

September 2013

Birding Observer



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

Calendar

- **Tuesday, September 3rd, 7pm:** Betsy Griffing will host the September board meeting on Tuesday, September 3rd (the day after Labor Day) at 7:00pm at her office. The address is Axilon Law Group, 257 W Front St, Suite B in downtown Missoula.
- **Monday, September 9th, 7:30pm:** We will have two speakers at our September program meeting. Radd Icenogle will discuss bird photography and Barbara Ross will present on the Audubon Adventures program.
- **Sunday, September 15th:** Submission deadline for the October edition of the Birding Observer.
- **Sunday September 15th:** Birding Missoula's West End led by Carole and Terry Toppins. Meet in the middle of the UM Adams Center Parking Lot for carpooling to depart at 8am for a half day trip taking advantage of some of Missoula's open spaces. For more information call Terry Toppins at 406-214-1194.
- **Saturday, September 21st:** Beginning bird walk at Lee Metcalf NWR from 10am-Noon. Meet the field trip leader at the Refuge Visitor's Center.
- **Saturday, October 5th:** All-day field trip to Rob Domenech's Golden Eagle banding site near Lincoln. See write-up on page 3 for details.



Capturing the Moment: Photography for Birders

Capturing great images of birds and your birding adventures is a fantastic way of preserving your memories, increasing your identification skills, and documenting rare birds. At our inaugural fall meeting on Monday, September 9th, author and biologist Radd Icenogle will discuss the rewards and challenges of photographing birds. He will also explain digital SLR basics, shooting techniques, and tricks of the trade. Join us for this lively program at 7:30 p.m. in room L14 of the Gallagher Business Building on the UM campus.

Barbara Ross, coordinator of the Audubon Adventures program, will start the evening by updating us on this educational curriculum in local classrooms. Audubon Adventures is an educational program from National Audubon for grades 3 - 6. Our chapter provides these materials on nature and the environment to schools in Missoula and the surrounding areas, from Charlo to St. Regis. Barbara coordinates with teachers who want to use the program in their classrooms. Last year 29 teachers taught with Audubon Adventures at \$46 per kit. Five Valleys Audubon funds this school program with money pledged from our annual Birdathon.

Radd Icenogle is a native Montanan and a lifelong outdoor and wildlife enthusiast. He earned a degree in biology with an emphasis on habitat relations. During his studies he wrote a thesis that explored the effects of slope aspect on communities in southwestern Montana and specifically, the ways that Clark's Nutcrackers use their habitat. He has worked for the U.S. Forest Service as a botanist, bird biologist, and hydrology technician. In 2003 he published *Birds in Place*, a habitat-based guide to birds in the Northern Rockies. This spring, Radd discovered a bird species new to Montana, a Baikal Teal, on the west edge of Missoula.

Peeps from the Board: Financial Update

By Kit Stevens, Treasurer

For Fiscal Year ending 6/30/13, Five Valleys Audubon has continued to fund educational opportunities, promote the conservation & enjoyment of birds and wildlife, and support our Montana and National Audubon Societies. Educational programs consisted of Phil Wright Fund Scholarships, Community Naturalist Programs in elementary schools, and adult bird identification classes. Along with various birding trips, open to everyone, we participated in the Bird Migration Celebration and the Pollinator Party in conjunction with the Native Plant Society.

Income for the year totaled approximately \$20,400 with expenses of approximately \$14,300. Over one-half of the income comes from our Birdathon Fundraiser (59%). Other sources of income include: National Audubon dues share (9%), General Donations (8%), Chapter Membership dues (5%), Phil Wright Endowment Fund(8%) and various fundraising activities (8% - bird class, sales of miscellaneous items donated to FVA, local presentation Riverside Health Center), a grant from National Audubon for the Community Naturalist program field trip bus, and income from investment funds(4%).



