

SEPTEMBER 2011

# BIRDING OBSERVER



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

## Calendar

- \* **Tuesday, September 6<sup>th</sup>**: Paul Loehnen will host the September board meeting.
- \* **Thursday, September 15<sup>th</sup>**: Submission deadline for the October edition of the *Birding Observer*.
- \* **Saturday, September 10<sup>th</sup>**: All-day field trip to the Lee Metcalf NWR. Meet at 8:00 AM in the middle of the UM field house parking lot or 9:00 AM at the Metcalf Visitors Center.
- \* **Monday, September 12<sup>th</sup>**: Dr. Richard L. Hutto will speak at our September program meeting.
- \* **Saturday, September 17<sup>th</sup>**: Monthly beginning bird walk at Lee Metcalf NWR from 10am-Noon. Meet the field trip leader 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.
- \* **Saturday, October 1<sup>st</sup>**: All-day field trip to Flesher Pass to visit Rob Domenech's raptor banding site. Meet at 6:00 AM in the middle of the UM field house parking lot. A strenuous 2-mile hike will be required to reach the banding site, but Rob may transport people on ATVs. Good hiking shoes are a must and dress appropriately for the weather conditions. The trip will be limited to 10 people. To sign up, call Larry Weeks at 549-5632, or email him at bwsgenea@onlinemt.com.

Keep smiling  
and  
have a  
happy day



SEPTEMBER 2011						
SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
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## Using Birds as Monitoring Tools: A role for Five Valleys Audubon Society?

The chapter's first meeting following the summer break will feature Dr. Richard L. Hutto, Professor and Director of the Avian Science Center at the University of Montana. The meeting will be on **Monday, September 12<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 p.m.** in room L14 of the Gallagher Business Building on the UM campus. Dr. Hutto will speak about the occurrence patterns of birds, which depend heavily on the vegetation types and ages after natural disturbances, and on the condition of the land following various kinds of human activity. Because the collection of bird occurrence data is relatively easy, it is possible that Five Valleys Audubon Society could participate in a coordinated effort to position recreational bird survey locations within designated land types and learn about the potential effects of local development and land-use activity.

Dr. Hutto has conducted research on migratory landbirds in Mexico in winter, the Southwest during spring and fall, and in the Northern Rockies in summer for more than 30 years. He developed and continues to supervise the USFS Northern Region Landbird Monitoring Program, which is now in its 20<sup>th</sup> year of operation, and he has been studying the ecological effects of fire on bird communities for 20 years as well. Dr. Hutto was host of "Birdwatch," a nationally televised PBS series that ran from 1999-2001. Because he is moved by what birds have to teach us about land stewardship, Hutto established the Avian Science Center on the University of Montana campus to promote ecological awareness and informed decision making through the synthesis and dissemination of science-based information on western birds (<http://avianscience.dbs.umt.edu/>).

## Peeps from the Board: 2010-11 Community Naturalist Program

by Larry Weeks



The Community Naturalist Program (CNP) represents a portion of the Chapter's education effort. This program includes classroom presentations and field trips for grade school and high school classes, workshops to improve bird identification skills, and other requests from miscellaneous sources for bird-related education. During the year ending on June 30, 2011, there were 60 CNP presentations that reached 1058 children and 229 adults. This effort was by far the largest outreach for the Chapter's CNP. I should point out that some of the children participated in 5 separate programs and were counted 5 times.

The major aspect of last year's program was the hiring of Hillary Kimbler as an intern. Hillary was a senior in Environmental Studies at the University of Montana and graduated in May. She contacted the 30 teachers that received the Audubon Adventures kits from the Chapter, asked them if they would like a bird presentation, scheduled the requests, and made most of the presentations. As a result of this effort, 23 bird presentations and 2 field trips were made to grade schools in St. Regis, Charlo, Arlee, Potomac, Bonner, Frenchtown, Alberton, DeSmet, and Missoula. A bird presentation lasts 1 hour and includes a brief discussion about the Chapter's activities in birding, conservation and education, general bird information, bird migration, the importance of habitat, and the showing of about 40 bird skins. Pertinent information about each skin is shared such as field marks, behavior, how it died, and the status of the population.

