JANUARY 2011

BIRDING OBSERVER

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

Calendar

*** Monday, January 3rd, 7pm:** Char Murray will host the board meeting.
*** Monday, January 10th, 7:30pm:** Paul Hendricks presents "Home is Where You Make It: Woodpeckers and Giant Columnar Cacti" at the January program meeting.
*** Friday, January 14th:** Submission deadline for the February edition of the *Birding Observer*.
*** Saturday, January 15th:** Larry Weeks will lead a beginning bird walk at the Lee Metcalf NWR from 10 AM until 12 Noon. Meet at the Metcalf Visitor's Center at 10 AM.

Join ornithologist, Paul Hendricks for his presentation:
Home is Where You Make It: Woodpeckers and Giant Columnar Cacti

Warm up by taking a trip to the Sonoran Desert with ornithologist Paul Hendricks when he presents "Home is Where You Make It: Woodpeckers and Giant Columnar Cacti." This will be a joint meeting with the Montana Native Plant Society on **January 10 at 7:30 p.m. in room 123 of the Gallagher Business Building on the UM campus**.

Paul's interest in woodpeckers and giant cactus was aroused over spring break in 1982 during a UM Field Ecology class trip to Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument in Arizona. Between 1983 and 1990 he returned to Arizona for more study of the use of saguaro cactus by Gila Woodpeckers and Gilded Flickers. He then traveled to Sonora, Mexico to examine woodpecker cavities in the cardon cactus and then made a trip into the heart of Mexico to the state of Puebla and the Tehuacan Valley, where he looked at more woodpecker cavities in a suite of large columnar cacti. His presentation will look at how woodpeckers use these various cacti for cavity construction, and how, in some cases, the cacti respond to this intrusion.

Paul has been a zoologist with the Montana Natural Heritage Program, now affiliated with the University of Montana, since 1996. After spending most of his formative years in Billings, Montana, where his mother was president of the local Audubon chapter, Paul received his college education at the University of Montana in Missoula (B.A., M.A.) and Washington State University in Pullman (Ph.D.). His graduate research focused on the foraging and breeding ecology of American Pipits on the Beartooth Plateau of Wyoming and Montana, but also included time for field work on wintering neotropical migrants in western Mexico, Bristle-thighed Curlew on Laysan Island, Golden-crowned Sparrow on the Alaskan Peninsula, and Harris's Sparrow in the Thelon Game Sanctuary of the Northwest Territories. He is coauthor of "Amphibians and Reptiles of Montana" (Mountain Press 2004), and is currently working on the "Birds of Montana" project as well as developing a field guide to the land snails of Montana and Idaho.

Peeps from the Board by Paul Loehnen

Over the Thanksgiving holidays an arctic cold front descended on us from the north. Chickadees and Nuthatches were still flitting around despite the very low temperatures. That got me thinking about the survival strategies used by small birds that overwinter in climates like ours.

Most information I came across concerned the Golden Crowned Kinglet, which I assume would probably apply to most small birds. In the fall many species are forced to migrate to warmer climates. However, migration is not risk-free. The huge metabolic demands of travelling long distances, as well as the increased exposure to predators can greatly challenge birds' survival. Thus some species tend to overwinter, taking their chances that they will survive the cold weather.

The Golden Crowned Kinglet is the smallest bird in our woods during the winter months. While common, they are not often seen, as they don't visit feeders and tend to confine their activities to the tree tops. They tend to move through the woodlands in mixed feeding flocks with Chickadees and Nuthatches.

Extremely small, Kinglets are on the cutting edge of survival during the winter. From sunrise to sunset they are constantly searching for food. They are almost exclusively insect eaters, and forage out larvae and eggs in the treetops. There are a number of moths that overwinter in the caterpillar stage, a favorite food source for these birds. During the course of a day Kinglets can double the lipid (fat) content of their bodies. This prodigious feeding, while essential, is inadequate to get these diminutive birds through the long nights, which in mid-winter can be as long as 16 hours. As evening comes they seek out communal nests, frequently a snow cave under the branch of a fir or pine tree. They huddle tightly together and as a result lose less heat. However, this strategy is also insufficient to ensure survival. It appears that they are able to lower their body temperature and go into a stupor state. This gives them the energy they need to reach the next day.

