

March 2023

Birding Observer



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

Calendar

Monday, March 6th, 6-8pm: The FVAS Board Meeting will be held at the Missoula Public Library in the Blackfoot Room (the large one).

Saturday, March 11th, 9-11am: Town Bound Birding Series takes us to Rattlesnake Creek. We will scan the ponderosas at Rattlesnake Creek in late winter for Pileated Woodpeckers, Mountain Chickadees, American Dippers, & more. Park and meet the group at Duncan Drive Trailhead. There will be a post birding hangout at Black Coffee.

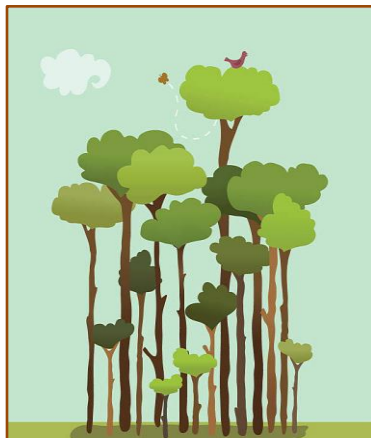
Monday, March 13th, 7pm: Conservation ecologist, Jedediah Brodie, will present, "Plant-animal Interactions in Tropical Rainforests" at our March meeting. The meeting will be held in Room 110 in the Interdisciplinary Sciences Building on the UM campus.

Saturday, March 18th; 10 am – 1 pm: Beginning Bird Walk at the Lee Metcalf NWR. Meet the field trip leader at the Refuge Visitor's Center. Expect approximately two miles of level hiking.

Saturday, March 25th: All-day field trip the Lee Metcalf NWR. Meet at 8:00 am in the WEST END OF THE WALMART PARKING LOT ON BROOKS-93 SOUTH OR AT THE RUFUGE VISITOR'S CENTER AT 8:45 AM.

Plant-animal Interactions in Tropical Rainforests

Join us Monday, March 13, 2023, at 7:00 PM for our annual joint meeting with the Native Plant Society. Our speaker will be Jedediah Brodie presenting his talk entitled: Plant-animal Interactions in Tropical Rainforests.



Tropical rainforests are wild riots of life, known not just for their incredible diversity of animals and plants, but for the strong interactions among these organisms. In his talk, Jedediah will explore how birds, mammals, and insects both help and hinder plants through pollination, seed dispersal, and herbivory – interactions that have led to some surprising evolutionary patterns. He will also look at how plant-animal relationships in the forests of tropical Southeast Asia are changing and what we can do to help conserve them.

Jedediah Brodie is a conservation ecologist and the Craighead Chair of Conservation at the University of Montana. He studies vertebrates, seed plants, and their interactions. He specializes in getting dirty, sweaty, and parasite-ridden through field work across the tropics and in Alaska. Jedediah's current work focuses on landscape connectivity, climate change, and species interactions. He works closely with government agencies, NGOs, and other partners in Malaysia and elsewhere to help establish habitat corridors and other conservation areas.



The meeting will be held in Room 110 of 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. You have the option of watching the meeting over the zoom link listed below.

FVAS general meeting
Mar 13, 2023, 7PM Mountain Time
<https://umontana.zoom.us/j/94696638657>

Peeps from The President

By Rose Leach

Happy March to our members, and Thank You for your support! And it is time for me to report on our past year's accomplishments.



Again, over 230 volunteers powered us with cumulatively over 3,000 hours of conservation-related activities. Our varied projects included conducting bird surveys, organizing monthly meetings, producing our newsletter, running our community naturalist program, and commenting on city and county planning documents. We also provided input, time and talent to Five Valleys Land Trust, Clark Fork Coalition, Wings Over Water teachers' program, and City Parks and Recreation, our local partners in conservation and environmental restoration projects.

One project of note is the long-term planning and restoration project along the portion of Grant Creek from the interstate to where Grant Creek joins the Clark Fork River. Thanks go to long-time birder Will McDowell and the folks at the Clark Fork Coalition for leading this effort.

A fun project this year was a spring outing to Greenough Park with members of our visually impaired community. It was fascinating to see and identify the birds through everyone's varied perceptions and abilities. We hope to continue this partnership this spring and into the future. Thanks to Jacob Glass, Jean Duncan, and Andrea and Don Stierle for leading this effort.

Again, this year, our Chapter partnered with Five Valleys Land Trust to secure a conservation easement in our local Grass Valley Important Bird Area (IBA). Your contributions to the Chapter help us fund our contribution to these purchases, which in turn helps our partners in their fundraising for the bulk of the cost of the easements. We could never afford these projects singly or without our partners, but together, we have helped to protect hundreds of acres of important conservation lands in Western Montana. Many thanks go to our Conservation Chair Jim Brown in leading these projects for us.