For the seventh consecutive year, I have presented a fire ecology program to the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classes at St. Joseph School. I developed this program after participating in a Fire Works Curriculum training session at the Fire Science Laboratory. For one classroom session, I use an exercise where the students are separated into 8 groups and are given samples from a known tree and are asked to fill out a data sheet about that tree. Then each group is given an unknown tree and copies of the data sheets from all 8 trees. Their

assignment then is to identify the unknown tree by matching it to the proper data sheet. As a result of the exercise, each group gets exposed to 2 different trees which are common to Western Montana. A second classroom session deals with several plants which have their roots covered up. The students are asked to draw what they think the roots look like. Then I remove the covering and discuss the various roots such as rhizomes, corm, tape root, root crown, and bulb. I also discuss the depth of each plant root and whether or not it would be a survivor after a fire. The main theme here is that the roots are the "buried treasure" that restore the plants after a fire destroys everything above ground. A third classroom session illustrates two different types of fire; a creepy crawly fire such as occurs in large Ponderosa pine stands and a roaring tree-top fire that occurs in lodgepole pine stands. As the students read the narrative of each fire, I change a felt board to graphically depict the fire. The main themes from this exercise are that fire is needed to regenerate the forest and that by preventing fires, man has allowed the growth of "ladder fuels" which allows ground fires to become crown fires. Then the class is taken on a 3-hour field trip to a recent forest fire. During the past 3 years, I have been taking them to the Black Cat fire near Frenchtown. We identify trees, review examples of different types of fires, examine new plant regrowth, and talk about the role of wood boring and bark beetles. Chapter volunteers assist me by setting up Little Professor hikes where the students are given two or more facts about a plant or fire condition and then they recite those facts individually to the other students in their group. A fire scavenger hunt concludes the activities. Cynthia Hudson and Virginia Vincent were the volunteers.

Another activity that I have done for several years with Patti Walker's 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class at Hawthorne is to do a classroom presentation on bird identification which is followed by an all-day field trip. This year, we went to Metcalf because Smurfit-Stone was no longer available. The class is split up into 4 groups and I arrange for Chapter volunteers to go with each group for 2-hours of birding. The volunteers were Ruth & Russ Royter, Virginia Vincent and Judy Bungarz. In the afternoon, I worked with half of the class by making cattail decoys while Patti did journaling with the other half. Then we

switch groups. During the cattail exercise, I explain that all parts of the cattail can be eaten; the leaves make good salad greens, the pollen spikes can be boiled and eaten like corn on the cob, cattail fluff can be used as an extender for wheat flour, and the whitish stalks can be eaten like celery. Some of the brave ones will even eat the stalks. Then we make the cattail duck decoys and test them by floating in the water. The kids just love the exercise and most of the decoys are taken home.

This last year's workshop was for advanced birders and included presentations on owls by Denver Holt, shorebirds by Jim Brown, flycatchers by Kristina Smucker, forest birds by Jim Sparks, raptors by Kristi DeBois, and sparrows and gulls by Terry McEneaney. Twenty-nine people attended at least one session and 3 people attended all seven sessions.