All this adds up to an animal that is living on the edge and barely surviving. Prolonged blizzards can prevent them from foraging and take a terrible toll. Perhaps the greatest threat is ice storms. Ice can lock food up and Golden Crowned Kinglets have been known to die by the thousands. In those years when kinglet populations are decimated, the few survivors return in the spring to have two broods of 7-9 young and their numbers are quickly restored. Nature truly is remarkable.

Hi Friends! Go Green!

View your Birding Observer newsletter even sooner, only on-line.

Just send us an email request with your name to Vick Applegate at k7vk@arrl.net.

We will alert you each month when the newsletter becomes available on-line.

You can find the Five Valleys Audubon web site at: http://www.fvamissoula.org/

Save the date for Montana Audubon's *Wings Across the Big Sky* Bird Festival, June 3rd–5th

It's the event of the year we all look forward to . . . our annual bird festival! This year we're traveling to Glasgow. Festival activities will begin Friday, June 3rd, and extend through Sunday, June 5th. Consider making a vacation out of it, and here's just one reason why. . . .

This year we are adding full-day pre-festival workshops on Friday, June 3rd. Montana Audubon and Glasgow's Feather Fest Committee are developing two opportunities to explore the conservation of key bird habitats within critical prairie grasslands and sagebrush-dominated lands. Northeastern Montana has the three largest Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Montana; these are outstanding habitats for the conservation of native grassland and shrubland birds like Long-billed Curlew, Greater Sage-Grouse, Ferruginous Hawk, and more. We encourage you to join us for these field excursions to learn about opportunities to protect and enhance habitats for many rare and declining birds inhabiting the region.

It's not too early to reserve your campground/RV spot. For your stay, Glasgow has *Cottonwood RV* to consider, located at the heart of bird festival activities on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. If camping is not your style, the *Cottonwood Inn* will be our primary location, with rooms reserved for festival attendees. Fort Peck is a short 15–20-minute drive to and from Glasgow and is an extraordinary historical and summer hotspot. The Fort Peck Interpretative Center and Museum, as well as the Fort Peck Dam are two of the biggest attractions to the area. Adjacent to the Center is the *Downstream Campground*—a great family location along the Missouri River next to the Interpretative Trail. Moreover, Family Day, Saturday, June 4th, will include a field trip along the Interpretive Trail. If you wish to include cultural/art experiences before or after your birding weekend extravaganza, consider Fort Peck's popular summer theatre and other nearby attractions.

For more about the birds of the area, the IBAs worth visiting, and camping/RV information, go to Montana Audubon's home page at www.mtaudubon.org and click on the festival link (look for the Long-billed Curlew), or contact Larissa Berry at (406) 443-3949 or lberry@mtaudubon.org.

Annual Membership Meeting

Five Valleys Audubon Society will hold its Annual Membership Meeting on Monday February 14th during our usual monthly meeting. We will elect a number of Officers and Directors as follows:

- President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer: the incumbents (Paul Loehnen, Pat Little, Char Murray, and Alex Taft) are standing for re-election
- Three of the six Director positions: the incumbents (Carolyn Goren, Bill DeCou, and Gerhard Knudsen) are standing for re-election
- One vacant Director position

The Board's Nominating Committee will be bringing a candidate forward for the vacant Director position - if you have any suggestions please forward them to Pat, Alex, or Carolyn. Other nominations for any position are welcomed from the floor at the Annual Meeting.

Advanced Birding Workshop by Larry Weeks

An advanced birding workshop has been scheduled for February and March 2011 that will include seven 2-hour sessions on Thursday nights at the Fish, Wildlife & Parks Regional Office on Spurgin Road. Each session will be devoted to one bird group. The date, subject and presenter of each session are as follows:

Date	Bird Group	Presenter
Feb 17	Owls	Denver Holt
Feb 24	Shorebirds	Jim Brown
Mar 3	Flycatchers	Kristina Smucker
Mar 10	Forest birds	Jim Sparks
Mar 17	Raptors	Steve Hoffman
Mar 24	Sparrows	Terry McEneaney
Mar 31	Gulls	Terry McEneaney

A person may decide to attend a single session, any combination of sessions or all 7 sessions. The cost will be $15 per session or $70 for all 7 sessions. To sign up, contact Larry Weeks at 549-5632 or bwsgenea@onlinemt.com.

