December 2015

Birding Observer

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

Calendar of Events

- **Sunday, December 6th:** All-day field trip to the Mission Valley led by Jim Brown. Meet in the northwest corner of the Adams Center parking lot at 8am or at the Cenex Gas Station in Ronan at 9am.
- **Monday, December 7th, 2015**: The December board meeting will be held at The Missoula Public Library, 6:45 to 8:45 pm.
- **Monday, December 14th, 7:30pm:** PhD Candidate, Andy Boyce, will discuss biodiversity in Borneo at our December meeting, in UM's Gallagher Business Building, room L09.
- **Tuesday, December 15th**: Submission deadline for the January edition of the *Birding Observer*.
- **Saturday, December 19th**: The Missoula Christmas Bird Count. Please see the article on page 3.
- **January 11, 2016**: meeting with Native Plant Society is scheduled for Gallagher 123. Speaker is Marisa Lipsey Sather will discuss vegetation and songbirds on North Central MT prairie.
- **Saturday, January 16th**: Bird walk at Lee Metcalf NWR from 10:00am-Noon. Meet the field trip leader at the Refuge Visitor's Center.

Andy Boyce with a Pitta

Biodiversity in Borneo: Highlights and Challenges

At our Monday, December 14 meeting, be prepared to encounter the amazing biodiversity of Borneo. Andy Boyce, a 4th-year PhD student at the University of Montana, will discuss his work researching tropical birds, but will also highlight some of Borneo's fantastic mammalian species (5 species of wild cats in an area the size of South Carolina!). Join us at 7:30 p.m. at the Gallagher Business Building room L09 (note the different location, which is next door to our usual meeting room).

Andy's research focuses on the tropical birds in Malaysian Borneo. More specifically, he calls himself an Ecophysiologist, meaning that he is interested in how an organism's physiology, or bodily function, relates to its environment and other organisms therein. He is investigating the possibility that the physiology of tropical organisms might be a cause of the immense biodiversity we see in tropical regions.

He grew up in Rhode Island and was introduced to birds while working as a deckhand on offshore fishing boats. He spent two years at Georgia Tech and two years at the University of Colorado, in an effort to boost his ABA list while doing the bare minimum to graduate with a B.A. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. After graduating he worked as a field technician in Colorado, California, Venezuela, and Borneo while traveling to tropical locations all over the world and chasing some of its most unique and spectacular birds. He has lived and worked in Missoula since 2010 and is dreading the day he receives his graduate degree and must start contemplating leaving Montana. While his work would not necessarily be categorized as conservation biology, he has a strong interest in biodiversity conservation, and Montana has turned him into an avid hunter.

Preceding the main program, Larry Weeks will give a brief overview of birds frequently seen in our Christmas Bird Count.

Peeps From The Board: eBird for the Birder

By Thomas Tarns

You've probably heard of eBird and you might be an eBird user but before we talk about what eBird can do for you as a birder, let's get a handle on what, exactly, eBird is. eBird is a real-time online checklist program that allows birders to submit their checklists to a central database, either through a smartphone or web browser window. The data can then be accessed through eBird's website making it available to anyone who finds it useful including researchers, conservation organizations and land management entities and many others. The data is filtered for errors and unusual sightings which are then reviewed by local experts who volunteer their time for eBird making it as accurate as possible. And that's eBird in a nutshell. This sounds great for citizen science and science in general, but what's in it for you? A lot. In fact, it's far more than equitable to the individual contributor. In return for the data that you take the time to collect and submit, eBird offers you the use of an extremely powerful tool to analyze that data, as well as the data of other birders, to keep track of not only your own sightings but sightings on the local, county, state, national and even international levels. The potential is mind-boggling to say the least.

With a few clicks of the mouse you can see exactly how many species you have seen in a single location, a county, a state or province or a major area like ABA, AOU, hemisphere, continent or ocean and you can do this by life, year or month. Delve a little deeper and you'll discover that you can summarize and filter your own sightings to create a custom list covering up to a year in duration. eBird also lets you import and export data in different formats as well as manage any list you've submitted or location you've entered. You can even embed media including video, audio or still images into your records to document sightings.

But that's not all. eBird allows individual birders to examine and summarize data that's been submitted worldwide, to summarize that data in bar charts, line graphs and species maps. You can also look at individual "hotspots" to see what other birders have been seeing recently or over the long term. You can determine where, and just as importantly when, the next bird you'd like to see will be. All in just a few clicks. There's even an application for smartphones called BirdsEye which compares sightings within a specified radius and time with your life list or year list to let know if there's a bird around that you haven't seen.

eBird makes is very easy to submit your sightings: you can install an application on a smartphone and record observations in the field or get online and submit them from anywhere that has an internet connection. Currently, eBird is free for Apple phones and will be free for Android phones in the very near future.

