

December 2023

Birding Observer



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

Calendar

- **Sunday, December 3rd, 8:00am:** All-day field trip to the Mission Valley to look for raptors. Meet at 8:00 am in the northwest corner of the Adams Center parking lot. No hiking involved.
- **Saturday, December 9th, 10:00 am:** Beginning Bird Walk at the Lee Metcalf NWR. Meet the field trip leader at the Visitor's Center and expect two miles of level hiking. NOTE: THE DATE IS ONE WEEK EARIER TO AVIOD A CONFLICT WITH THE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT.
- **Saturday, December 16th:** Christmas Bird Count. See write-up on page 3.



The Impact of Plastic on Wildlife

Please join us on Monday, December 11, 2023, at 7:00 PM to hear our speaker, Youpa Stein, present her talk "Plastic in the Wild: The Impact of Plastic Pollution on Wildlife - and You."

The physical and chemical components of plastics contaminate our water, air, soil, and the bodies of all life on earth. Youpa will give us an overview of how every stage of plastics causes health problems and environmental justice harm to humans, wildlife, and the

ecosystems that sustain us all. She will explain how plastics pollute and contribute to climate change at every stage including how plastics are made, used, and disposed of, and how plastics create a long-lasting legacy of damage to the health of earth's biological systems. We will also look at how we can work together to reduce the toxic overproduction of single use plastics and how we can support a regenerative circular economy and actions to stop the harm and injustice at every stage of plastic pollution.

Youpa was born in Montana and is an artist and concerned citizen who works to raise awareness about plastic pollution and the related health and environmental justice harm caused by plastics through giving talks, writing, creating art, and policy work for solutions. Her belief in the rights of nature fundamentally shapes her work. She volunteers for the Beyond Plastics Speakers Bureau and is a volunteer Co-Chair of the Families for a Liveable Climate Plastics Working Group. Youpa agrees with writer, farmer and activist, Wendell Berry, in his belief that the care of the earth is our most ancient and worthiest responsibility.

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

<https://umontana.zoom.us/j/94761481088>



Peeps From the Board: Married to a Non-Birder

By Jeff Ipsen

My wife is not a birder. There will be no vacation to Attu Island anytime soon (never). She likes birds, though. She likes to watch our feeder, particularly when something new shows up. She especially likes Evening Grosbeaks, and if she can't identify a bird, she'll ask me what it is. She likes to look at birds through binoculars or a scope, just not for a protracted amount of time.

Evening Grosbeak

Coccothraustes vespertinus



She's also a good bird spotter and has put me on to several local bird hangouts. When I was first getting serious about birding, she already knew about the location of a mountain ash tree that was often full of Cedar Waxwings. And recently she noticed that a family of Cooper's Hawks were hanging out and hunting outside her office on campus. She took me there that evening and we immediately saw three of them perched on a fence rail. We eventually saw all four of them.

She just thinks birding is too slow-paced. She doesn't have the patience. If you could bird while walking at five mph, driving at eighty, or biking at twenty mph (which is how I have had to bird on occasion), she could be a birder. We still see birds while we're travelling, we just don't stop to look at them. The "I brake for chickadees" bumper sticker would be way out of place on our car. It's because she's so destination-oriented, the process doesn't interest her. We once made a trade where I would go garage saling in the morning with her and then she would come to the beginning bird walk at Lee Metcalf with me. Then garage saling was actually fun, but it's lucky I was driving when we passed a couple more signs in Florence. Once we got there, she enjoyed looking through a scope at some waterfowl or other, but started getting antsy when we didn't move on right away. Then, when we stopped again in about twenty yards because something new had become visible, she

muttered something under her breath and that was the last we saw of her for a while.

