

January 2010

Birding Observer



Five Valleys Audubon Society

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Calendar

- * **Monday, January 4th, 7pm:** Vick & Jean Applegate will host the board meeting.
- * **Saturday, January 9th:** Half-day field trip to Maclay Flat. Meet in the Maclay Flat parking lot at 10:00 am.
- * **Monday, January 11th, 7:30pm:** Wildlife photographer, Tad Lubinski, and P.L. Wright Memorial Award recipient, Patrick Rhea, and will speak at the January program meeting.
- * **Friday, January 15th:** Submission deadline for the January edition of the Birding Observer.
- * **Saturday, February 27th:** Full-day field trip to the Mission Valley. Meet in the middle of the UM field house parking lot at 8:00 AM or at the Ninepipes Lodge at 9:00 AM.
- * **March 18th – 21st:** Rivers and Wildlife Celebration will be held in Kearney, Nebraska. See page four for details.
- * **June 4th – 6th:** Montana Audubon's Bird Festival will be held in Missoula. Please save the dates. The planning committee will be asking for volunteers to help out during the Festival.



Wildlife Photography:

The topic of the January Program Meeting

Tad Lubinski, wildlife photographer, will share his photos of birds and mammals at the Chapter meeting on Monday, January 11th at 7:30 p.m. in room L14 of the UM Gallagher Business Building. Tad is particularly interested in wildlife behavior that he documents with photos taken over many days. He has a particular interest in the Great Gray Owl and has an incredible array of photos of this species. If you would like to see the Great Gray Owl in every conceivable position, then you won't want to miss Tad's presentation!

Tad has a degree in wildlife biology from UM and worked for the Forest Service from 1972 – 91. He worked as a wildlife technician on the protection of elk wallows and inventorying wildlife on timber cuts. Along the way, he shifted to commercial construction. He started birding in 1968 and developed an appreciation for quality photos. He is in the process of shifting from part-time construction to full-time photography.

After Tad's presentation, we'll hear from Patrick Rhea, a 2009 Philip L. Wright Memorial research award recipient. He will present on his study titled, "Deciphering ant-plant mutualisms in Arizona: do extra-floral nectaries benefit bracken fern?" Patrick is from Kansas and is a sophomore at UM, studying ecology and organismal biology.

I had not realized that Theodore Roosevelt (he disliked the name Teddy) was a died-in-the-wool birder until recently reading *The Wilderness Warrior Theodore Roosevelt and the Crusade for America*, by Douglas Brinkley. Although Roosevelt is widely known as a conservation president, his lifelong interest in birds is little recognized. His conservation achievements are indeed remarkable. To mention some, he was responsible for creating 125 million acres of National Forests, the first National Wildlife Refuge and others including Montana's National Bison Range, and the National Monument Act. By executive order he created 51 National Bird Reservations from Puerto Rico to Alaska. In all, he set aside 234 million acres for posterity during his presidency. One wonders what the underpinnings of his conservation crusade were.

His childhood interests and early career put him on a pathway to being a champion of our natural world. When he was eight years old, Roosevelt wrote, *The Foraging Ant*, a piece about the work ethic of ants. By the time he was fourteen, he was a taxidermist, illustrator, voracious reader, hunter, naturalist and ornithologist. He collected specimens, primarily birds, and skinned and mounted them. Later, he donated them to the Smithsonian Institute and the American Museum of Natural History. Roosevelt was strongly influenced by John James Audubon and Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*. He sketched field notes and studied and memorized every detail in Audubon's *Birds of America*. At Harvard he studied Darwinian biology, intending to be a naturalist or wildlife biologist. By the time he was a sophomore he had written a booklet entitled, *The Summer Birds of the Adirondacks* with ample description of 100 birds. He received accolades from scholars for his work. He was part of a generation that stimulated the transition from collecting specimens to birding as we know it. He believed that bird watching wasn't a hobby exclusively for the rich. Like most serious birders, he attempted to see and identify as many species as possible. Throughout his life he would traverse all kinds of terrain to see a rare bird.

Roosevelt's career evolved to politics largely because he was so active and did not want to

spend his career peering through a microscope, the direction his career seemed headed. He became Governor of New York and began efforts to protect wilderness from land



abusers and despoilers, as he termed it. He protected the Adirondacks and Catskills for the enjoyment and benefit of all people. He advocated birds' rights: the state should not permit using bird skins or feathers for apparel or ornaments. This led to him to signing the Hallock Bill that made it illegal to sell nongame for commercial purposes. Roosevelt praised the Audubon Society for its mission and educational efforts that had provided wide backing for passage of the Hallock Bill. Roosevelt was also concerned about plume hunters and market hunters in Florida, who were decimating populations of wading birds, terns, shorebirds and waterfowl. At the inaugural meeting of the Florida Audubon Society, Roosevelt was asked to be an officer, and he gladly accepted.

Perhaps Roosevelt's most well-known bird protection effort was using executive order to establish 51 National Bird Reservations, notably Pelican Island in Florida. Here Roosevelt announced that he wanted plumers and eggers flushed. This intensified the plume wars for a period of years. Roosevelt seemed to relish using the rule of law to incarcerate all plumers and eggers that could be caught. One warden was shot and killed by a pelican poacher during this effort.

After reading this book I realize more than ever how fortunate we are for Roosevelt's conservation agenda. He believed that wildlife protection and forest conservation were a moral imperative. Today wildlife protection is still an important need, but we are confronted with bigger issues of sustainable land management, overpopulation and global warming. Now, 100 years later, we need his stout resolution to inspire us all. Birders should feel a connection to his crusade for America, a crusade we need to continue.