So what are you waiting for? Surf on over to www.ebird.org and share your observations today!

Hello Audubon friends and members,

Our Chapter is seeking a new Program Chairperson. This task involves networking to find interesting and informative speakers for our monthly meetings, getting a description of the talk and the speaker's background into the newsletter, and coordinating the planning and dealing with potential schedule changes.

One great perk is that most of the program speakers are already lined up for 2016, so you could ease into the position fairly easily, and there is plenty of time to start lining up future programs. All of the Board members can (and do) help you find potential speakers, so you don't have to find them all by yourself. Also, we have a wealth of potential speakers in the area, with many professional biologists and ongoing research projects to explore.

If you think you would enjoy meeting interesting people with a passion for birds, wildlife, and our natural world, please contact any board member on the back of this newsletter. It is a truly rewarding and enjoyable position.

Finally, I want to extend our heartfelt thanks to our retiring Program Chair, Carolyn Goren. Please accept our sincere appreciation for all of the outstanding programs you have provided for us over the past many years.

Warm Wishes for a Happy Holiday Season,
Rose Leach

Missoula Christmas Bird Count
By Larry Weeks

The Missoula Christmas Bird Count will be held on Saturday, December 19, 2015. If you would like to participate in the field count, contact Larry Weeks at 549-5632 (home) or 540-3064 (cell) or bwsgenea@gmail.com. If you are interested in being a feeder watcher, contact Rose Leach at 370-1999 or rleach-2@bresnan.net. The Count will end with a potluck dinner at the home of Larry Weeks, 2428 West Kent. Dinner will commence at 6:30 pm. 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.

Community Naturalist Program
By Larry Weeks

Last year, National Audubon only offered their Audubon Adventures program digitally. Some of the teachers commented to National Audubon that they would prefer the paper version. This year, National Audubon is offering the option of paper or digital. I contacted 17 local teachers and 9 of them requested the paper version. Our Chapter has ordered the paper version for these teachers. During my conservations with these teachers, I asked if they wanted a bird presentation, and every teacher said yes. So consequently, I have already made 6 presentations. These include the 3rd grade classes at Target Range (James Quigley – contact); Susannah Murphy's 8th grade class at Frenchtown Junior High; Margaret Petty's 3rd grade class at Lewis & Clark; Kris Gardner's 2nd/3rd grade class at DeSmet; the 3rd grade classes at Bonner (Marlene Griel – contact); and the 5th grade classes at Bonner (Lesa Homer – contact). 215 children have been reached with this effort.

Field Trips
By Larry Weeks

November 7, 2015: Although we had sunshine for the Maclay Flat field trip, the birds were not very active. It is very unusual to spend 2 hours hiking the area and not find a mallard or a nuthatch. The best bird of the day was a toss-up between a high flying northern harrier and a great horned owl. The owl was located on a side trail that parallels the ditch on the south end of Maclay Flat. Other notable birds included an adult bald eagle, a belted kingfisher and a Steller's jay. There were 19 people on the tour and we only found 14 species.

Count Me In !!
By Rose Leach

Thanks to those of you who already responded to our request for volunteers for our Montana Bird Festival, June 3-5, 2016 in Missoula. But we would still like to hear from more of you, because many hands do indeed make light work.

Can you volunteer just **one hour** in either helping to plan the festival or work during the festival? We still need people to help with assembling registration packets on Thursday afternoon, set up in Foyer on Thursday afternoon, decorations for the banquet on Saturday evening, and volunteers to help with gathering items for the silent auction. Half of the proceeds from the silent and dessert auctions stay with our chapter in our new habitat legacy fund (see related article), so please help us make these efforts a success! We can do it with your help.

Can you make **one contact** to a business person you know about his or her willingness to participate in the silent auction by providing an item or even making a small cash donation? The business name would be listed on the auction sheet or the donors list.

Are you willing to do more? It would be great to have one person step forward to be the overall volunteer coordinator.

Thanks again, with a little bit of help from everyone, we will have another fantastic festival!