Field Trips by Larry Weeks

Sunday, December 5, 2010: Jim Brown led the field trip through the Mission Valley. After meeting several Mission Valley birders at the Cenex Station in Ronan, we drove out the Round Butte Road and then North on Leighton Road and the Back Road to Polson. There was heavy snow cover in the upper Mission Valley and the raptor concentrations were spotty. We returned on highway 93 to Ninepipes, went by the Crow Reservoir and then traveled down the Moiese Valley where there was less snow and better birding. Raptors were the main focus of this trip and we must have seen over 40 red-tailed hawks and about 30 rough-legged hawks. The red-tails were more abundant in the Moiese Valley and as usual, there was a wide variation in subspecies from Harlan's, to dark-phased, to the more typical eastern type. We found 2 great horned owls and 3 mature bald eagles. Falcons included 3 American kestrels, a merlin on Johnson Road and a prairie falcon in the Moiese Valley. One of the kestrels was sitting on a fence post along the road with a trophy-sized vole in its talons. The best raptor of the day was a spectacular Ferruginous hawk that was perched on the roof of a large building in the Moiese Valley. Jim had found the bird on a prior trip while hunting pheasants. Other birds included large numbers of Canada geese, mallards and house sparrows. There were a couple of flocks of horned larks that contained at least one snow bunting but they weren't very cooperative and most people did not get any good looks. We also saw 2 northern shrikes, a large group of mourning doves, a single American robin, and 2 northern harriers. Thirteen people participated on the trip and we tallied 36 species. The 11-year average for this field trip is 33 species.

Saturday, December 11, 2010: Every other year, I have been scheduling an owl-trapping field trip with Denver Holt. When I contacted Denver for a January field trip, he picked the December date instead and picked Missoula for the site. In order to reduce the "stand around" time, I asked Denver to go to the capture site and set up while I met the participants at the University and escorted them to the capture site. We parked along Deschamps Lane where we always parked and hiked in about 1 mile. When we reached the brushy draw where a mist net was set up, Denver described his long-eared owl research program which is now entering its 25th year. Denver has banded 1580 long-eared owls during those years. He answered questions and demonstrated how the mist net works by throwing his hat at the mist net. We then climbed up on one of the clay hills and Denver directed his crew to the upper ends of 2 brushy draws that joined near the bottom to start the "drive". As we

watched, one owl was flushed and landed in a juniper tree where we could see it. Then it was reflushed into the bottom part of the draw where the mist nets were set up. As the crew drove the last stretch, 5 owls flushed back up the draw and 3 landed in that same juniper tree. When the crew returned to the group, they were carrying 2 long-eared owls. Therefore, there had been a total of 7 owls in the draw. One of the captured owls had a band and they banded the second one. They took measurements of the wing chord and the tail, weighed the birds, and noted feather wear, underwing color, eye color, and sex. The owls weigh from 250 to 420 grams with the females being heavier. The unbanded owl weighed 350 grams. I didn't get the weight on the second owl because Will McDowell received a phone call that the highway patrol was at our parked cars and said that the cars would be towed if we didn't move them right away. I ran back to the cars and met with a sheriff's deputy and a highway patrolman to discuss the problem. They had received a complaint that the parked cars were a hazard. Fortunately, nobody's car was towed and nobody got a ticket. We will have to use a different parking area on future owl trapping field trips in Missoula. There were 22 people on the field trip. One lady drove all the way from Helena just to attend the trip.