She has much better bird luck than I do though. An adage that applies to our relationship is: 'If I tell her about a bird I'd like to see, she'll see it and I won't'. Once, she called from a conference she was attending in Phoenix to inform me that she had gone for a run that morning and a Roadrunner had run with her for a couple of blocks. Another time, we were snorkelling in Cozumel. I was hoping to see Brown Pelicans. Evidently, a group of them flew by the boat which she had returned to because she was cold. I, of course, had my head under water at the time. Another time, I tagged along to a conference in New Orleans. I like to do this because I can bird while she is in meetings. She does have free time, though, and I was able to talk her into taking an uber out to a boardwalk at Bayou Coquille. One of her co-workers was a birder, which helped, and there were lots of other things to see, like alligators. And who doesn't like to look at Little Blue Herons. Red-bellied Woodpecker was a target bird for me on this trip. She spotted one on the other side of the slough. I was next to her. "There's one." "I don't see it." "It's right there." "No." "Can't you see the red?" "No." "It just moved." "Nope." "Oh well, it's gone now." "Grr."

A defining moment in our birding relationship came when I called her from a birding trip to Glacier. When I told her we had hiked the three-and-a-half miles into Grinnell Lake in three hours, she thought that was cringe-worthy. She hasn't gotten over it yet.



"Looks like it might be fun for the birds too."

Harry Mace
April 21, 1956

Field Trip Summaries

By Larry Weeks and Steve Flood

October 22, 2023: We left Missoula at 9:00 am and made our first stop at Clearwater Crossing Campground. The water was nearly empty with only a Hooded Merganser, a Bufflehead, and a small group of Green-winged Teal.

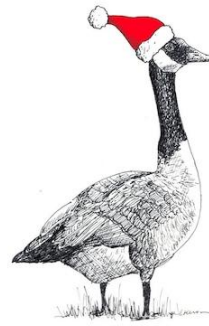
We made our way to Browns Lake, arriving at 10:40 am. Among the coots foraging near the north shore, we picked out Bufflehead, Pied-billed Grebe, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Mallard, Horned Grebe, Eared Grebe, Hooded Merganser, and Ruddy Ducks. A Northern Harrier also made a pass along the rushes. We made a few stops along the eastern shore picking up mostly Hooded Mergansers but spotted a Surf Scoter and a few Common Loons. We arrived at the campground at noon and had some lunch while looking over the mostly empty lake. There was a large raft of sleeping Western Grebes among which we picked out Horned and Eared Grebes, and a Red-necked Grebe. We also found several more Common Loons and another Surf Scoter. On both the way in and out of the campground, we spied a Northern Shrike near the private cabin.

The potholes along Cutoff Road added Greater Yellowlegs, Canada Goose, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, Marsh Wren, Townsend's Solitaire, and a pair of Trumpeter Swans. We also had passes of Red-tailed Hawk, Northern Harrier, Bald Eagle, and Golden Eagle. The surrounding grass and sage lands, ag fields, and aspen patches were very quiet. The weather was mostly sunny and calm early, becoming cloudier as the day progressed.

We had 13 participants and observed 35 species.

Missoula Christmas Bird Count

By Larry Weeks



The Missoula CBC will take place on Saturday, December 16th. If you want to participate in the field count or to be a feeder watcher, contact Larry Weeks at bwsgenea@gmail.com, 406-549-5632 or 406-540-3064 (cell). Larry will provide different options for you to choose from or instructions on how to be a feeder watcher. 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 dish, 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.



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

~ Andrew Wyeth

Species List for October 22, 2023

American Coot 160	Eared Grebe 5	Northern Shoveler 3
American Wigeon 2	European Starling 12	Northern Shrike 1
Bald Eagle 5	Gadwall 25	Pied-billed Grebe 2
Black-billed Magpie 10	Golden Eagle 1	Red-necked Grebe 1
Black-capped Chickadees	Greater Yellowlegs 1	Red-tailed Hawk 3
Bufflehead 4	Green-winged Teal 22	Ring-billed Gull 1
Canada Goose 4	Hooded Merganser 24	Ring-necked Duck 13
Common Loon 5	Horned Grebe 12	Ruddy Duck 12
Common Goldeneye 1	Mallard 18	Surf Scoter 2
Common Merganser 1	Marsh Wren 1	Townsend's Solitaire 1
Common Raven 9	Northern Harrier 2	Trumpeter Swan 2
	Northern Pintail 2	Western Grebe 26

