

MAY 2011

BIRDING OBSERVER



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

Calendar

- * **Tuesday, May 3rd, 7pm:** Joyce Nave will host the board meeting.
- * **Monday, May 9th, 7:30pm:** Kate Davis will discuss her work and her new book at the May program meeting. She will be accompanied by a few of her feathered friends.
- * **Sunday, May 15th:** Submission deadline for the June edition of the *Birding Observer*.
- * **Saturday, May 21st:** Monthly beginning bird walk at Lee Metcalf NWR from 10am-Noon. Meet field trip leader Pat Little at the Refuge Visitor's Center. Learn basic skills for bird identification, including use of binoculars and field guides, key field marks, and much more. Families with children and birders of any level are welcome!
- * **May 21-22, 2011:** Two-day field trip to Freezout Lake led by Joe Elliott. See enclosed write-up.
- * **Saturday, May 28, 2011:** Half-day field trip to climb Mt. Sentinel, and return via the Hellgate Canyon and Kim Williams trails. Meet at the base of the M Trail at 8:00 AM.
- * **June 23-26, 2011:** Four-day field trip to Red Rock Lakes. See enclosed write-up.
- * **July 7-10, 2011:** Four-day field trip to Glacier Park. See enclosed write-up.



Enthralled with Raptors

Kate Davis of Raptors of the Rockies will present the May program meeting on Monday, May 9 at 7:30 p.m. in room L14 of the Gallagher Business Building on the UM campus. She will discuss her projects over the last 23 years, from birds and art programs to filmmaking camps. She will provide a summary of her new book and share photos. Four live birds from the teaching team will also be present. And yes, you will be asked to "hoot up an owl."

Kate Davis developed a love of animals, especially reptiles, early in her life. By junior high school, she was rehabilitating injured and orphaned mammals and raptors with the Cincinnati Zoo Junior Zoologists Club. She immediately began providing educational programs at the zoo and in the community while illustrating their publications and doing taxidermy work.

After moving to Missoula in 1978, Kate earned a degree in Zoology from the University of Montana. She founded the nonprofit educational organization Raptors of the Rockies in 1988, and keeps 17 non-releasable and falconry birds at the facility at her house on the banks of the Bitterroot River. These birds are the subjects and source of inspiration for her photography, drawings, paintings, etchings, welded steel sculptures, and writings for periodicals.

Her first book, *RAPTORS OF THE ROCKIES*, came out in 2001 and the second, *FALCONS OF NORTH AMERICA*, in 2008. During that time, she hosted the international Raptor Research Foundation Conference in Missoula, and she served as Chair of their Educational Committee for three years. For her new book from Mountain Press, *RAPTORS OF THE WEST: CAPTURED IN PHOTOGRAPHS*, she again collaborated with photographers Rob Palmer and Nick Dunlop.

Peeps from the Board: Birding on Waterworks Hill

by Elizabeth Johnston

For those living in or visiting Missoula, the Waterworks Hill circuit makes a pleasant morning walk, and May, June and July are excellent times for viewing. The entrance is a short gravel road located off Greenough Drive. I like to start my hike by taking the Cherry Gulch Trail, the lower trail to the right, which circles up the hill via two switch-backs and then turns down hill back to the parking area. As you enter the short bushy and wooded area, you may see a Calliope Hummingbird perched on a tall brush proclaiming his rights to the area. I've seen male Lazuli Buntings fight over territory in this area. In the taller trees the Bullock Orioles hang their nest and hunt in the grasslands for food. In the underbrush the Spotted Towhees scratch and nest. On the edge of this area you may hear a Killdeer call. The Chipping Sparrows like the Ponderosa Pine.

All of the birds like the insect bounty the grasslands produce. Unless the day is wet and windy, Western and Mountain Bluebirds will be seen. The bright blue males like to sit on the fence lines near their nest boxes. The Western Bluebirds prefer the gulch area, which has scattered trees; while the Mountain Bluebirds find the top of the ridge more appealing. Bluebirds often double clutch in this productive area. Tree Swallows use many of the extra bluebird houses that the bluebirds reject. The Bluebirds like to feed close to the ground, while the swallows catch their prey on the wing. The Cliff Swallows that live under the Missoula bridges join in the flying insect hunt with their cousins, the Tree Swallows. The Eastern Kingbirds like to sit on the fences. Their cousins the Western Kingbirds come a little later and like to nest high up on the telephone poles. You will hear a chorus of Meadow Larks and Vesper Sparrows claiming their grassland territory. In midsummer, you are likely to see a tiny Vesper Sparrow running like little mouse upon the trail in front of you. And of course there are Red-tailed hawks. The Red Hawks are prominent as they sit on telephone poles or soar through the air searching for ground squirrels. The American Krestrels join in the hunt for grasshoppers and an occasional Cooper's Hawk feasts on small birds. One winter day the area seemed devoid of birds until a Merlin was discovered lurking about. It was also bird watching. This is just a few of the over sixty species I have observed on the Hill over the years. Take a walk on Waterworks Hill and discover it for yourself.