The Legacy Fund for Enhancing Bird Habitat
By Rose Leach

The board has recently established a specialized fund to promote the establishment of birding microsite hotspots in our area, or other similar habitat improvement projects. These hotspots would be open for the enjoyment of the public, and include perhaps water features, benches and signs, so that they increase awareness not only of birds but conservation in general. There are several areas around schools, in parks, in open space, and around some buildings that currently have good habitat that would be potential candidates for further improvement.

To add further emphasis to this idea, the board has dedicated the monies that come to our Chapter from our upcoming festival proceeds to be put into this fund. So it is important that any requests you make to donors who are wishing to help support our festival and our Chapter realize that those donations are going to improving the quality of life for our resident and visiting birds….plus of course our own quality of life!!

"Three levels" of Audubon
By David Cronenwett
Development Specialist with Montana Audubon

When I tell people I work for Montana Audubon, I often get a response like, "That's great! I'm a member of the Audubon Society." I then ask if they are also a member of *Montana Audubon*, and they come back with a quizzical, "Isn't that the same thing?" There is sometimes confusion when the word "Audubon" is used in an organization's name so with this in mind, I'd like to take a moment to explain the "three levels" of Audubon.

In 1976, the local National Audubon chapters in Montana came together to establish an independent organization that could deal directly with important conservation issues across the state. Perhaps this was done because of Montana's physical remoteness and cultural distance from the National Audubon office in New York City. At the time, chapter leaders were especially interested in affecting policy change by lobbying the Montana Legislature. Thus, Montana Audubon, an independent entity from both National Audubon and its local chapters, was born.

While each "Audubon" shares nearly identical mission statements, they play different roles on the broader conservation stage. National Audubon frequently deals with issues on a continental, even global scale such as climate change and long-distance flyways. They also carry the heavy political clout one would expect from a big, century-old organization.

Local chapters of National Audubon, such as the Five Valleys Audubon Society, tend to engage in very-localized conservation projects as well as education and outreach efforts. Montana Audubon's niche in the "Audubon family" is somewhere in the middle; through our conservation policy, bird science and education programs, we seek to protect the wildlife and landscape qualities that we all cherish about our magnificent state.

In short, National Audubon, Montana Audubon and local chapters of National Audubon while historically related, are each independent nonprofit organizations. That said, we often work cooperatively, share data, information and occasionally even financial resources. Montana Audubon for example, in addition to other fundraising, receives a small percentage of membership dues from the chapters on a voluntary basis. It works in the other direction as well, with Montana Audubon contributing expertise and staff time to chapter-level projects.

Though a bit confusing, all three "levels" of Audubon fill important niches in working toward the goal of bird and habitat conservation. If you have further questions about the work of Montana Audubon, please feel free to contact David Cronenwett at david@mtaudubon.org.

Which are better: natural or artificial Christmas trees?
By Susan Cosier
Originally published in *Audubon* magazine, Nov-Dec 2012

Decked with tinsel and ornaments, evergreens—farmed or fake—define holiday cheer. Experts say that the best choice is going natural. From a climate-change perspective, you'd have to keep your artificial tree for 20 years before it became a better alternative than the real deal.

"If you like live trees and want to build a tradition, they're a great choice and not environmentally harmful," says Clint Springer, a biologist at St. Joseph's University and a tree expert.

Americans will buy about 21.6 million real trees and 12.9 million artificial ones this holiday season, reports Nielsen Research in partnership with the American Christmas Tree Association, an artificial tree group. (Numbers from the natural tree group, the National Christmas Tree Association, show that consumers bought 28 million natural trees and 8.2 million artificial ones in 2010.)

Most of the artificial variety comes from China. Shipping them burns fossil fuels, says Jean-Sébastien Trudel, founder of the Montreal-based consulting firm Ellipsos, which conducted a lifecycle analysis of natural and artificial trees. They're also made from polyvinyl chloride, which emits volatile organic compounds that can lead to respiratory conditions.

Welcome To Our Newest Members

Ron Hoff
Kristin Kopplin
Mr. & Mrs. Dick Taber
Jeff Ipsen
Patricia Pierpoint
Robert W. Weaver

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: _____

Please note: The newsletter will be delivered electronically unless requested otherwise.

___ $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

Join National Audubon Society & 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*, and I may participate in all local Chapter activities. I understand that my dues are shared between NAS and my local Chapter.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City:_____ **State:**_____ **Zip:** _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Please note: The newsletter will be delivered electronically unless requested otherwise.

__ $20 for a 1-year individual or family membership

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Please make check payable to National Audubon Society:

National Audubon Society, Inc.
225 Varick Street, 7th Floor
New York, NY 10014
Attn: Chance Mueleck

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