### **Field Trip** by Larry Weeks

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**May 21-22, 2011:** Eleven people left Missoula for the 2-day field trip to Freezout Lake with a weather forecast of 1-2 inches of rain along the Rocky Mountain Front. Under the leadership of Joe Elliott, we birded our way to Freezout with stops at the Clearwater River, the bald eagle nest next to Russell Gates and a ferruginous hawk nest near Simms. Along the way, Paul Loehnen received a phone call from Wayne Tree that he had a red knot located at Freezout. After some searching, we located Wayne at the "neck" and spent the next hour looking at the birds at that location. The highlight was the red knot which is an extremely unusual bird for Montana. Other shorebirds at that location included sanderlings, stilt sandpipers, American avocets, marbled godwit, willet, long-billed dowitchers, Wilson's phalaropes, black-bellied plover, and semipalmated plovers. We also saw a Clark's grebe and a black-crowned night heron at this location along with a variety of ducks, gulls and terns. By the time we finished looking at the shorebirds, three other people had joined the field trip. Once we got started again, an American bittern walked across the road in front of our convoy. We drove around the lake but decided not to chance the mud road. The best bird on the back side of the lake was a whimbrel. Later on Saturday, we received another call from Wayne about a Philadelphia vireo at the Duffy place. We were able to locate the vireo very quickly after arriving at the row of trees. The trees were just starting to leaf out which made the viewing quite easy. We continued along the same road to some cliffs where

we found a golden eagle nest with an adult with at least 2 young. And a prairie falcon perched nearby. On Sunday, we headed to the Bynum Reservoir and encountered a group of upland sandpipers along the dirt road near Bynum. At another stop along the dirt road, we found 2 sharp-tailed grouse in a plowed field and a third that was perched in the top of a large cottonwood tree. The reservoir had 3 Caspian terns, a common loon and a variety of ducks and gulls. Then we went to the Blackleaf WMA where we had Say's phoebe, western kingbird, Clark's nutcracker, and white-crowned sparrow. On the return trip to Choteau, we stopped to look at a great horned owl's nest. The final birds were bobolinks on Bellview Road outside of Choteau and chestnut-collared longspurs on Mud Road. The weather turned out to be almost perfect with no significant wind and it didn't rain until we were driving back to Missoula. We ended up with a whooping 111 species for the field trip.

**May 28, 2011:** This field trip involved a climb to the top of Mt. Sentinel and a return via the Hellgate Canyon and Kim Williams trails. The climb to the top of Mt. Sentinel was slow going but we had a few birds to boost the morale. A pair of spotted towhees that included a normal colored male and a cream-colored (leucistic) female were just above the University. Then there were several Lazuli buntings and a dusky grouse. As we got further up the mountain, there were Vesper sparrows and western meadowlarks. As we entered the Douglas fir, we had chipping sparrows and ruby-crowned kinglets. On top, I was finally able to sort out a warbler song that turned out to be a yellow-rumped warbler. The Hellgate Canyon Trail was very quiet which was undoubtedly due to the late spring. The best bird on this segment was a Nashville warbler. When we reached the Kim Williams Trail, the group broke up while I waited for a slow couple. There were 9 people on the trip and I tallied 22 species.





Six hardy souls (Byron & Judy Olson, Judy & Bob Bungarz, Barbara Ross, and the author) traveled to the high country of Red Rocks Lake NWR situated near the continental divide for three days from June 23<sup>rd</sup> to the 26<sup>th</sup>. The Refuge is famous for nesting trumpeter swans. It

was the goal of the Judys (Jerry called all the women Judy except for Barbara, of course) to see a nesting swan which she found after a careful search on a small island in Wigeon Pond; even the Refuge staff did not know about it. Robin Bob (What's that?...It is a robin, Bob) became an expert birder on the trip as he could be heard later on exclaiming to himself "What's that? Oh, it's just a robin".

The first morning was windy (well, actually each day was windy), but good birding. Byron wanted to focus on identifying different bird songs, so Jerry (being the excellent guide) brought into view, almost in the same tree, a western tanager, a robin, and a black-headed grosbeak. The group studied the different but very similar songs and within a short time became experts on identifying the song to the right bird. This tremendous ability lasted for almost a day as the OLD group lost all memory by the next morning!!

On the second day, the group got good looks at the three local sparrows; Savannah, Vesper and Brewer's. They were all sitting and singing. A great memory!! Also at Wigeon Pond, Byron (who had a goal since childhood) wanted to see a marsh wren. Jerry found one sitting up and singing for a few minutes. All the group just marveled at ....?