Philip L. Wright Memorial Research Awards

By Bill Gabriel

The Philip L. Wright Memorial Research Awards are offered as a means of giving younger and less experienced students a way to get started in field research. The awards committee received nine proposals in 2011. Four undergraduates and five graduate students proposed studies of birds (4), mammals (3), insects (1), and habitat (1). We made the following awards:

- Ben Turnock, a junior, \$500 to study the effectiveness of loon decoys and calls in attracting Common Loons to unoccupied lakes.
- Maggie Raboin, a junior, \$500 to study divergence among populations of jumping spiders.
- Nora Carlson, a candidate for a second BS, \$500 to study techniques of recording bird songs.
- Riccardo Ton, a Ph.D. candidate, \$500 to aid his study of global warming, physiology, and behavior in birds.

In accordance with established tradition, the recipients will report how they used the grants and the results of their investigations at a Five Valleys Audubon meeting early in 2012.

In the 25-year history of these research grants, FVAS has awarded \$23,587.50 to 56 recipients. Awards have averaged \$421 and subjects studied have varied across the natural realm: birds (23), plants/habitat (11), mammals (9), amphibians (7), insects (5), fish (2).



March 26, 2011: Thirty people joined the author for the field trip at the Lee Metcalf NWR. On the drive to the refuge, some of the Missoula people were greeted by a pair of sandhill cranes along the East Side Highway and there were 3 trumpeter swans and a male Barrows goldeneye on Pond 5. Before we got started, we met Dick Hutto and an ornithology class coming off the Kenai trail but they hadn't seen any unusual birds. After organizing the group at the visitor's center, we hiked the Kenai trail in the morning and the Wildlife Viewing Area in the afternoon. Most of the ducks were present in Ponds 8 and 10, but we did not see a cinnamon teal. Some of the people on the field trip had been at the refuge the week before and commented that there were noticeably less ducks and swans present. Some of the noteworthy sightings along the Kenai trail included a pileated woodpecker, an aerial display by a couple of belted kingfishers, some tundra swans on Pond 10, a male northern harrier that perched on a snag that blended with its gray coloring, and a Virginia rail that was calling from the cattails. While hunter safety training took over the Kenai trail in the afternoon, we hiked both trails at the Wildlife Viewing Area. It was pretty quite along both trails. However, we did get to witness an interaction between 3 downy woodpeckers (2 males and 1 female) and a pair of white-breasted nuthatches that foraged very close to the group. The most unusual bird of the day was a turkey vulture which is earlier than normal. Cynthia Hudson found a porcupine for the second consecutive field trip. And the buttercups were blooming big time. At the end of the field trip, Paul Hayes addressed the group and reported that the refuge will soon publish a Comprehensive Conservation Plan. He advised everyone to review the plan and to comment appropriately. We ended up with 47 species for the trip.



The **2-day field trip to Freezout Lake and the Rocky Mountain Front** has been scheduled for **May 21st and 22nd**. It will be lead by Joe Elliott. The plan is to leave at 7:00 AM on May 21st and drive to Freezout Lake. The group will bird Freezout Lake on Saturday and the Rocky Mountain Front on Sunday. We will spend the night in Choteau and the motel options include the Stage Stop Inn (1-888-466-5900), Bella Vista Motel (1-406-466-5711), or Gunter Motel (1-877-491-5444). Participants are asked to make reservations in advance. Please call Joe Elliott at 542-5014 or Larry Weeks at 549-5632 if you wish to attend, and we will coordinate carpooling.

The **4-day field trip to Red Rock Lakes** is scheduled for **June 23rd, 24th, 25th, and 26th**. We will camp at Upper Red Rock Lake Campground all 3 nights. We will bird the refuge on Friday and Saturday, and then bird the Bannack area on Sunday on the return trip. If you are planning to go to Red Rocks, call Larry Weeks at 549-5632 or email him at bwsgenea@onlinemt.com. The trip will be limited to 20 people. Larry will be planning for potluck dinners. We plan to meet at 5:00 PM at the URRL Campground on June 23rd. Just a reminder, the elevation is 6600 feet, so plan for cool weather.

The **4-day field trip to Glacier Park** is scheduled for **July 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th**. The plan is to camp at St. Mary Campground on July 7th and 8th and at the Fish Creek Campground on July 9th. To make reservations at both St. Mary and Fish Creek, call 1-800-365-2267 or go online at www.recreation.gov and enter Montana, St. Mary Campground, the date of arrival (July 7th), and the length of stay (2). Pick a campsite from the group C107-C112 in Loop C so we will be together. Use the same procedure for the Fish Creek Campground; enter Montana, Fish Creek Campground, date of arrival (July 9th), and length of stay (1). Pick a campsite from A2 – A7. If you have a Golden Passport, the rate is reduced by 50%. You will be asked for your Golden Passport number. We can have up to 8 people per campsite, so not everyone has to make a reservation. We will bird the Red Eagle Lake trail on Friday, hike to Piegan Pass on Saturday, and bird the Camas Creek and Howe Lake trails on Sunday. If you are planning to go to Glacier, call Larry Weeks at 549-5632 or email him at bwsgenea@onlinemt.com. The trip will be limited to 20 people. Larry will be planning potluck dinners. We plan to meet at 5PM at the St. Mary Campground on July 7th.

