

November 2022

Birding Observer



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

Calendar

- **Saturday, November 5th, 9-11am:** The November Town Bound Birding Series will take us to historic Fort Missoula. Meet & park in the dirt lot across from Missoula Public School Agricultural Center (at the end of Guardsman Lane), 9-11am. Guardsman Lane becomes 36th Ave as it crosses South Ave and heads north. Head south on Guardsman Lane.
- **Monday, November 7th, 6-8pm:** The FVAS Board Meeting will be held at the Missoula Public Library in the Blackfoot Room (the large one).
- **Sunday, November 13th:** All-day field trip to the Lee Metcalf NWR. Meet at 8:00 am in the northwest corner of the Adams Center parking lot. There will be three miles of level hiking.
- **Monday, November 14th, 7pm:** David Naugle, a UM wildlife biology professor, will present on the conservation of sagebrush and grassland birds. The meeting will be in Rm 110 in the Interdisciplinary Sciences Building at UM.
- **Saturday, November 19th, 10:00am-1:00pm:** Beginning Bird Walk at the Lee Metcalf NWR. Meet the field trip leader at the Refuge Visitor's Center. Approximately two miles of level hiking.



Sagebrush & Grassland Birds Conservation

Please join us for our monthly chapter meeting on Monday, November 14th at 7:00 PM to hear David Naugle present his talk, "Advancing Private Lands Conservation to Benefit Sagebrush and Grassland Birds."

Dave will show us how scientists are creating new satellite mapping technologies to reduce the impacts of invasive cheatgrass on sage-steppe birds. He will also demo next-generation approaches for predicting rangeland wildfire

risk that are being used to maintain large and intact sagebrush habitats in the Great Basin. Lastly, we will explore ways to tackle woodland expansion that are benefiting prairie-chickens in southern Great Plains grasslands. Dave is a storyteller by trade, and the night promises to be a fun and interactive tour of ongoing efforts to conserve birds across the sagebrush sea.

This fall marks Dave's 22nd year as a professor in UM's Wildlife Biology Program. Dave spent his career studying western rangelands, and his two books on energy development chart a path for reducing human impacts on sage-grouse and other wildlife. As USDA's science advisor to the Sage Grouse Initiative since 2001, Dave uses science to help target Farm Bill conservation and assess its efficacy on private ranchlands.

The meeting will take place in Room 110 in the Interdisciplinary Sciences Building (ISB) on the University of Montana campus. The building lies on the south end of campus on Beckwith Avenue, between Maurice and Mansfield avenues. Due to our membership being composed of many older adults, masks are encouraged, but not required by the university. Room 110 is large enough that social distancing is possible, but you also have the option of watching the meeting over the zoom link listed below, until you feel comfortable attending.

Topic: FVAS General Meeting
Time: Nov 14, 2022, at 7pm Mountain Time

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://umontana.zoom.us/j/95273914998>

Meeting ID: 952 7391 4998
One tap mobile
+16694449171,,95273914998# US

Dial by your location
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Find your local number:
<https://umontana.zoom.us/u/aelkjQT69y>

Peeps from The Board: Heading Elsewhere

A personal essay by Ser Anderson



Common Loon photo
by Jerry Oldenettel

One morning, I had thoughts of taking the canoe out to watch the sunrise from the water. I considered going down to the dock to sit and watch the world. Instead, I pull up a chair to the cabin's big windows, let the world pass by one step removed.

The clouds are low and heavy, the air misty. The hour of sunrise comes and goes, barely letting more light in. The world stays gray. Rain begins to patter lightly on the surface of the lake.

Even in the rain, there is a dark shape out on the water, its formal black and white smudged to shades of grey, a common loon in winter plumage.

It paddles along, occasionally bending its long neck forward, submerging its head to peer into the depths. And then it dives, slipping under the surface with barely a splash, sinking down, gracefully, headfirst.

I take its dive as a chance to shove my feet into shoes, put on my coat, and go out, get closer without startling it. I stay on the trail down to the dock because it often seems that water creatures of all types, from the yellow perch off the end of the dock to the various diving birds, can detect my presence from just the vibrations of my feet on the wood planks and respond accordingly. All I want is to get closer, but everything is shy.

Something I read recently said that loons are found at the beginning of field guides because they are one of the oldest living species of bird. Their bones are denser than those of other birds and it makes take off from the water a laborious affair. A few days ago, I saw a loon fly for the first time. It was low over the water and did not go very far, just far enough to catch up with its companion. The loons I see are just as shy as the mergansers, which do startle into flight, but instead of taking to the air, loons just slip into the water and stay underwater for long enough that I begin to wonder if I missed them, finally emerging again, looking unruffled, much further away.

Though I don't see them flying, right now they must be. This is just one more day in a string of maybe ten days that

I have seen one or more loons almost every morning, right around this time, just when I need to be leaving for work. The number of loons has varied, up to a group of six, the largest number of loons I have ever seen together. I think I must be witnessing their migration from the lakes across the northern part of the continent where they spend their summers to the coastal areas they overwinter.

I do not usually see loons more than a couple times each summer. I have seen more loons in the last few weeks than I usually do in a year. This is what I have been holding out for, staying at the cabin far enough into the fall to see something new, learn something new. The world is so full it often seems impossible for my attempts and hopes not to be rewarded.

I let the rain sprinkle on my face, just like the loon does. We are both moved by the seasons and heading back into town for the winter does not feel so bad when I am not the only one heading the elements and heading for an easier wintering ground.

The world is just as full elsewhere, as long as I keep my eyes open.

Missoula Christmas Bird Count

by Larry Weeks



The Missoula Christmas Bird Count (CBC) will take place on Saturday, December 17, 2022. The Count is a circle with a 7.5-mile radius, 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 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: bwsgenea@gmail.com, 406-549-5632 (phone), 406-540-3064 (cell). Larry will provide different options for you to choose from. Also contact Larry if you want to be a feeder watcher. 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.

A Warm Welcome to Our New Members:

Fred Cooper Dorothy Everett
Michael Sol Lori Webster

HAPPY THANKSGIVING DAY!



Please sign up for emailed newsletters!

If you subscribed to Audubon through National Audubon, we may not have your email address. To receive our newsletter and other bird news by email, and to help us save trees and reduce FVAS newsletter expenses, please send your email address to Treasurer, Jean Duncan at treasurer@FVAudubon.org or Membership Promotion Chair, Thomas Kallmeyer at thomas@tarns.net.

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, includes newsletter sent via email.

\$ _____ Phillip L. Wright Fund, small grants for student research.

\$ _____ \$25 FVAS membership, includes newsletter sent via USPS.

\$ _____ Legacy Fund, creating and supporting local urban bird habitats for citizen enjoyment without leaving the city.

\$ _____ Free for students, includes FVAS newsletter, sent via email.

\$ _____ 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.

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 manages 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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