April 2018

Birding Observer

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

Calendar of Events

- **Monday, April 2nd, 6:45-8:45pm:** The FVAS board meeting will be held in the Board Room of the Missoula County Library.
- **Saturday, April 7th:** Five-hour late day field trip to the Ninepipes area to look for Short-eared Owls. Meet at 4:00 pm in the northwest corner of the Adams Center parking lot.
- **Monday, April 9th, 7:00pm:** Educator Lee Silliman will present on John James Audubon's artwork in Room 123 of the Gallagher Business Building at the University of Montana.
- **Sunday, April 15th:** The deadline for the May 2018 edition of the *Birding Observer*.
- **Saturday, April 21st:** All-day field trip to the Warm Springs Ponds. Meet at 7:00 am in the northwest corner of the Adams Center parking lot.
- **Saturday, April 21st:** Bird walk at Lee Metcalf NWR from 10:00am-Noon. Meet the field trip leader at the Refuge Visitor's Center. Note that the Visitor's Center is no longer open on Saturdays, so no rest rooms.
- **Saturday, May 5th:** All-day field trip to Brown's Lake. Meet at 7:50 am in the northwest corner of the Adams Center parking lot

***Caribou or American Rein-Deer*: One of Audubon's lithographs that Mr. Silliman will present on at the April meeting.**

Audubon's Mammals

At our April meeting Lee Silliman will be presenting an illustrated lecture entitled "Audubon in the West". Many admirers of John James Audubon (1785 – 1851), the masterful painter of North American birds, are not aware that he turned his attention in the last twelve years of his life toward the dynamic depiction of four-footed mammals in their natural habitat (an American first).

Silliman's lecture will first sketch Audubon's early career and delve into the details of his expedition into the Upper Missouri River country. Next, the talk will illustrate the process of how Audubon fashioned preliminary paintings into exquisitely detailed and richly hand-tinted stone lithographs, which were eventually published to the acclaim of the general public and scientists. As a special treat, Lee will be bringing some of the framed original Audubon lithographs for us to view.

Silliman is a retired educator and museum employee. Since early childhood he has nurtured a strong interest in the art and history of the 19th century American West. He began the craft of photography in 1979, built his own darkroom and picture framing shop in 1983, and began using a Wisner 8 x 10 inch field view camera in 1989. Utilizing his own photographs, the historic photos from the museum collection he managed, as well as vintage engravings that he purchased, Silliman has assembled and circulated numerous exhibits that have been displayed in more than one hundred venues throughout Montana and ten other states since 1988. He holds BS and MS degrees from the University of Illinois. Our meeting will be held Monday, April 9th at 7:00 PM in Room 123 of the Gallagher Business Building.

Cedar Mathers-Winn, an MS candidate at UM and recipient of a 2017 Philip L. Wright Memorial Research Award, will also make a brief presentation at the April meeting on his study of how forest gaps disrupt communications among birds.

Peeps From The Board: Bird Migration
By Andrea Stierle

Migration is one of the many adaptations used by birds and other animals to cope with the cold temperatures and scarcity of food that winter can bring. As scientists and naturalists we are interested not only in where birds go in the winter, but in how we know where birds go in search of more hospitable conditions. Traditionally, scientists captured, tagged and released individual birds and hoped that someone, somewhere, would find this bird and report its whereabouts. In recent years, however, satellite transmitters have given scientists an unprecedented opportunity to track birds around the globe. Once a bird is equipped with a transmitter, it emits signals that are picked up by space satellites and reported to computers back on earth. Using this technique, scientists have documented a Peregrine Falcon migrating from Alberta, Canada, to Mazatlán, Mexico. They have tracked Swallow-tailed Kites from Florida and Georgia to previously unknown wintering grounds in Brazil over 5,000 miles away. A Swainson's Hawk was tracked from California to Argentina, where it joined thousands of other Swainson's Hawks, including hawks that had been banded in California, Colorado, and Saskatchewan, Canada.

