

October 2020

Birding Observer



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

Vote Your Audubon Values This November

**By David Yarnold, President & CEO,
National Audubon Society**

On November 3, 2020, Americans will vote for legislators who represent their values. If you receive Audubon magazine, it's pretty likely that we share some core values: a commitment to protect birds and the places they, and we, need; to nature; and to justice and respect.

We are proud of our politically diverse membership (53 percent progressive, 47 percent moderate and conservative), and it's not our place to pick your candidates. Together we've proven we can find common ground, starting with ensuring every American can easily register to vote. Birds need all the support we can muster.



If you value birds, vote for candidates who will uphold laws that protect them like the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. If you value clean water and clean air, vote for candidates who will uphold and strengthen the Clean Water Act and Clean Air Act. If you care about climate change, vote for

candidates who will hold polluters accountable and who support clean-energy development and access. If you value the places that birds need, vote for candidates who will invest in public natural spaces, from planting native plants in city parks to protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

And after you vote, hold those elected officials accountable for their actions. If they promised to protect birds, protect clean air, protect the climate—hold them to those promises.

We can give you the training to talk with your elected officials. We've created a series of webinars and a campaign manual that teach you how to be an advocate, how to write to legislators, and how to meet with them. Start with Advocacy 101 and go from there.

We're living through historic times, and it's been tough. But there's an inescapable date on the calendar, and it is just a few short months away. Audubon's chapter network started with political action—stopping the killing of birds for their feathers. It's time to vote Audubon's values again. The world will be a better, more just place if you do; a place where birds and people thrive, together.

Status of Chapter-sponsored Events

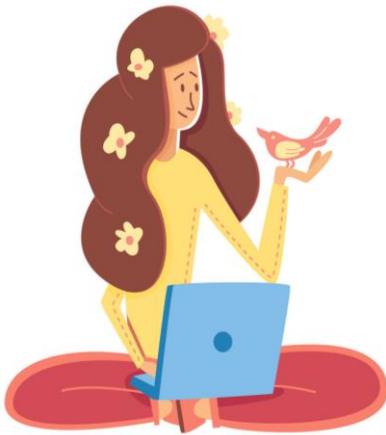
Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, Five Valleys Audubon Society has canceled all chapter-sponsored events indefinitely. Specifically:

- All Chapter-sponsored meetings at the University are cancelled. We will try to reschedule our planned speakers for a future program.
- In-person Board Meetings will also be cancelled, and we will conduct business via our email google group or other online venue.
- Chapter-sponsored field trips are cancelled.
- If you want to go birding individually, great! Feel free to contact Larry or your other birding pals to see if he or they will be going birding—without carpooling—during this period.



Peeps from the Board: Tips for documenting your bird sightings By Rose Leach

Last month we talked about the idea of documenting your bird sightings. Here are a few easy tips for you to think about, and we've posted a reference note—Tony Lukering's 'WRITING BIRD DESCRIPTIONS: RULING OUT OTHER SPECIES', with more information. See our Five Valleys Audubon Website (fvaudubon.org) under the tab 'Bird ID Tips' (PS, we are working on the link now).



It can be fun to run through these tips while you are viewing already-confirmed birds. This will help get you in the habit of looking at all of the bird's parts. Try to mentally rule out other species that might be more expected, or that might even be rare here, too. When looking at that Western Kingbird in

the fall, why is it not a Tropical Kingbird? Tropical Kingbirds make northward forays along the coast, and there are records in Idaho, not too far from southwestern Montana.

Photos are great, but they often do not definitively show what you may see in the field with your binoculars or scope. So mentally, think about what you would say if you were describing your bird to a non-birder. If you have a camera or even a phone, by all means try to snap a picture, but only after you have mentally described the bird.

First, note the habitat and how the bird is acting. If possible, note what family the bird is and why. Warbler? Vireo? Thrush? If you are not sure of that part, then try to note if the bird is the same size as a nearby bird that you do know. You might say—it was feeding on the ground and was the same size as several adult White-crowned Sparrows that it was feeding with. Comparisons can be helpful to narrow down the identification.

Rather than ticking off field marks, think about systematically describing your bird. Think—front to back, topline and then bottom-side. If you can't see part of the bird, note that as well. This lets a reader know that you tried to look at that part, but just did not have a view of it. Don't forget the wings—are there wing bars or patches, or none at all?

Be sure to look at the bill shape and color, and legs and feet as well. We had a recent sighting of a Bay-breasted Warbler in fall plumage in Greenough Park, and we had a nice photo that showed the toes—which were dark—as opposed to those of the Blackpoll Warbler (more likely here than the Bay-breasted), which has yellow toes! But if the photo had not shown the toes, the observer could have said—'when perched, dark toes were visible'—because he had looked at all of the parts of the legs and feet when he was viewing the bird, and made a mental note about it.