Battling Birds

by Jim Brown

Again this year the Coffee Swallows battle the Chit Chats for the honor of seeing the most birds during an all day, dawn to dark, competitive Birdathon. Last year the Chit Chats, through an extraordinary effort motivated by years of too much chatting and not enough birding, claimed the honor by tallying 128 species for the day compared to 124 for the Coffee Swallows. This fun event is Five Valleys Audubon's annual fund raiser to support our conservation and education efforts. We seek pledges from Chapter members of so much per species observed or whatever contributors wish to donate. After the full day of birding is completed and weary eyes have recovered we mail out a reminder of your pledge and a list of species seen by the team you supported. The Birdathon day is scheduled during the first two weeks of June when migrant songbirds are back and bird diversity is at its peak. Teams will search the Missoula Valley and beyond visiting as many habitat niches as possible.

Your tax deductible contributions are used to support these Chapter activities:

- Phil Wright Research Awards granted to qualifying high school and college wildlife biology students
- Audubon Adventures, a quarterly newsletter and lesson guide for teaching environmental education in elementary grades (3-6)
- Community Naturalist Program--Chapter volunteers provide classroom presentations and field trip learning experiences
- Wildlife habitat conservation projects that protect habitat in Missoula County particularly in the Clark Fork River--Grass Valley Important Bird Area. We inform Missoula citizens, land-owners, developers and city/county planners of the special importance of habitat in this area for birds and other wildlife. We review all subdivision proposals in Missoula County and testify at hearings in favor of adequate protection of riparian areas.

If we miss you by phone or letter please consider a contribution to FVAS and we will mail a species list to you. We certainly appreciate your support.

May 2011 Programs and Events at the Montana Natural History Center

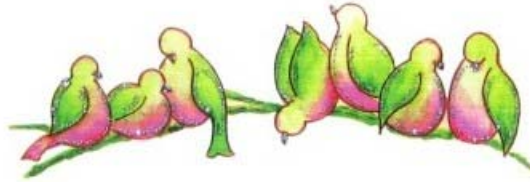
- **Thursdays (May 5, 12, 19, 26) at 10am: The miniNaturalists PRE-K PROGRAM** engages youngsters, ages 2-5, in the exploration of the natural world through fun hands-on activities, games and play. The cost of admission per child is \$1 for MNHC members; \$3 for non-members. Children must be accompanied by an adult.
- **Friday, May 6th, 5-8pm: Native Plants and Pollinators FIRST FRIDAY Event:** This show features original drawings by Nancy Seiler, which she created for the U.S. Forest Service publication "Attracting Pollinators to Your Garden Using Native Plants".
- **Saturday, May 7th, 9am-2pm:** Join naturalist Hobie Hare for a hike just outside of Missoula where you'll learn about and discover some of the "sure signs" of spring! Registration required by Wednesday, May 4th at 5pm. Call 327-0405 to reserve your spot today! The cost of participation is \$20 MNHC members/\$25 non-members.
- **Saturday, May 7th, 1-4pm: NATIVE PLANT WORKSHOP:** Join avid native plant gardener David Schmetterling to learn how you can turn your landscape into an oasis for wildlife and to visit several established native plant gardens in Missoula. Registration is required by Wednesday, May 4th at 5pm. The cost is \$35 MNHC members/\$40 non-members.
- **Saturday, May 14th, 1-4pm:** Join Larry Evans, "The Mushroom Guru" for a spring time mushroom foray. Registration is required by Wednesday, May 11th at 5pm. The cost is \$20 MNHC members/\$25 non-members.
- **Saturday, May 21st, 2pm:** Come learn all about the special "powers" of flowers! Flowers are very powerful—they can attract pollinators from miles away. This program is best for children ages 5 and up. The cost per child is \$1 for MNHC members; \$3 for non-members. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

The Montana Natural History Center is located at 120 Hickory Street in Missoula. 406-327-0405.

Welcome New Members:

Lela Autio
Paul & Mary Hayes

James Cain
Shannon Parsons



Thank You

Thanks to our Returning Members:

Kristine J. Beal
James W. Cohenour
Lillian A. Dove
Gabriel Furshong
J. R. Hoem
Cynthia Hudson
Lin L. Lundgren
David Nelson
Minie Smith
Robert W. Weaver

Monica Best
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Linnea Faber
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Hi Friends! Go Green!

View your *Birding Observer* newsletter even sooner, only **on-line**.
Just send us an email request with your name to Vick Applegate at k7vk@arrl.net.
We will alert you each month when the newsletter becomes available on-line.
You can find the Five Valleys Audubon web site at: <http://www.fvamissoula.org/>

**Join National Audubon Society
and 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*, as well as participate in all local Chapter activities. I understand that my dues are shared between NAS and my local Chapter.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

\$20 for a one-year membership
for an individual or family

Please make the check payable to National Audubon Society and mail to: National Audubon Society, Membership Data Center, PO Box 422250, Palm Coast, FL 32142-2250. **C1Z N53 0Z**

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 (optional): _____

\$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.

Five Valleys Audubon Society

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