On the return trip near Bannack State Park, Jerry (being the excellent guide) played the song of the sage thrasher and a couple were heard, with Judy being able to catch a quick glimpse of one.

All in all, about 84 bird species (plus or minus a hundred) were identified along with a good list of mammals which included moose, elk, antelope, deer, skunk, fox, rabbit, and lots of little ones. Barb made a good list of flowers and loved to lay down among them.

It's happening all around us right now— young birds are leaving their nests and striking out on their own. But how do they make the transition from fledgling to adult?

A lot of us think that baby birds grow up in a family that stays together and migrates south together. There are some species of birds that stay together after the nesting season, but they are rare.

Most young birds are totally on their own soon after they leave the nest. In fact, in many bird families, the parents migrate south long before their youngsters do. The best examples of this are the families of most species of hummingbirds. The female raises her offspring until they are out of the nest and able to feed themselves. A few weeks later, she disappears. The youngsters are left alone to fatten up for their long migratory flight to a place in the tropics where they have never been before.

They linger at the natal feeding grounds for several more weeks, sucking up as much nectar, sugar water and tiny insects as possible before heading south. How do they know when to leave, where to go, how to get there and when they have arrived? There are lots of theories, but no one really knows for sure. Herein lies one of the great mysteries of nature.

The same is true among juvenile ducks, warblers, vireos, flycatchers and thrushes. They are all deserted by their parents and left to find their way to some place in the South where there is food and habitat.

Juveniles of permanent residents such as chickadees, nuthatches, finches, and woodpeckers, are much better off. Though their parents no longer care for them, at least they are still in familiar surroundings.

**Hi Friends! Go Green!**

View your **Birding Observer** newsletter **on-line**.

Send an email request with your name to

Vick Applegate at [k7vk@arrl.net](mailto:k7vk@arrl.net).

We will alert you each month when the newsletter

becomes available on our website:

<http://www.fvamisoula.org/>

## Dan Lufkin's gift of the Carolina Parakeets

by Grainger McKoy

Former Audubon director Dan Lufkin is donating a Grainger McKoy wood carving of a flock of Carolina Parakeets to the National Audubon Society. The life-size piece will be part of the upcoming Grainger McKoy exhibit of his sculptures and wood carvings of birds at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, Georgia, from September 25, 2011, through January 8, 2012.

McKoy's unique approach is to carve the individual feathers and insert them in the bird and then connect them into flocks - a covey of quail rising, a flock of sanderlings, or Green-winged Teal on the wind, in an extraordinarily realistic style that is unique and compelling. McKoy's complex compositions—hallmarks of his work—appear to defy gravity as groupings of birds lift into flight. Like others before him, and much like John James Audubon, McKoy's sculptures focus on the dynamics of avian behavior as inspiration—birds feeding, flocking, fleeing danger or fighting.

Mr. Lufkin is perhaps best known as the co-founder of Donaldson, Lufkin and Jenrette, the global investment banking firm. However, he was an early leader in the conservation movement as one of the original founders of Earth Day in 1970, which ignited the modern environmental movement. Dan left DLJ to serve as the first head of the new Connecticut Dept. of Environmental Protection.

Mr. Lufkin is making the gift in honor of his lifelong friend Donal C. O'Brien, who served as Audubon's Chairman for 15 years. Dan and Donal have been friends since their days at prep school over 65 years ago. An earlier challenge grant from Mr. Lufkin established the Donal C. O'Brien Chair in Bird Conservation and Public Policy of the National Audubon Society, which is catalyzing some of the Society's most exciting and significant conservation initiatives focused on flyways and the landscapes birds depend on throughout the Western Hemisphere.

