

March 2024

Birding Observer

Newsletter of the Five Valleys Audubon Society



CALENDAR

Monday, March 4th, 6:00-7:45pm: The board meeting will be held in the Blackfoot Room of the Missoula Public Library.

Sunday, March 10th, 9-11am: Attend the Town Bound Birding field trip at Power Park to look for Pileated Woodpeckers, Mountain Chickadees, American Dippers and more. The trail may be icy, so please consider bringing traction devices. Parking is available at the Duncan Drive Trailhead

Monday, March 11th, 7:00pm: Attend our March program meeting to learn about the status of Mountain Caribou. See details to the right.

Saturday, March 16th, 10:00am: 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.

Saturday, March 23rd, 8:00am: William Boggs will lead an all-day field trip to the Lee Metcalf NWR. Meet at 8:00 am in the west end of the Walmart 93S parking lot which is near the garden center. There will be 2–3 miles of level hiking.

Ensuring the Future of Mountain Caribou

Please join us at our monthly chapter meeting on Monday, March 11, 2024, at 7:00 PM to hear our speaker, Cory DeStein, present his talk, *Resilience in the Selkirks: Ensuring the Future of Mountain Caribou*.

Once widespread throughout northwest Montana, the mountain caribou has now become one of North America's most endangered species. Inhabiting the region until the 1980s, the last remnants of caribou in the continental United States vanished in 2019 with the extinction of the South Selkirk herd along the Idaho-Canadian border. Concurrently, the most southern surviving herd, the Central Selkirk, dwindled to a mere 24 animals.

During his talk, Cory will share with us how he along with the Arrow Lakes Caribou Society are working to combat this alarming decline. Together we will delve deeper into the world of these elusive mountain creatures and the collaborative endeavors aimed at their preservation. The Arrow Lakes Caribou Society was established near Nakusp, British Columbia. Among its key initiatives is a maternal penning project designed to shield newborn calves and their mothers from environmental pressures during their most vulnerable period.



Cory DeStein

Cory DeStein is a wildlife photographer based in Missoula and a board member of the Arrow Lakes Caribou Society. Cory is dedicated to documenting the mountain caribou's narrative through his photography. His goal is to instill in others the same appreciation he has developed for one of North America's most endangered species.

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 by the university. You may also watch the meeting over zoom: <https://umontana.zoom.us/j/94507996333>

In addition, FVAS will hold its annual elections at the General Meeting on March 11, 2024. Three Board positions are currently open.

Peeps From Your President: Thanks to our Supporters! By Rose Leach

Happy Spring to our members, and many thanks for your continued support! Our Chapter has accomplished many conservation, habitat, and education goals this year because of our caring and generous volunteers.

Cumulatively, we had nearly 230 volunteers contribute over 4,400 hours to various projects throughout the year. Our total hours in 2023 were higher than the last several years, because of our participation in a region-wide, standardized shorebird survey. We anticipate the project will continue for several years and spotlight the state, regional, and national importance of our habitats to migrating and locally-nesting shorebird species.

Our projects are as varied as our individual interests, and they influence local, statewide, and even national issues. The following list illustrates my point.

- Bird surveys on city open space lands. Results help to shape management and land-use planning that can affect nesting, wintering, and migrating populations of birds.
- Bird surveys on private lands that are being considered for conservation easements. These projects are located in local and adjacent watersheds in western Montana and can affect resident and migrating species of concern to the state.
- Assess, recommend and provide comments to city and county planning staff. Our Board's comments can affect local conservation of species of concern to our community and state.
- Monthly Chapter programs for the public, which cover a wide variety of topics, from the importance of habitats in the tropics, to studying genetic markers in wildlife populations.
- Shorebird surveys during spring and fall migration, as part of a multistate regional effort to understand the movements of these long-distance migrants. Many travel throughout the continent and beyond.
- Grant Creek watershed comprehensive planning, shaping the watershed to protect and restore wildlife and fisheries habitat in our community.
- Audubon Adventures education program for 3rd grade students.