Our volunteers conducted quite a few bird surveys this year, many at the Knife River ponds at Fort Missoula. We had a chance to survey the site both during the spring and fall seasons. Thanks to Poody McLaughlin for organizing the bird surveys, as well as updating our IBA map last year (<https://fvaudubon.org/clark-fork-river-grass-valley-important-bird-area/>). Planning for the future of the ponds has been on-going for several years, and thanks go to outgoing board member Ed Monnig for helping us plan for future restoration and conservation at this site. Jim Brown wrote about the direction the planning is going in last month's newsletter, and recently, Shane Sater, a visiting birder and scientist from Helena, has provided us with a wonderful podcast and write-up about the ponds that you can find here: <https://whatsgoingonblog.org/2022/12/29/fort-missoula-ponds/>

Shane also did an informative and fun podcast on our Missoula Christmas Bird Count this year. Check it and all of his posts out here: <https://whatsgoingonblog.org/2023/01/12/lavalle-creek-birds/>

Our volunteers surveyed birds in grassland-riparian habitats at a ranch near Drummond this summer, in cooperation with Five Valleys Land Trust. We were happy to find quite a few pairs of Bobolinks at this site. Board member William Boggs also keeps track of Bobolinks at Larry Creek in the Bitterroot—a fairly close to town site for this species that has been negatively affected by habitat changes to its tall and damp grassland habitat.



Board Member Jacob Glass launched the Town Bound Birding series to promote easily accessible birding opportunities. It's a way to bird our local sites, with little driving and just two hours or so of effort. We can often forget about our local 'hot-spot' habitats, when we focus on destination birding to the more well-known sites in the region. Jacob's next outing is scheduled for March 11th. Go to <https://fvaudubon.org/calendar/> for details. Thanks, Jacob!

Thomas Kallmeyer took on the herculean task of updating our web site (<https://fvaudubon.org/>) and transforming it into a beautiful journey through our Chapter's activities and programs. It is truly visually stunning. We salute you Thomas!

Our Community Naturalist, the dervish known as Larry Weeks, was busy again this year with programs, field trips, education presentations, Christmas Bird Count, and teaching birding classes for our community. I don't know when he sleeps, but you can catch him leading several field trips each month and starting the Advanced Birding Workshop on March 2nd at the FWP office on Spurgin Road. Larry was assisted by Rose Stoudt, Ginny Fay, Linda Pillsworth, and Alex Kearny on several projects. Thanks again Larry and company.



Board members Jim Brown and Gerhard Knudsen contributed many hours reviewing and commenting on several county planning projects of conservation concern. Over many

years of participation, Jim and Gerhard have built a strong and enduring relationship with our county planning staff, which benefits everyone in the process.

Thanks to Cathy Nolan for running our publicity and editing. Both are behind-the-scenes tasks that need to be covered, but that we too often take for granted. They just seem to magically happen each month, don't they? The fact that we have informative newsletters is often down to Cathy's insightful reading and skill in adding clarity to our messages. Thanks Cathy.

Most of you may not know that behind the scenes Andrea Stierle, our Secretary, and Jean Duncan, our Treasurer, keep the Chapter on track with their copious notes, organizational skills, and budget planning. Andrea also runs the Philip L. Wright Research Awards program – all this, on top of working a full-time job. Our Vice-President, Jeff Ipsen, runs things when others are traveling, as well as supports individual projects with his hands-on knowledge and skills.

Have you wondered how all of our monthly programs get organized and implemented each month? We have our Program director Susie Wall to thank for the many varied and informative meetings each month, and Andrea—again—to set up the Zoom and university liaison portion of the meetings.

Last but not least, thanks to our newsletter editor Beverly Orth, who unfailingly compiles and produces our missives each month, and has done so for over 20 years. And Bev does all of this remotely from her home in New York. Locally, Hedwig Vogel-Wright gets the newsletter addressed and posted each month, quite a time-consuming project. Newsletter production is a big, time-sensitive job, and Bev and Hedwig keep us on track month after month. We are all so grateful for having Bev, Hedwig and other helpers on our newsletter team.

We have lots of projects running each year, and some for multiple years. It takes many dedicated workers to pull it off. By sharing the load, it is manageable, effective, and fun to be on our board. If you would like to become a board member or just get more involved, let us know. We will be happy to include you in one of our projects, or perhaps a new one of your invention. Thanks again to everyone for making 2022 a successful year!