Dan is making this gift to both positively impact bird conservation and to inspire the next generation of conservation leaders. The Carolina Parakeets will be showcased at the new Audubon Center at Mill Grove in Pennsylvania, the original home of John James Audubon when he came to America. The Center will also

showcase one of Audubon's Double Elephant Portfolio's of the Birds of America. From this base in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, Audubon launched his famous painting expeditions throughout the early America.

The Audubon Center at Mill Grove will use wildlife art to build people's awareness and appreciation of birds, wildlife and nature to ensure the conservation of this extraordinary resource ...so that unlike the Carolina Parakeet, which is now extinct, our kids and their kids and all Americans, will be able to be inspired and awed by the diversity of life in nature and become good citizens and stewards of our planet.

The High Museum of Art's "The Sculpture of Grainger McKoy" exhibition will feature 34 sculptures and several models and color sketches produced over the course of McKoy's career, which spans from the early 1970s until the present. The installation will also explore McKoy's artistic process, showcasing a selection of sketches to finished sculptures and a film of the artist at work.

An observer of nature and a hunter from an early age, McKoy received an antique duck decoy from his grandmother one Christmas. This inspired him to sculpt his first bird, a shorebird carved of cypress from the corner of his family's log cabin in rural South Carolina. McKoy studied architecture for a few years in college, but he never abandoned his love of carving. His skills were recognized by the innovative bird carver Gilbert Maggioni of Beaufort, SC, who convinced McKoy to try to make a living from carving. Upon graduating from Clemson University in 1970 with a degree in zoology, McKoy moved to Beaufort with his wife Floride to pursue his passion under the tutelage of Maggioni. McKoy also used his knowledge of architecture to create complex structural compositions, the likes of which had never before been seen in wildlife sculpture.



**George Engler (1919-2011)** By Bill Gabriel



When I lived in Alaska a coworker took every opportunity to remind us that "foresters are versatile."

Among the most versatile here in Montana was George Engler who died at 92 in June in Great Falls. After serving as a Marine in WWII, he received a forestry degree at the University of Idaho and then spent the rest of his working career with the USFS, mostly in Montana. From 1967 to 1977 he was the supervisor of the Lewis and Clark National Forest where he prepared the way for the wild Rocky Mountain Front to be eligible for congressional protection. Someone in the USFS regional office once told him that he had a reputation as a preservationist—not a good thing in that day—and he replied that someone had to do it.

George Engler founded, with Margaret Adams, the Upper Missouri Breaks Audubon chapter, and he also founded the Great Falls Conservation Council, a forum for people from various government agencies and nongovernmental groups to meet and collaborate on regional conservation issues. George Engler was recognized by Montana Audubon as Conservationist of the Year, and then in 2009 he received Montana Audubon's Lifetime Achievement Award for his devotion to Montana's wildlife, wilderness, forests, water, and landscapes.

It is worth noting that, among the small group that helped Phil Wright found Five Valleys Audubon in 1976, three were foresters. Arnold Bolle and Sid Frissell each also served as Dean of the UM Forestry School, and Sid initiated the Missoula Christmas Bird Count. Sid is still with us as a member of the Phillip L. Wright Memorial research awards committee. The third of those versatile foresters was Jim Brown who, in 2010, received the Montana Audubon Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of his long-time efforts on behalf of Five Valleys Audubon, Montana Audubon, and Five Valleys Land Trust.

In their devotion to wildlife, forests, wilderness, and healthy environments these foresters have followed the lead of some of the iconic figures revered within the 20th century environmental movement. Consider first

Aldo Leopold, a forester in the early days of the Forest Service who, in 1924, developed the concept of special areas within national forests to be devoted to the preservation of wilderness. Leopold later left the Forest Service to create the new field of wildlife management, write the first wildlife management textbook in 1933, and become the first wildlife professor. His collection of essays on land ethics, *A Sand County Almanac*, became a bible of the environmental movement.