- Community Naturalist in Schools, reaching several hundred adults and children each year.
- Local and state-wide field trips offered throughout the year, reaching several hundred participants.
- Town Bound birding outings, exploring our local habitats of significance.
- Annual field trip for the blind, which explores birds and habitats through our other senses.
- Christmas Bird Count, a national project that engages over 100 local participants in our count circle each year.
- Monthly Beginning Birders bird walk, the gateway drug (we hope) for sparking new interests in birds, their habitat needs, and conservation challenges.
- Osher Lifelong Learning at UM (MOLLI) Birding class. A week-long immersion of classes and field trips, which also provides income to our Chapter, thanks to the donation of compensation from the 2 instructors.
- Advanced and Beginning birders workshops. One series offered each year, where we share our knowledge of local and migrating species and their habitat needs.
- Birdathon—our single most important project to raise money to support our conservation, education, and habitat conservation goals.
- Support to the Wings over the Water teacher education curriculum, which reaches teachers from throughout the country. Each year a new group comes to Missoula to learn about the importance of river and wetland ecosystems, using Ospreys as our unifying ambassador. Our support of initial seed money helped to bring this program to fruition.
- Philip L. Wright Memorial Research Award program providing students with small but enormously helpful grants for local and international projects.



If you are thinking that you might want to join us in any of these types of projects, simply let one of our Board members know (listed on the back of the newsletter), or just show up when a project is announced at a Chapter meeting or in the newsletter. Hope to see you soon!

Correction: The name Iñupiat was misspelled on page one, in the speaker section of our February 2024 *Birding Observer* newsletter.

Workshop for Beginning & Intermediate Birders By Larry Weeks

The Five Valleys Audubon Society will offer a workshop for beginning and intermediate birders. This workshop should appeal to birders just getting started and to birders who want to improve their identification skills. It will consist of four classroom sessions, which are scheduled for Thursday evenings from 7:00 to 9:00 pm on March 21st, April 4th, April 11th, and April 18th. The sessions will be held in the meeting room at the Fish, Wildlife & Parks Regional Office at 3201 Spurgin Road. The schedule is as follows:

Thursday, March 21st:

- Anatomy – 30 min.
- Waterfowl – 60 min.

Thursday, April 4th:

- Migration – 30 min.
- Warblers – 30 min.
- Shorebirds – 30 min.

Thursday, April 11th:

- Woodpeckers – 30 min.
- Sparrows – 30 min.
- Birding by ear – 30 min

Thursday, April 18th:

- Raptors – 2 hrs.

There will be a \$35 fee for the entire workshop or a \$10 fee per session. To sign up, contact Larry Weeks at 406-549-5632 (cell 406-540-3064) or bwsgenea@gmail.com.



Audubon's Native Plant Database Reprinted from *audubon.org*

Attract birds to your home by growing native plants. With Audubon's Native Plant Database, you can find the best plants for the birds in your area.

<https://www.audubon.org/native-plants>

How does the native plants database search work?

The plant data in the Audubon Native Plant Database come from the Biota of North America Program (BONAP), one of the most comprehensive sources of native plant information in the United States. The BONAP data show us where plants are native and Audubon's bird experts then selected plants that are beneficial to birds and generally available for purchase in the nursery trade; those plants are listed on the 'Best Results' tab in the search results. The 'Full Results' tab lists all the native plants for each location, including plants you probably won't see in the nursery trade.



Each type of plant listed in Best Results produces resources (nuts, seeds, nectar, etc.) or may host insects that can support birds. The types of birds supported by those resources are shown next to the plant, with a link to Audubon's Guide to North American Birds that shows all the members of that group. Our bird data only covers species in North America, so we can't currently show birds that would be attracted to native plants in Hawaii.

If you'd like to narrow down your search results based on specific types of plants, resources, or birds, you can use the pull-down filter menus in the Best and Full Results tabs. You can also filter your list by keyword; type in the name of the plant or any word found in the plant's description, and your list will show you every profile in which that keyword appears. Looking for shade-tolerant species or ones that thrive in dry soil? Type "shade" or "dry" respectively into the keyword filter to see all the plant profiles that contain those terms.

The information underlying the Native Plant Database defines native status by county—so if your ZIP code is in a large county with diverse geographies and habitats, you should inquire with your local Audubon or a native plants nursery with expertise in your area to verify which plants will work best for you.

Come Celebrate!