Upcoming elections for the FVAS Board

Boards are - and should be - dynamic entities, with new members coming in, and members who have served as long as they would like, stepping down. We have been very fortunate to have gained very engaged new Board Directors and Committee Chairs in the last few years who have brought energy and new ideas to FVAS. These folks serve alongside dynamic Board members who have served for multiple terms and have provided years of dedicated service, vital connections to other conservation organizations, incredible outreach and educational opportunities for the community, and a deep commitment to the conservation and preservation of bird friendly habitat. This dynamic equilibrium has supported the goals of FVAS for 50 years. As a group, we are dedicated to the preservation of natural resources through birding and other wildlife focused activities, education, and a commitment to the conservation of important birding areas (IBAs).

We will hold elections at our general meeting March 13th for Vice-President and Treasurer. Jeff Ipsen and Jean Duncan who currently serve as Vice-President and Treasurer, whose terms are up are willing to continue to serve. We have some interested



candidates but would appreciate having a few more. If you would like to join the FVAS Board, please email Andrea Stierle at andrea.stierle@mso.umt.edu.

Field Trip Summary By Larry Weeks

Since the January 28th field trip to the Mission Valley was cancelled due to a winter storm, I decided to write up the Beginning Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR which took place on January 21, 2023. Pond 6, which is next to the Visitor's Center, had some open water and there was a good collection of waterfowl. The most obvious birds were the swans which were sleeping on the ice. One of the swans was trumpeting so there was at least one Trumpeter Swan. There was a group of three swans that were separate from the rest that had "yellow tear drops" which made them Tundra Swans. There was a pair of Barrow's Goldeneyes which were under water more often than on the surface. The female's totally orange bill was very prominent. Other waterfowl included Ring-necked Duck, Common Goldeneye, Gadwall, Mallard, Northern Pintail, and Green-winged Teal. A Wilson's Snipe flew back and forth across the pond but kept hiding in the cattails. However, when we returned from our hike on the Kenai Trail, it was out where everyone was able to get a good look. A Northern Shrike was perched in a shrub beside Pond 6. On Pond 8, which is north of Pond 6, there was an estimated 400 Mallards. The resident Virginia Rail made a "grunt" call which signalled its presence among the cattails. We had a nice look at a Rough-legged Hawk. There were more swans on the ice at Pond 8. The total number of swans on both ponds numbered 29. After hiking the Kenai Trail, we moved to the Wildlife Viewing Area but there was very little bird activity. We couldn't find the Great Horned Owl, but we did locate a porcupine. There were two American Dippers on the Bitterroot River. There were 12 people on the field trip, which was a little less than normal, and we tallied 24 bird species.



Advanced Birding Workshop By Larry Weeks

An advanced birding workshop is scheduled for March and April 2023 that will include seven sessions on Thursday evening at the Fish, Wildlife & Parks Regional Office at 3201 Spurgin Road. Each session will be devoted to one bird group. The date, subject and presenter for each session are as follows:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Bird Group</u>	<u>Presenter</u>
March 2	Raptor	Larry Weeks
March 9	Flycatchers	Steve Flood
March 16	Shorebirds	Jim Brown
March 30	Gulls	Alex Hughes
April 6	Sparrows	Larry Weeks
April 13	Forest Birds	Larry Weeks
April 20	Owls	Beth Mendelsohn

A person may attend one session or all seven. The cost will be \$15 per session or \$70 for all seven sessions. To sign up, contact Larry Weeks at bwsgenea@gmail.com, 406-549-5632 or 406-540-3064 (cell).



MARCH

Forward, March
And welcome Spring,
When bunnies bounce
And birds all sing!

When March winds blow
The winter away,
They get the world ready for
April and May.

By Helen H. Moore

Welcome New Members

Cherie Courtney
Judith Gaughran
William Hughes
Nancy Knilans
Judy Thayer
Claire Beelman
Diane Zentgraf

Anne Garde
Marilyn Heath
John Kirkendall
Mike Sehorn
Jan Trickel
Michael Umphrey



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: <https://fvaudubon.org/make-a-donation/>

\$ _____ \$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. \$ _____ Total contribution
\$ _____ Donate to our General Fund to support our habitat protection work within Missoula County, nonprofit organizations that care for birds, and education on birds and birding. \$ _____ Free for students, includes FVAS newsletter via email.
_____ I would like to Volunteer. Please contact me.

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: <https://act.audubon.org/a/join>. 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: <https://mtaudubon.org/>. Please give generously to each organization. Although independent, we work together to protect what we all love.

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