If the bird is singing, even a recording on your phone can be helpful. Or you could describe what it sounded like—perhaps it sounded like a yellow warbler, but it was harsher, or something like that.

Here is a practice assignment for you during this fall and winter. —Look at those sparrows with rusty crowns. Is it a late Chipping Sparrow, an early American Tree Sparrow, or an immature White-crowned Sparrow? Why and why not? What about an out-of-range Field Sparrow? What about a late Clay-colored Sparrow or a winter plumage Chipping Sparrow? When you know what your bird is, mentally eliminate the other species.

Time of year can be important in your description. During winter, we would not expect an Osprey or Turkey Vulture. It helps in your description if you note—'this bird is not expected at this time of year, so I looked carefully to confirm the identification'. For practice, keep looking for those Osprey that you have been identifying all summer with just a glance. How do you know that the bird you are seeing is not an immature Bald Eagle? I have seen many Bald Eagles with stripes on their heads that look superficially like Osprey. Mentally eliminate Bald Eagle as you view the bird. If you are basing your ID on a white underwing with a dark wrist patch, why is it not an early Rough-legged Hawk? A record of a vulture during winter is going to need lots of description to be accepted, so look carefully and be prepared to rule out every other potential raptor, including Black Vulture and Crested Caracara.

One more tip—during the Christmas Bird Count, there is essentially an equal chance that a female or immature-type grosbeak you might find could be either a Rose-breasted or Black-headed Grosbeak. (Evening Grosbeaks can occur all year, and would not be confused with these 2 species.) Look carefully so that you can rule out either species. I will be glad you made the extra effort, as the compiler of that data for the state, so thanks in advance.

Enjoy mentally challenging yourself and your birding pals. You can have lots of fun while your skills will increase.



Books That Might Interest You

By Jim Brown

Bill Gabriel was a collector of bird books, many related to birds found around the world. When he died this past spring he wished that his books would become available to Audubon members. Because our Chapter meetings are on hold until the pandemic is under control we would like to make these books available through our newsletter. If you would like to have any of these books, please contact Jim Brown by phone or email (see last page of newsletter) to arrange for receiving them. He will either deliver them to you or you can stop by his house for them. If you enjoy the books and find them useful consider a donation to the Chapter's Philip L. Wright Endowment for student research awards. Bill believed strongly in the educational value of this program. Here are the titles for the available books:

- ✦ Simon & Schuster's Guide to Birds of the World
- ✦ Birds of Southern South America and Antarctica
- ✦ Travel Survival Kit Antarctica
- ✦ Antarctica a Guide to Wildlife
- ✦ Handbook of Foreign Birds Volumes 1 and 2
- ✦ Birds of South Vietnam
- ✦ Common Birds of Malay Peninsula
- ✦ The Birds of Malay Peninsula
- ✦ Birds: Kruger National Park
- ✦ The Bird of Seychelle
- ✦ A Field Guide to the Bird of Galapagos
- ✦ Birds of Guatemala
- ✦ A Guide to Bird of Trinidad and Tobago
- ✦ The Birds of New Providence & the Bahama Islands
- ✦ Field Guide to Birds of Mexico & Central America
- ✦ A Field Guide to Mexican Birds
- ✦ Birds of South Africa
- ✦ Birds of the Mediterranean and Alps
- ✦ Birds of Britain and Europe
- ✦ Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe
- ✦ Birds of Britain and Europe
- ✦ The most complete Field Guide to the birds of Britain and Europe
- ✦ Birds of the West Indies
- ✦ The Birds of Columbia
- ✦ A Field Guide to the Birds of South-East Asia
- ✦ The New Guide to the Birds of New Zealand
- ✦ A Field Guide to the Sea Birds of Southern Africa and the World
- ✦ Birds of Europe, Russia, China, & Japan Passerines
- ✦ A Field Guide to the Birds of East and Central Africa
- ✦ A Field Guide to the Birds of West Africa
- ✦ The Birds of Zambia
- ✦ A Field Guide to Birds of East Africa
- ✦ A Birders West Indies
- ✦ A Guide to the Birds of the West Indies
- ✦ Plants and Animals of the Eastern Caribbean
- ✦ Penguins of the World
- ✦ A New Guide to the Birds of Hong Kong
- ✦ A Field Guide to the Birds of Gambia and Senegal
- ✦ The Gambia & Senegal
- ✦ Birds of Venezuela
- ✦ Birds of Panama
- ✦ Inland Birds of Saudi Arabia
- ✦ Atlas of Breeding Birds of the Falkland Islands
- ✦ Philippine Birds & Mammals
- ✦ A Pocket Guide to Hawaii's Birds
- ✦ Birds of Hawaii
- ✦ A Photographic Guide to North American Raptors
- ✦ Peterson Field Guides Hawks
- ✦ Peterson Field Guides Advanced Birding
- ✦ Birds of the Rocky Mountains
- ✦ Handbook of California Birds
- ✦ The Audubon Society Master Guide to Birding: Volumes 1, 2, & 3
- ✦ Kingbird Highway by Ken Kaufman
- ✦ The Ducks, Geese and Swans of North America
- ✦ Wood Warblers' World
- ✦ The Bird
- ✦ Birdscapes
- ✦ Where the Birds Are
- ✦ The Bedside Book of Birds
- ✦ Pilgrim on the Great Bird Continent
- ✦ Audubon Bird Guide Small Land Birds of Eastern and Central N.A.
- ✦ Audubon Water Bird Guide Eastern & Central N.A.
- ✦ Waterproof Birder's Journal



