/fill the feeders as needed.

We need a volunteer for each school to spend one or two hours a month to help the students and teacher in their responsibility, plus do some education about birds and birding. For more information, please contact Jerry Dirnberger at dirnberger@aol.com or 406-360-5133. Thanks!

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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