Another was Robert Marshall, a Forest Service forester who hiked thousands of miles in the backcountry to promote and extend Leopold's concept of Wilderness Areas on federal lands, who is memorialized by the Bob Marshall Wilderness in Montana.

And there was Norman Borlaug, a forester with the Forest Service before being laid off for lack of funds during the Great Depression. He received a Ph.D. in plant pathology and genetics, went on to revolutionize the farming of wheat and rice in poor countries around the world, and is considered by many to be the father of the agricultural green revolution in the 1950s. He originated the "Borlaug hypothesis," that deforestation could be controlled in third world countries by increasing the productivity of agriculture on the best farmland to reduce the demand for new farmland.

If these foresters were versatile men of vision it was because forestry was a progressive movement begun to conserve the forests, soils, water, and wildlife being decimated by a thoughtless 19th century population engaged in industrializing the continent, and because their education in forestry schools of the day imparted a general knowledge of many subjects. As such, forestry has an honorable history, but it has fallen from public favor and the very word become anathema to many. The oldest citizen conservation organization in the country, founded in 1875 as the American Forestry Association, removed forestry from its name, to become simply American Forests. Even universities, finding their forestry school enrollments diminishing, have deleted the word in favor of reconstituted "colleges of natural resources and environment," or whatever. Some may see this as a process of evolution by which organizations naturally select names that will make them more fit to survive in the contest for funding and membership. But it saddens me, a forester of the old school to whom every day was Earth Day.

**Are birds attracted to the native plants in your yard?**

If so, consider sharing photos of your yard or of birds in your yard for an upcoming joint program with the Native Plant Society. The program will focus on how birds are drawn to native landscapes that include features that they need such as food, water, and cover. While a broad range of potential landscapes will be covered, we will also include information on attracting hummingbirds and butterflies. If you can contribute your experiences and/or photos for this program, please contact Poody McLaughlin at pmcregan@bresnan.net or 543-4860. The more photos and ideas the better!



**Welcome New Members:**

Jon Bertsche	Chad Burrett	Julie Devlin	K. Dove
Morgan Erickson-Davis	M Laurice Fritz	Olivia MacArthur-Waltz	Marilyn Martin
Sandra J. Miller	S. A. MacQuarrie	William & Robin Tawney Nichols	Sally Phillips
Betty Rafferty	Philip Smart	Andrea & Don Stierle	

**Thanks to our Returning Members:**

Kim Erway Birck	Rose Marie Bradshaw	Cyndy Braun	Clancy Cone
Phil Difani	Kent & Susan Dvorak	Arnold Finklin	Sally Friou
Nila Gibbs	Sophy Hagey	Haugan Family	Marjie Glenn Heyman
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Patricia Vogel	Alexis Volkerts	Gary F. Walter	Richard & Adele Wolff

**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: \_\_\_\_\_

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\$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 OZ**

**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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### OFFICERS:

President	Paul Loehnen	11556 Bench Road, Missoula, MT 59808	721 – 7517	loehnen@gmail.com
Vice President	Pat Little	1710 34th St., Missoula, 59801	493 – 1745	roughleg@gmail.com
Secretary	Char Murray	50 Brookside Way, Missoula, MT 59802	549 – 5223	murray555@bresnan.net
Treasurer	Alex Taft	332 S. 1 <sup>st</sup> St. W., apt. A, Missoula, MT 59801	218 – 8438	alextaft9@msn.com

### DIRECTORS:

2008-2011	Bill Boggs	PO Box 7881, Missoula, MT 59807	728 – 3088	boggsandfoleylaw@gmail.com
2009-2012	Joyce Nave	4605 Rattlesnake Dr., Missoula, 59802	721 – 2981	nave@bresnan.net
2011-2013	Carolyn Goren	PO Box 7189, Missoula, MT 59807	544 – 1060	carolyngoren@gmail.com
2011-2013	Gerhard Knudsen	4400 Scott Allen Dr, Missoula, 59803	251 – 2765	gmk@bresnan.net
2011-2013	Bill DeCou	PO Box 8674, Missoula, MT 59807	728 – 5376	billdecou@bigsky.net
2011-2013	Lynn Tennefoss	8850 O'Brien Creek Rd, Missoula, MT 59804	544 – 6323	ltennefoss@audubon.org