Virginia Vincent's Bird Books

By Larry Weeks

Our friend Virginia Vincent studied and rejoiced in the beauty of birds throughout her life. Unsurprisingly, she amassed a library of books that is being made available to the Chapter membership. If you would like to have any of these books, contact Larry Weeks to arrange for receiving them (see last page of the newsletter.) Then, if you enjoy the books and find them useful, consider making a donation in her memory to Five Valleys Audubon Society.

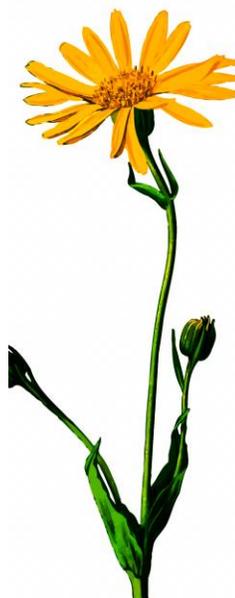
- ✦ Birds of the World by Austin and Singer
- ✦ The World of Birds by Fisher and Peterson
- ✦ American Bird Engravings by Wilson
- ✦ The Nightwatchers by Cameron and Parnall
- ✦ Menaboni's Birds by Menaboni
- ✦ The Art of Audubon
- ✦ Ravens, Crows, Magpies, and Jays by Angell
- ✦ The Birders Guide to Montana by McEaney
- ✦ The Joy of Birding by Bernstein
- ✦ A World of Watchers by Kastner
- ✦ Birder's Handbook by Ehrlich, Dobkin & Wheye
- ✦ A Field Guide to Birds by Peterson
- ✦ 100 Birds and How they Got Their Names by Wells
- ✦ Hand Taming Wild Birds at the Feeder by Martin
- ✦ Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe by Peterson, Mountfort and Hollom
- ✦ Golden's Field Guide for Birds of North America
- ✦ Bird Brains – Intelligence of Corvids by Savage
- ✦ Gardens of Plenty – The Art of the Potager Garden by Abbott
- ✦ Song Birds: How to Attract them and Identify their Songs by Proctor
- ✦ Birds of Mount McKinley Alaska by Murie
- ✦ Book of North American Birds – Reader's Digest
- ✦ Atlas of Wintering No. American Birds – Analysis of CBC Data by Root
- ✦ Birds of the Pacific Coast by Eliot
- ✦ Brushed by Feathers – A Year of Birdwatching in the West by Wood
- ✦ Dozen Birding Hot Spots by Harrison
- ✦ A history of Birds by Fisher



Visit Audubon's Native Plants Database to Prepare for the Fall Planting Season

Reprinted from Audubon.org

Long before harsh winter weather arrives, the cooler temperatures and ample rainfall of early fall create the perfect conditions for new plants to take root in your garden. But before you pay a visit to your local nursery, find out which plants will provide the most for birds in the coming months.



Audubon's native plants database will allow you to explore the best plants for the birds in your area, as well as local resources and links to learn more. All you have to do is enter your 5-digit zip code to get started. Once you have your list, it's time to start planting!

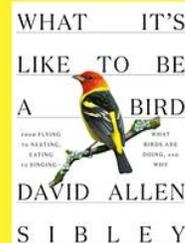
<https://www.audubon.org/native-plants>

Virtual Birding with David Sibley From Town Hall Seattle, 9/3/2020

Click on the link below to watch a virtual presentation and Q&A with bestselling author, and birder, David Allen Sibley for his new book, **What It's Like to Be a Bird**.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SPuj1dlaChc&feature=youtu.be>

virtual event



Welcome New Members

Jennifer Bolton	Alfred Brule
Barbara Cieslewicz	Jann Clouse
Joan Cook	Warren Dennis
Teri Fellon	Patty Hahn
Pelah Hoyt	Tom Lankenau
Jody McKinley	Lois Reimers
Karen Schilke	Vicki Thornton
Greg Weier	Gina Welch
Daniel Yochim	Randy York



Five Valleys Audubon greatly appreciates those who renewed their membership this past month. We generally encourage members to receive their newsletter via email (to conserve resources and our expenses), which is the default mailing option if provided by new members. If you want to change how your newsletter is delivered or have any changes to your mailing preferences, please contact the Membership Chair, Poody McLaughlin, at poodymc@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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