Do you remember Lee Ballard? She and her husband Bill were active members of Five Valleys Audubon for many years. She died last August at age 99. Her daughter Martha is throwing a "Lee Party" at the Missoula Public Library on April 20th from 2 – 4 PM. Martha hopes that Lee's Audubon friends will come to the party to hear and tell Lee stories, listen to some music, and share some of Lee's favorite snacks.

News from Montana Audubon

2024 Citizen Science projects

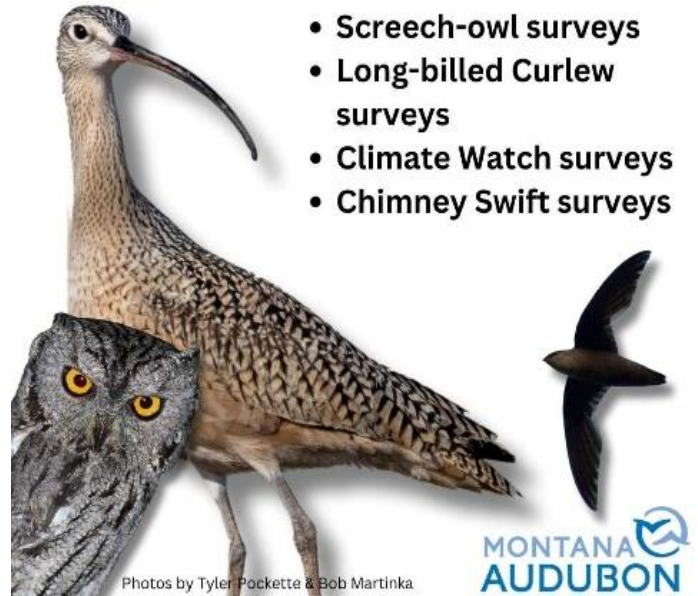
2024 Montana Audubon Citizen Science Projects

Help contribute valuable observations to science- and have a great time doing it! Montana Audubon is recruiting volunteers to help with four different surveys this year, including a new project surveying for Screech-owls.

2024 Montana Audubon Citizen Science Projects:

- Western and Eastern Screech-owl surveys | March - April
- Long-billed Curlew surveys | April – May
- Climate Watch surveys | May 15-June 15
- Chimney Swift surveys | June – July

Screech-owl survey training is on Feb. 27, 6:30 pm via Zoom. Curlew training is scheduled for March 26, 6:30 pm, via Zoom. To sign up, or for more information about any of the projects, email Gwynne at gwynne@mtaudubon.org.



- Screech-owl surveys
- Long-billed Curlew surveys
- Climate Watch surveys
- Chimney Swift surveys

Learn more about each of these projects on our Citizen Science website: <http://www.montanabirdsurveys.com/>

Wings Across the Big Sky Birding Festival

May 31 - June 2, 2024
Helena, MT

Keynote Speaker

Montana Audubon and Last Chance Audubon are pleased to announce the keynote speaker for the 2024 Wings Across the Big Sky Birding Festival: Tiffany Kersten!

About her presentation:

Birdie Big Year: Elevating Women Birders

Tiffany Kersten didn't set out to do a Big Year, but after a series of unanticipated and serendipitous events, she suddenly found herself amidst one. As a sexual assault survivor, she spent 2021 traveling to all corners of the Lower 48 States, tallying birds and gifting personal safety alarms to women she met along the way. Her goal was to see 700 species, and to raise awareness of women's safety in the outdoors. She ended up surpassing her goal and setting a new record, of 726 species. In her presentation, Tiffany will lead us through the fear, empowerment, struggles, and healing that all played vital roles in the personal growth she experienced on this wild adventure.



Learn more about Tiffany and Nature Ninja Birding Tours on her website: <https://tiffanykersten.blogspot.com>.

Welcome New Members

Julie Cook
Linda Harris
Jens Leerssen
Susan Snetsinger

Lorraine Corra
Harold Holden
Susan Mann
Kathy Wilson

Linda Forest
Deborah & Thomas Hoppin
Kimberly McGuire



**Be an environmental and fiscal champion.
If you are able, please sign up for emailed newsletters rather than hard copies.**

If you subscribe to Audubon through National Audubon, we may not have your email address. To receive our newsletter and other birding news by email, saving trees and reducing 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.

Join Five Valleys Audubon Society

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.
(Please provide an email address below.)

\$_____ 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.

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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