Our expenses included:

- Production & mailing of the monthly newsletter (23% of expenses)
- Donations to Mt. Audubon, The Owl Institute, Raptors of the Rockies and Raptorview Research (29%)
- Purchase of Audubon Adventure kits for local schoolteachers (9%)
- Phil Wright Awards (18%)
- Dues paid to Mt. Audubon (8%)
- Miscellaneous post office, mailing supplies & website support, Annual report fee, and marketing costs for the Bird Migration Celebration 2012 (9%)
- Liability Insurance & New radios for use on our field trips were also purchased this year (4%)

At the end of June 2013, Five Valleys Audubon had assets of approximately \$3,700 in a checking account and \$41,000 in investment accounts. The Phil Wright Endowment Fund has a separate investment account and held approximately \$68,800. A portion of the income from this endowment fund is specifically earmarked for research scholarships with the balance

reinvested in the fund to keep up with inflation and to eventually fully fund the scholarships.

Each year, we adopt an annual budget. Anticipated income for the July 2013-June 2014 year is approximately \$17,000 with projected expenses approximately \$14,000. Monthly financial reports are produced and reviewed at the board meetings. We also implemented a five year budget in 2010 reserving \$12,000 for habitat protection and \$5,000 for any unexpected Chapter expense. To date, approximately \$2,500 has been spent on a conservation easement & a video project highlighting the Grass Valley IBA.

I hope this synopsis of our financial structure keeps you assured that your contributions to Five Valleys Audubon Society are locally & wisely used. If you have any questions, you can always contact me.

~ Kit Stevens, Treasurer.

May Field Trip by Larry Weeks

Saturday, May 25, 2013: Larry Weeks led the field trip to the old Smurfit-Stone mill site. The mill ceased operation in early 2011 and the ponds have mostly dried up except for some water in low spots that is being maintained by groundwater. The current owners have allowed Larry to visit the mill site on a regular basis and more recently have allowed him to conduct tours. It didn't take long to realize that the diversity of birds at the mill was still very good, but the numbers were down due to the shortage of water. As a result, Larry offered to do a spring and a summer field trip for the Chapter. The spring trip was attended by 22 people. After signing in and organizing car pooling, the first stop was behind the paper machine buildings where all six species of swallows were located. In addition to a few ducks in an old gravel pit with water, Scott Hampton identified a common grackle that was flying by. We then visited a sludge pond that was covered with water and found horned and eared grebes and a few ruddy ducks. A 3rd stop by a small pond with considerable mud yielded American avocets, Wilson's phalaropes, one long-billed dowitcher, spotted sandpipers, and cinnamon and blue-winged teal. A second flooded sludge pond had several coots, a few bufflehead, a pectoral sandpiper, and a peep that appeared to be a least sandpiper. On the road to the well field, there was an eagle's nest with 2 juveniles and 2 adults. An American kestrel was herded down the road from pole to pole, western bluebirds were hanging around a

nesting box, and Lewis's woodpeckers were spotted at a cavity in a dead cottonwood. A walk through the habitat on the south end of the property had wood ducks, yellow warblers, Bullock's orioles, black-headed grosbeaks, a gray catbird, and Calliope hummingbirds every 100 yards along the slough. The sky was full of soaring birds that included red-tailed hawks, turkey vultures, accipiters, osprey, swallows, and white-throated swifts. The tour proceeded along the river to the north end of the property. We saw more avocets, Wilson's phalaropes, a juvenile red-tailed hawk on a nest, a great blue heron on a nest, and hooded mergansers. Gadwalls seemed to be everywhere. Upon returning to the mill, a Say's phoebe was found near the remaining buildings. The tour had a total of 80 species.

June Field Trip to Blackfoot-Clearwater

By Terry Toppins

Saturday, June 1st: Kristi Dubois led 22 people on a great birding trip from Missoula to the Blackfoot-Clearwater WMA to Upsata Lake and up past Seely Lake to Divide Lake. The weather was great and birds were plentiful. Kristi provided great commentary on FW&P activities and projects in the area. Northern Waterthrush, Wilson's Warbler, Pied-billed Grebe, Long-billed Curlew, Trumpeter Swan, Common Loon, Red-necked Grebe, Williamson's Sapsucker, Hammond's Flycatcher and calling American Bittern's were among the 60 plus species that were observed.