Saturday, November 11th: The November field trip was to Maclay Flat. Thirty-four people followed me to the boat launch on the Bitterroot River. We saw a Black-billed Magpie, a Pileated Woodpecker and a Red-tailed Hawk across the river and a Downy Woodpecker on our side. I heard a Greater Yellowlegs doing its few-few-few as it flew down the river. Then I received a call from Thomas Kallmeyer about a perched Great Horned Owl near the Inland Marsh sign. I immediately marched my group to that location, and I lost some of the people along the way. We initially had trouble locating the owl but eventually, with enough eyes, it was located. Continuing on the main trail, we found another Downy Woodpecker and another Red-tailed Hawk. There was also a perched Bald Eagle near the eagle territory. When we got back to the river, there were a couple of Mallards and a pair of Hooded Mergansers upstream. A Great Blue Heron and a Common Raven were our final birds.

When I got back to the parking lot, I discovered that Thomas had led a separate group of birders that chose not to join the large group that I had. In addition to the Great Horned Owl, they had a winter-feeding flock that included Black-capped Chickadees, Golden-crowned Kinglets, and Brown Creepers. They also had a Common Goldeneye and a flock of Bohemian Waxwings.

Since I had not seen a Golden-crowned Kinglet this year, I returned to the south end, and I did find the kinglet. I also showed the owl to several people, and it was still there at 12:30 pm. I also had a Steller's Jay on my way back to the parking lot. Altogether, there were 18 bird species documented and there were at least 40 people involved.

Christmas Word Search

H	S	G	R	E	E	T	I	N	G	S	W	O	W	C
F	U	Z	Q	Q	Y	C	H	R	I	S	T	M	A	S
P	R	P	F	Z	L	G	B	G	G	K	R	U	H	X
J	S	U	F	B	L	S	N	O	W	M	A	N	P	A
E	J	J	I	R	O	Z	F	X	J	C	T	Y	R	N
L	F	H	J	T	H	N	T	H	F	A	S	C	C	G
C	C	S	V	R	C	U	V	A	M	N	P	A	G	E
I	Y	H	P	E	N	A	T	W	D	D	X	N	O	L
C	V	P	H	T	L	H	K	A	H	L	Y	D	N	U
I	D	O	S	O	T	V	S	E	A	E	L	Y	G	G
R	K	E	Z	S	L	H	E	C	P	S	I	K	G	R
A	H	R	I	G	E	I	E	S	P	F	M	E	E	E
C	W	R	T	R	B	M	D	B	Y	Y	A	C	O	E
Z	H	F	R	O	S	T	Y	A	O	W	F	K	K	N
C	K	R	V	Y	H	A	Q	B	Y	R	K	Y	P	F

ANGEL
CANDLES
CANDY
CHESTNUT
CHRIST
CHRISTMAS
DASHER
EGGNOG
ELVES
FAMILY

FROSTY
FRUITCAKE
GREEN
GREETINGS
HAPPY
HOLIDAY
HOLLY
ICICLE
SNOWMAN
STAR





Welcome New Members

Robin Harris
Candace Lewis
Sonja Walesch
David Williams
Lily Frandsen
Hayley Johnson
Gilbert Quintero



Please sign up for emailed newsletters!

If you subscribed through National Audubon, we may not have your email address. To receive our newsletter and other bird news by email, and to help save trees and reduce 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. All options include the *Birding Observer* newsletter and allow you to 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

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

_____ I would like to Volunteer. Please contact me.

\$_____ 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.

(Please provide an email address below.)

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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