### COMMITTEES:

Member Records	Vick Applegate	303 Rimrock Way, Missoula, MT 59803	549 – 0027	k7vk@arrl.net
Membership Promotion	Bill DeCou	PO Box 8674, Missoula, MT 59807	728 – 5376	billdecou@bigsky.net
Program	Carolyn Goren	PO Box 7189, Missoula, MT 59807	544 – 1060	carolyngoren@gmail.com
Conservation Advocacy	Terry McEneaney	1215 Lolo Rd, Missoula, MT 59802	493-1438	ravenology@bresnan.net
Habitat Protection & Restore	Jim Brown	1504 Woods Gulch Rd, Missoula, MT 59802	549 – 8052	brownjs2@bresnan.net
Field Activities	Larry Weeks	2428 W Kent Ave, Missoula, MT 59801	549 – 5632	bwsgenea@onlinemt.com
Publicity	Poody McLaughlin	1629 Douglas Dr., Missoula, MT 59808	543 – 4860	pmcregan@bresnan.net
Education	Larry Weeks	2428 W Kent Ave, Missoula, MT 59801	549 – 5632	bwsgenea@onlinemt.com
PL Wright Endowment	Bill Gabriel	PO Box 520, Florence, MT 59833	273 – 6880	
University Liaison	Erick Greene	University of MT, Missoula, MT 59812	243 – 2179	erick.greene@mso.umt.edu
Newsletter Editor	Bev Orth Geoghegan	310 W. 73 <sup>rd</sup> St., apt. 1A, New York, NY 10023	406-750-0149	orthbev@hotmail.com
Newsletter Circulation	Shirley Holden	2319 Valley Dr, Missoula, MT 59802	549 – 5706	
Web Site	Clare Kelly	2909 Highwood Dr, Missoula, MT 59803	251 – 7207	jouisns@gmail.com
Archivist	Shirley Holden	2319 Valley Dr, Missoula, MT 59802	549 – 5706	
Audubon Adventures	Jackie Alford	215 Brooks St, Missoula, MT 59801	549 – 0917	jalford@bresnan.net
Christmas Bird Count	Larry Weeks	2428 W Kent Ave, Missoula, MT 59801	549 – 5632	bwsgenea@onlinemt.com
Past President	Jim Brown	1504 Woods Gulch Rd, Missoula, MT 59802	549 – 8052	brownjs2@bresnan.net
Honorary Member	Elizabeth Johnston	1101 W Greenough, Unit E-8, Missoula, MT 59802	327-1525	birder@bigsky.net

MONTANA AUDUBON – PO Box 595, Helena, MT 59624

Steve Hoffman, Executive Director: [shoffman@mtaudubon.org](mailto:shoffman@mtaudubon.org)

Janet Ellis, Program Director: [jellis@mtaudubon.org](mailto:jellis@mtaudubon.org)

Larissa Berry, Office Manager: [lberry@mtaudubon.org](mailto:lberry@mtaudubon.org)

Dan Sullivan, Board President

(406) 443-3949

[www.mtaudubon.org](http://www.mtaudubon.org)

Norane Freistadt, Development Director: [norane@mtaudubon.org](mailto:norane@mtaudubon.org)

Amy Cilimburg, Director of Bird Conservation: [amy@mtaudubon.org](mailto:amy@mtaudubon.org)

Darcie Vallant, Center Dir., Audubon Conservation Education Center: [dvallant@mtaudubon.org](mailto:dvallant@mtaudubon.org)

Heather Ristow, Education Dir., Audubon Conservation Education Center: [hristow@mtaudubon.org](mailto:hristow@mtaudubon.org)