June Field Trip to Bannock

by Cynthia Hudson

On June 22nd, Nate Kohler led 9 people on a weekend tour of the Melrose, Dillon and Bannack areas. The forecast threatened rain, but our luck and the weather held up as we tallied 97 species for the trip. We had great success with all of our target birds: Gray Flycatcher, Sage Thrasher, Yellow-breasted Chat, Green-tailed Towhee, McCown's Longspur, Sage Sparrow, Ferruginous Hawk, Brewer's Sparrow and Burrowing Owl. Our Camp Creek Road lunch-time birding was serenaded by Canyon and Rock Wrens, Green-tailed Towhee and Yellow-breasted Chat. Birch Creek Road featured McCown's Longspur and two Burrowing Owls that cooperated by remaining outside their burrow. We even exchanged looks with a roadside badger near the owl burrow. Bannack Bench Road rewarded us with the sights and sounds of all the special sagebrush species. We also noted a Common Nighthawk perched on the

same fence rail that one had perched on the previous year. Clark Canyon Reservoir was difficult birding because of the lighting and distance of most of the birds but we did pick up several shorebirds and waterfowl. A Ferruginous Hawk soared low and slow over us which gave everyone time to appreciate and learn the field marks. Also, we were able to see the pink breeding blush on the Franklin's Gull. Our thanks to Clancy for the cookies (again!) and to Nate for his time and expertise (again!).

July Field Trip to Cottonwood Lakes

By Terry Toppins

Saturday, July 20th:

Dragonfly and bird enthusiasts Nat Kohler and Bob Martinka led 10 people from Missoula past Seely Lake up towards the Cottonwood Lakes area for a Dragonfly



and Birds field trip. While we waited for the day to warm up so that the Odonata's {Dragonflies and Damselflies} would be more active, we did some birding and were rewarded with Lazuli Bunting, MacGillivray's Warbler, Western Tanager, and Rufous Hummingbird. But the stars of the birding part were a singing Pacific Wren and a singing Fox Sparrow right over our heads. We then went to several ponds and learned tips on identifying and how to handle the 15 species of Dragonflies and 9 species of Damselflies that were caught. You cannot really appreciate their spectacular beauty until you can see them up close.

Upcoming October Field Trip

The trip to Rob Domenech's Golden Eagle banding site near Lincoln will be on October 5th. The trip will be limited to 6 participants, but if there is enough interest an additional trip may be added on October 6th. We had successful trips last year with Golden Eagles banded both days. This is an all-day field trip meeting at the W. Broadway Park-n-Ride lot at 6:00 am. It is a steep 2 mile hike up to the banding station. Although there is an option to ride up on the back of an ATV, all of last year's participants chose the hike over hanging on during the steep ascent! To reserve a spot, ask questions, or if you need a ride - contact Cynthia Hudson at 830-5424 or bobcyn@live.com.

Conservation Heroes By Kathy Heffernan

This spring, two Sentinel High School biology classes were fortunate enough to receive a grant from the Montana Native Plant Society to conduct a study of noxious weed control on the Peschel Conservation Easement adjacent to Waterworks Hill. With teacher Kathy Heffernan, the classes have assisted in placing and maintaining bluebird boxes on Waterworks Hill for several years. Bluebirds mainly eat insects. Because healthy, diverse plant communities foster healthy, diverse insect populations, weed control is a win-win situation for bluebirds.