Some birds engage in truly epic migratory flights. Biologist Robert Gill has studied bird migration for over 30 years. In 1976 he was studying migratory birds on the southeastern coast of Alaska. He was impressed by the obvious fat stores on a small wading bird, the bar-tailed godwit. Scientists knew that bar-tailed godwits spent their winters in places like New Zealand and Australia and probably took a series of flights through Asia to reach their destinations. Gill wondered why this little shore bird had such a heavy layer of fat and wondered if this allowed the bird to stay in the air for longer flights than other birds. For thirty years Gill managed as best he could, building a network of bird-watchers who looked for migrating godwits over the Pacific Ocean. Finally, in 2006, technology caught up with Gill's hypothesis. He and colleagues implanted satellite transmitters in bar-tailed godwits and tracked their flight. Nine satellite-tagged bar-tailed godwits departed Alaska in the fall. The transmitters sent their location to Gill's computer. He sometimes stayed up until 2 AM to watch the signals on the Google Earth program running on his laptop. The bar-tailed godwits flew south across the Pacific Ocean. They did not stop along the way. Instead, they traveled up to 7,260 miles in nine days — the longest nonstop flight ever recorded. Godwits leave Alaska between late August and early November and generally wait for a large storm system with strong southerly winds to start their journey. Gill clocked average speeds of 35 miles an hour for the migrating godwits, with storms, gusts and cyclones boosting them south.

These long journeys can be incredibly stressful. Some birds do not feed during their migratory journeys and must rely on stores of fat--and antioxidant-rich berries--to see them through to journey's end. Despite the incredible amounts of energy expended by birds in their epic migrations, the primary advantage of migration is actually conservation of energy. Birds generally fly farther north (or farther south, south of the equator) to take advantage of the explosion of vegetation that accompanies long summer days farther from the equator. The extended daylight hours allow diurnal birds (active by day, sleeping at night) to produce larger clutches than those of related non-migratory species that remain in the tropics year round. As the days shorten in autumn, the birds return to warmer regions where the available food supply varies little with the season.

Much of the mechanics of migration are under genetic control. These include timing and response to important physical stimuli like duration of light. An important physiological cue for migration appears to be changes in day length. These changes are also related to hormonal changes. In the days before migration even caged birds display restlessness in their behavior. This heightened activity is accompanied by other physiological changes including increased eating behaviors and fat deposition.

As global temperatures rise, certain migratory birds are arriving at their breeding grounds earlier. A warming climate does not affect all birds equally, however. Long-distance migrants are less responsive to rising temperatures, and generally do not alter the timing of their migrations as much as birds with shorter migrations. This can have serious consequences for these birds. If short distance migrants change their arrival time by only a few days, they will have an advantage in selection of prime nest sites.

As the days lengthen and the return of spring is ever more imminent, the vocalizations of these winged travelers will again greet our ears. If only we could understand those voices—for they just might tell a tale or two of their migratory adventures great and small.

Field Trip Summary
By Larry Weeks

Saturday, February 24th: The late winter field trip to the Mission Valley to look for raptors was spectacular. The total raptor count in my car was 168. The breakdown was as follows; Red-tailed Hawk 51, Rough-legged Hawk 54, American kestrel 3, Merlin 2, Prairie Falcon 3, Bald Eagle 51, and Great Horned Owl 4. Steve Flood had 177 raptors with 55 Red-tails, 65 Rough-legs and 45 Bald Eagles. The route included Leighton Road to Polson, Eli Gap Road, Valley View Road, and Moiese Valley Road. While we were assembling at the Cenex Station in Ronan, Rose Leach spotted a falcon flying over Ronan. We drove around Ronan looking for the falcon and Andrea spotted a Merlin near Round Butte Road. So we were off to a good start. Leighton Road was especially good for raptors. Every time we stopped, we tallied multiple birds. The ranchers were calving which attracts the Bald Eagles. At the Town Pump in Polson, we had a Blue Jay in the same location that we found one on the December field trip. A stop at the outlet of Flathead Lake had 8 species of waterfowl and Ring-billed Gulls. There were no male Barrow's Goldeneyes at the sewage ponds in Polson, where they are usually easily found. However, there was a female goldeneye with a mostly orange bill (suggesting Barrow's), but the head profile wasn't steep (indicating Common Goldeneye). In the end, we played it safe and called it goldeneye species. We had Prairie Falcons on Eli Gap Rd., Valley View Rd. and Moises Valley Rd. Great Horned Owls were on nests in two locations. At the end of the trip, we encountered a buteo that was very white and some of the participants thought it was a Rough- legged Hawk. However, after considerable discussion, we decided it was a Red-tailed Hawk. After reviewing the Raptors of Western North America by Brian Wheeler, the photo of a light-phase Harlan's Red-tail came the closest to matching the bird we saw. Other interesting birds included 3 Wild Turkeys, 4 Gray Partridge, a flock of Bohemian Waxwings in Polson, and a few Brewer's Blackbirds mixed in with many Red-winged Blackbirds at a cattle feeding location. There were 10 people on the trip and we had 39 species.