Field Trip

by Larry Weeks



Sunday, December 6th:
Fifteen people joined Jim Brown for a cold field trip to the Mission Valley. Although it was a sunny day, the temperature was near 10 degrees and it was quite windy. Nine of the participants were U of M students in the Environmental Studies Program who were working on extra credit.

We met part of the group at the Ninepipes Lodge and ran into Denver Holt who was leading a 5-day raptor workshop in the Mission Valley. Denver informed us of several target birds from the previous day during which they had found 200 raptors. Our raptor count for the day wasn't nearly as impressive but we did find 62 raptors. Our raptors included 30 rough-legged hawks, 20 red-tailed hawks, 5 bald eagles, 2 American kestrels, 1 northern harrier, 1 prairie falcon, 1 great horned owl, and 2 unidentified buteos. We were unsuccessful in locating a mew gull on Flathead Lake that Denver's group had seen the day before. We did find a small flock of ring-billed gulls that were huddled up on a parking lot adjacent to the lake. There were a few ducks in the Flathead River, but the Polson sewage were mostly iced over and the only birds were common goldeneyes. Other interesting birds included a couple of Townsend's solitaires, 1 American tree sparrow and a few gray partridge. The species count for the field trip was 27.

Even in winter, an isolated patch of snow has a special quality.

~ Andy Goldsworthy

I prefer winter and fall, when you feel the bone structure of the landscape. Something waits beneath it; the whole story doesn't show.

~ Andrew Wyeth

2009 Field Trip Bird List

by Larry Weeks

During the 2009 calendar year, the Chapter had 16 field trips that included owl banding, Smurfit-Stone (5), Lee Metcalf, Warm Springs Ponds, Brown's Lake, Bandy Ranch, Bannack, Mt. Sentinel, Glacier Park, Tower St., Flesher Pass, and Mission Valley. Two of these field trips were multi-day trips; a two-day trip to Bannack and Clark Canyon Reservoir led by Nate Kohler and a four-day campout to Glacier National Park.

If someone had participated in all 16 field trips, they would have seen, or had the opportunity to see, 204 bird species. This total does not include some special birds seen on field trips at Montana Audubon's Bird Festival in Great Falls. The most unusual birds seen included the following:

Harlequin duck – Glacier

Broad-winged hawk – Flesher Pass

American golden plover – Smurfit

Northern hawk owl - Glacier

Burrowing owl – Bannack

Great gray owl – Glacier

Gray flycatcher – Bannack

Loggerhead shrike – Bannack

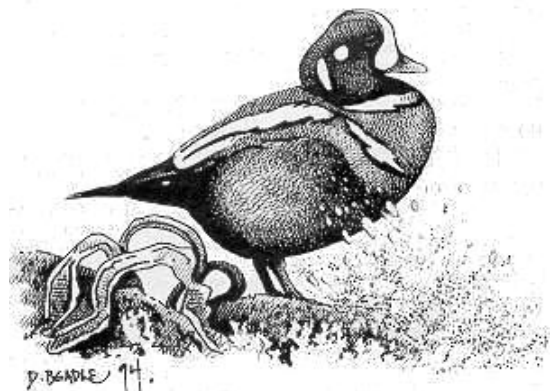
Sage thrasher – Bannack

Tennessee warbler – Glacier

Green-tailed towhee – Bannack

Sage sparrow – Bannack

Le Conte's sparrow – Glacier



The Sparrow Hawk, written by Russell Hoban
Submitted by Sara Boyett

*Wings like pistols flashing at his sides,
Masked, above the meadow runway rides,
Gallop, gallop with an easy rein.
Below, the field mouse, where the shadow glides,
Holds fast the small purse of his life, and hides.*



Sandhill Crane Migration Focus of 40th Annual Rivers and Wildlife Celebration
by Kevin Poague, Audubon Nebraska



The 40th annual Rivers and Wildlife Celebration will be held March 18-21, 2010, in Kearney, Nebraska. Organized by Audubon Nebraska and the Nebraska Bird Partnership, the conference gathers together nature enthusiasts from across the county to witness the migration of over half a million sandhill cranes and millions of waterfowl and other birds through central Nebraska. Events include guided field trips, workshops, a family fun room, and daily visits to river blinds operated by Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary for up-close views of cranes roosting on the Platte River.

Local and national speakers will present information on a variety of wildlife and conservation topics. Main speakers are Scott Weidensaul, author of more than two dozen natural history books, including *Living on the Wind: Across the Hemisphere with Migratory Birds*, a Pulitzer Prize finalist; Mike Forsberg, nature photographer and author of *Great Plains: America's Lingering Wild*; Ron Klataske, executive director of Audubon of Kansas; and Chris Wood, eBird Project Leader, Cornell Lab of Ornithology. More than twenty local environmental organizations will have information booths and hands-on activities on Saturday.

The celebration is open to the general public. Registration materials can be found beginning in mid-December at www.nebraska.audubon.org. Or contact Audubon Nebraska to be put on the mailing list: Nebraska@audubon.org; 402/797-2301. Rowe Sanctuary has information about viewing the sandhill crane migration, 308/468-5282; www.rowsanctuary.org.

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Please note the expiration date of your membership on the address label of this newsletter. We wouldn't want your membership to expire. We would miss you! A renewal form is on the last page of every newsletter for your convenience. Please renew your membership so that you don't miss any newsletters or any of the upcoming events of the Five Valleys Audubon Society.

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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: _____

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\$20 for an individual or family

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Please make the check payable to National Audubon Society and mail to: National Audubon Society, Membership Data Center, PO Box 51001, Boulder, CO 80323-1003. **N53 7XCH**

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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: _____

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Email (optional): _____

\$15 is enclosed for Chapter 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.

Five Valleys Audubon Society

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