Last fall, the students surveyed the weeds on the site. In spring, they invited Bryce Christiaens from the Missoula County Extension Service and Kathy Settevendemie of Blackfoot Native Plants to share information about weed control and native plants. In groups, the students created weed control plans for their 100-square-meter study plots. The plans included clipping Leafy Spurge, digging Knapweed, planting native wildflowers and grasses, and adding beneficial insects. The students spent three spring field trips on the easement, implementing their plans, identifying native wildflowers, monitoring bluebird boxes, and placing a new bird box next to the study plots. In the classroom, the students studied noxious weeds, created a guidebook to local wildflowers, and learned to identify common local birds. Their semester test was an identification final consisting of slides of weeds, wildflowers, and birds.

This fall, another group of biology students will survey the weed population of the site. A new grant from the Captain Planet Foundation ensures that the project will continue into 2014.



Students at work on the Peschel Conservation Easement

This is what students had to say about their experiences:

- “The best parts of the field trips were the hiking and the scenery. I enjoyed getting out of the classroom and working with other students. The worst part was the weather when it rained. I learned how to identify noxious weeds and various wildflowers. When we threw the sampling circle in random directions, we found that there was more Leafy Spurge than Knapweed. Some areas had more weeds than others. We discovered wildflowers, such as Lupine, Balsamroot, Yellow Bell, and Shooting Star.” Gracie F.
- “On April 24th, we hiked to Waterworks Hill where we measured weeds. We enjoyed walking up the hill to our beautiful location. First we set up our plot. Then, we did five random samples of weeds on our plot to determine the average amounts of Spotted Knapweed and Leafy Spurge. We planted seeds of native flowers and we got rid of most of the weeds. We could improve our methods by using bigger clippers.” Will D., David H., Kristina S.
- “The best part of our field trips was the sunny, bright weather on the first field trips. The worst part of the field trips was on May 22nd when we had thunder and lightning and pouring rain.” Alec D.
- “My favorite part of the field trip was when I got to dig the hole for the bird house. It was fun because I got to stay warm when it was pouring rain outside. The worst part of the field trip was when we all had to leave. I was having fun in the rain and I was warm and enjoy hiking. I learned that Leafy Spurge is a noxious weed that has a white liquid inside. The white liquid causes the weed to grow faster. In order to control this weed, you have to keep clipping it for many years. I also learned you want to keep all native plants, such as Bitterroot.” Eddy W.
- “I think the best part of the field trips was the exercise and the learning about plants. The worst part would probably have to be picking weeds or the last field trip when it poured on all of us. I learned a lot about native plants such as Lupine and Chokecherry. I also learned tons about noxious weeds such as Leafy Spurge and Spotted Knapweed. One of the most important things I learned during the field trips is that invasive weeds are destroying our land and many people just think they are pretty flowers.” Will D.
- “The best part of the field trips was seeing two Tree Swallows up close. The worst part was when it was pouring rain. One thing I learned was that I hate hiking. I also learned that Knapweed is abundant on Waterworks Hill. The last thing I learned is that I am not as fit as I used to be.” David H.

Welcome New Members:

Cyndy Braun
Tim Dye
Vicki Kober
Jared R. Little DDS
Ann McCauley
Andrew Smith
Qin Yu

Christina Campbell
Christopher Frandsen
Devin Landry
Steven Longacre
Brian Miller
Asta So
Les & Jo Carpenter

Ronald & Elva Cox
Correy Harrison
Joyce E. Lindsay
Virginia Lund
Elizabeth A. Slow
Gwen Thibodeau
Suzy Wiseheart



Marilyn Wolff

Go Green and Save !



Do you want to help Five Valleys Audubon Society save money, paper and volunteers' time? Please consider viewing your **Birding Observer** online. In addition your online copy will have 'color' content and you will receive your newsletter much earlier than the mailed hard copy!

If you can **Go Green** and wish to receive your **Birding Observer** only via email, just send us a request with your name to Vick Applegate at k7vk@arrl.net. You can also always find your current newsletter on the Five Valleys Audubon Society's website at: www.fvaudubon.org. 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 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, 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 individual or family membership

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Please make the check payable to National Audubon Society and mail to:

**National Audubon Society
PO Box 422250
Palm Coast, FL 32142-2250**



TO:

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