2010 Field Trip Bird List by Larry Weeks

During the 2010 calendar year, the Chapter had 16 field trips that included Maclay Flat (2), Mission Valley (2), Lolo Pass, Lee Metcalf (2), Brown's Lake, Smurfit-Stone (2), Spring Gulch, Freezout Lake, Glacier Park, Ninepipes, Flesher Pass, and owl banding. Two of these field trips were multi-day trips; a two-day trip to Freezout Lake and a four-day campout to Glacier Park. If someone had participated in all 16 trips, they would have seen, or had the opportunity to see, 195 bird species. This total does not include the birds seen on the field trips at MT Audubon's Bird Festival, which was held in Missoula. The field trip that produced the most birds seen only once during the year was the 4-day campout to Glacier. Those birds included Harlequin duck, northern hawk owl, black swift, olive-sided flycatcher, gray jay, brown creeper, winter wren, American dipper, veery, hermit and varied thrushes, Tennessee warbler, northern waterthrush, Wilson's warbler, fox and Lincoln's sparrows, Lazuli bunting, and pine grosbeak. The 2-day field trip to Freezout Lake and vicinity had the only Clark's grebe, American bittern, black-crowned night-heron, black-necked stilt, willet, marbled godwit, Franklin's gull, Caspian tern, common tern, alder flycatcher, blue jay, McCown's and chestnet-collared longspurs, bobolink, and common grackle. The annual trip to Brown's Lake had the only Ross' goose, Williamson's sapsucker and Cassin's finch. The raptor banding trip to Flescher Pass had the only broad-winged hawk, Cooper's hawk and northern goshawk. The December trip to the Mission Valley had the only merlin and snow bunting. The fall trip to Ninepipes included a visit to Logan Pond which has the potential to replace Smurfit-Stone for shorebirds. Logan Pond had the only sanderling, Baird's and pectoral sandpipers, long-billed dowitcher, and red-necked phalarope. Smurfit-Stone had the only solitary sandpiper, Lewis's woodpecker, Nashville warbler, spotted towhee, and Bullock's oriole. One of the participants on the cross-country ski trip at Lolo Pass heard the only barred owl. The owl trapping field trip had the only long-eared owl.

2011 Field Trip Schedule

Date	Location/Description	Leader	Meet
Saturday Feb 26	Mission Valley	Larry Weeks	8AM UM
Saturday Mar 26	Lee Metcalf	Larry Weeks	8AM UM
Saturday Apr 23	Warm Springs Ponds	Gary Swant	7AM UM
Saturday Apr 30	Brown's Lake	Jim Brown	8AM UM
May 21-22	Freezout Lake	Joe Elliott	
Saturday May 28	Mt. Sentinel	Larry Weeks	8AM M Trail
June 23-26	Red Rock Lakes	Larry Weeks	
July 7-10	Glacier Park Campout	Larry Weeks	
Saturday Aug 20	Ninepipes	Larry Weeks	8AM UM
Saturday Sep 10	Lee Metcalf	Larry Weeks	8AM UM
Saturday Oct 1	Flesher Pass	Larry Weeks	6AM UM
Saturday Nov 5	Maclay Flat	Larry Weeks	10AM Maclay
Sunday Dec 4	Mission Valley	Jim Brown	8AM UM

Welcome New Members:

William E. Bray
Chris & Dorothy Busch
Dave & Sally Crouch
Erik Foster
Daniel Leighly
Louis Lunte
Phyllis Musicar-Wight
Pamela Schneider
Philip Weber
Shannon Bristol
Rita Cheek
Lillian A. Dove
Sheila Guse
Ron Leno
Jackie McMahan
Elton J. Nutman
Bill Towle

Thanks to our Returning Members:

Jill M. Alban
Nancy & Todd Cochran
Clara & Ron Erickson
Stephen & Bev Glueckert
Colleen Hunter
Gene Mc Latchy
Tarn Ream
Kathy Steen
Vick & Jean Applegate
Yvonne Lissa L. Dotz
T. Finsaas
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Join National Audubon Society and 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*, as well as participate in all local Chapter activities. I understand that my dues are shared between NAS and my local Chapter.

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

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

[ ] $20 for a one-year membership for an individual or family

Please make the check payable to National Audubon Society and mail to: National Audubon Society, Membership Data Center, PO Box 422250, Palm Coast, FL 32142-2250. **C1Z N53 0Z**

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 (optional): _____

[ ] $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.

Five Valleys Audubon Society

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FIVE VALLEYS AUDUBON SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Past President	Jim Brown	1504 Woods Gulch Rd, Missoula, MT 59802	549 – 8052	brownjs2@bresnan.net

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