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.

Make checks out to Five Valleys Audubon Society and mail to: PO Box 8425, Missoula, MT 59807
Or donate on our website: fvaudubon.org/join

$_____$15 FVAS membership only, includes newsletter sent via email.

$_____$25 FVAS membership only, includes newsletter sent via USPS.

$_____ General Fund, use as needed for conservation, field trips, education and outreach.

$_____ Phillip L. Wright Fund, small grants for student research.

$_____ Legacy Fund, creating and supporting local urban bird habitats for citizen enjoyment without leaving the city.

$_____Total contribution

_____ Volunteer - Please contact me. I would like to know more about how I may help birds and FVAS.

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: fvaudubon.org/nas. 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 handles statewide issues and is responsible for its own fundraising. To assist in this important statewide work you may contact MTA through their website: http://mtaudubon.org/. Please give generously to each organization. Although independent, we work together to protect what we all love.

Five Valleys Audubon Society
PO Box 8425, Missoula, MT 59807

NON-PROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE
PAID
MISSOULA, MT
59807
PERMIT NO. 490

TO:

Five Valleys Audubon Society
PO Box 8425, Missoula, MT 59807
www.fvaudubon.org

OFFICERS:			
President, 2018-2021	Rose Leach	721-0779	rleach-2@bresnan.net
Vice President, 2017-2020	Catherine Goodman	549-5404	catherine.goodman08@gmail.com
Secretary, 2018-2021	Andrea Stierle	782-6419	andrea.stierle@mso.umt.edu
Treasurer, 2017-2020	Jeffrey Ipsen	543 -7051	treasurer@fvaudubon.org
DIRECTORS:			
2018-2021	Larry Weeks	549-5632	bwsgenea@gmail.com
2017-2020	Jim Brown	549-8052	brownjs2@bresnan.net
2017-2020	Jean Duncan	396-1171	jeanclaire@montana.com
2017-2020	Gerhard Knudsen	251-2765	gmk@bresnan.net
2016-2019	Ed Monnig	549-0580	emonnig01@gmail.com
2016-2019	Rose Stoudt	880-8060	ras120656@yahoo.com
2016-2019	Susie Wall	274-0548	susiewall2@gmail.com
COMMITTEES:			
Archivist	Shirley Holden		
Audubon Adventures	Vacant		
Christmas Bird Count	Larry Weeks	549-5632	bwsgenea@gmail.com
Conservation	Amy Cilimburg		amycili@gmail.com
Education	Larry Weeks	549-5632	bwsgenea@gmail.com
Field Activities	Larry Weeks	549-5632	bwsgenea@gmail.com
Habitat Protection	Jim Brown	549-8052	brownjs2@bresnan.net
Member Records	Poody McLaughlin	543-4860	pmcregan@bresnan.net
Member Promotion	Jerry Dirnberger	360-5133	dirnberger@aol.com
Newsletter Circulation	Hedwig Vogel-Wright	549-7251	hedwigvw@fastmail.fm
Newsletter Editor	Bev Orth Geoghegan	750-0149	orthbev@hotmail.com
PL Wright Endowment	Bill Gabriel	273-6880	biograf@earthlink.net
Program	Susie Wall	274-0548	susiewall2@gmail.com
Publicity	Peter Kearns		psk59801@gmail.com
Social Media	Thomas Kallmeyer		thomaskallmeyer@yahoo.com
University Liaison	Chad Bishop	243-4374	
Web Site	Pat Little	493-7115	roughleg@gmail.com

Montana Audubon
PO Box 595, Helena, MT 59624
(406) 443-3949
www.mtaudubon.org

Larry Berrin, Executive Director
lberrin@mtaudubon.org

David Cronenwett, Development Specialist
david@mtaudubon.org

Janet Ellis, Senior Director of Policy
jellis@mtaudubon.org

Cathie Erickson, Accounting Specialist
cerickson@mtaudubon.org

Norane Freistadt, Finance Director
norane@mtaudubon.org

Janet Johnston, Office Manager
info@mtaudubon.org

Amy Seaman, Conservation Program Manager
aseaman@mtaudubon.org

Carolyn Sevier, Center Director
csevier@mtaudubon.org

Rachel Van Wingen, Board President