June 2018

Birding Observer

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

Calendar of Events

- **Saturday, June 16th:** Bird walk at the Lee Metcalf NWR from 10:00 am-Noon. Meet field trip leader at the Refuge Visitor's Center. Please note that the Visitor's Center is not open on weekends, so no restrooms.
- **Sunday, June 17:** Half-day field trip to the Line Property. Meet at 7:50 am at the top of Whitaker Drive.
- **July 5th – 8th:** Glacier Park campout. See write-up in the next column.
- **Saturday, July 14th:** All-day field trip to the Primm Meadow. This will be a 4-mile hike on a dirt road. Meet at 7:50 in the northwest corner of the Adams Center parking lot.
- **Saturday, July 21st:** Bird walk at the Lee Metcalf NWR from 10:00 am-Noon. Meet field trip leader at the Refuge Visitor's Center. Please note that the Visitor's Center is not open on weekends, so no restrooms.
- **Saturday, August 18th:** Bird walk at the Lee Metcalf NWR from 10:00 am-Noon. Meet field trip leader at the Refuge Visitor's Center. Please note that the Visitor's Center is not open on weekends, so no restrooms.
- **Wednesday, August 15th:** The deadline for the September 2018 edition of the Birding Observer. (Please note that we do not publish newsletters in July and August.)
- **Saturday, August 18th:** All day field trip to look at shorebirds at Canyon Ferry. Meet at 7:00 am in the northwest corner of the Adams Center parking lot.

Multi-day Field Trip to Glacier
By Larry Weeks

The 4-day campout to Glacier Park is scheduled for July 5-8, 2018. We will camp at St. Mary Campground on July 5th and 6th and Fisk Creek Campground on July 7th. I have reserved 3 campsites at each campground, which will allow up to 6 cars and 24 people. We will bird Many Glacier on Friday, the Red Eagle Lake trail on Saturday, and Howe Lake and Camas Creek trails on Sunday. If you plan on going to Glacier, call Larry Weeks at 549-5632 or 540-3064 or email him at bwsgenea@gmail.com. Larry will be planning potluck dinners and carpooling. We will meet at 5:00 pm at the St. Mary Campground (campsites C-112, C114, C116) on July 5th. There is a $10 charge per individual on multi-day field trips.

Peeps From The Board:
This is NOT a "How Are We Doing" Survey
By Jerry Dirnberger

I just hate those "How are we doing" surveys. It seems every company is sending them out, mostly via email. If you fill it out, you are just a number! I want to be able to make comments. Well, ok, so probably give advice too. I prefer someone to talk with and who will listen. If I am investing in my time and energy to improve a company, then that company ought to expend an employee's time too.

So here it goes… This is not a survey, but we would like your feedback, advice, and comments on:

- How can we improve the FVAS?
- Do you have any problems with the FVAS?
- Are we effective in our mission and goals?
- What other areas would you like to see us involved in?
- What other activities would you like to participate in?
- Do you belong to other Audubon groups? If so, what do they offer that we don't?
- Is there anything else?

If you want to discuss your thoughts and ideas, I am available. You can call me at: 406-360-5133. If you want to send an email, my address is: dirnberger@aol.com.

If you want your comments "off the record", no problem, I respect that. But I would like to pass on to the Board what our members are thinking, liking, or not, ideas, comments, desires, etc. Every organization should reflect upon itself every once in a while. You, the members, are the life-blood of our healthy club. And, we, the administration, should know when we are doing things right and when we need to be open to new ideas, changes, and activities.

Thanks for your support, energy, and service.

Birdathon
By Larry Weeks

The Birdathon is Five Valleys Audubon's annual fundraiser to support our conservation and education efforts. We seek pledges from Chapter members of so much per bird species observed or a flat amount. This year, we have one team that will be doing a Big Day, which will be a midnight to midnight attempt to find as many species as possible in Montana. After the full day of birding is completed, a letter will be mailed out as a reminder to honor your pledge and it will include a list of the birds that were seen or heard by the team.

Your tax-deductible contributions will be used to support the following Chapter activities:

- Audubon Adventures, a newsletter and lesson guide for teaching environmental education in elementary grades 3-6.
- Wildlife conservation projects that protect habitat in Missoula County, particularly in the Clark Fork River – Grass Valley Important Bird Area. We inform Missoula citizens, landowners, developers, and City/County planners of the special importance of habitat in this area for birds and other wildlife. We review all subdivision proposals in Missoula County and testify at hearings in favor of adequate protection of riparian areas.
- Financial support of the campaign to put an open space bond on the ballot.

If we missed you by phone, please consider a contribution to FVAS and we will mail a species list to you. We certainly appreciate your support.

Montana Waterfowl Foundation Field Trip Summary
By Rose Stoudt

It was a beautiful, sun shining spring day Saturday May 12th for the 18 participants who traveled to Ronan for the birding on the Montana Waterfowl Foundation property. When we arrived at the old growth forest area we were greeted by an almost overwhelming symphony of birds singing.

After an introduction by the manager John Jarvis, we birded our way through lush vegetation, meandering through the forest and ponds looking and listening in search of many common birds, some of which were first of year for many. We saw Evening Grosbeak, Wood Duck and we heard Cassin's Vireo, American Goldfinch, Yellow Warbler, and Yellow – rumped Warbler, Downy Woodpecker among many others.

We had an opportunity to study some captive birds up close. Several duck species such as Pintail, Widgeon, Cinnamon Teal, Hooded Merganser and Lesser Scaup. There was a captive pair of nesting Sandhill Cranes and a pair of Trumpeter Swans, which we were able to hear their trumpet call. The swans are part of the Salish Kootenai Tribe re-introduction program providing cygnets for release on the reservation. A pair of Snow Geese lives at the site, as well and offered close observation.

We took a long leisurely lunch at the picnic tables while feasting our eyes on the bird feeders. The seed feeder attracted American Goldfinch, Evening Grosbeak, Black Capped Chickadee and House Finch.

The hummingbirds gave us plenty of opportunity for study at their feeders with numerous visits from Rufous, Black Chinned both male and female, and Calliope.

Larry Weeks then led the group over to Kicking Horse reservoir, Nine Pipes and a number of other ponds in the vicinity to see Black Neck Stilt, American Avocet, Wilson's Phalarope, Pelicans, Double-crested Cormorant, Common Loon, Green Winged Teal, Caspian Tern, and several grebes: Eared, Pied-billed, Horned, Red-necked and Western. The Western Grebes gave us a wonderful display of mating ritual dances on the water. In all, we saw 74 species.

Beginning Birder Field Trip
By Lynn Tennefoss

On Saturday, May 19, 2018, Five Valleys Audubon Society hosted its Beginning Birder Field Trip at the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge. Three intrepid birders ignored the early morning rain to join co-leaders Johnnie Moore and Lynn Tennefoss for a beginning birding field trip at Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge. We were rewarded with clearing weather and spent a great four hours birding the ponds around the visitor's center and on the Kenai Nature Trail. (Extensive flooding of the Bitterroot River made the wildlife viewing trail and adjacent wetlands in the southern portion of the refuge inaccessible.) Highlights included watching a pair of male and female Northern Harriers exchange a mouse in midair; seeing four Common Goldeneye ducklings resting with an adult female; observing several sets of very fuzzy Great Blue Heron chicks in nests at the rookery along Wildfowl Lane; and taking in great, up-close looks at Tree Swallows in nest boxes as we discussed differentiating between swallow species. Productive time spent on field marks was made possible by a good variety of waterfowl, with Hooded Mergansers joining Cinnamon and Blue-winged Teal, Gadwalls, American Wigeon, Redheads, Buffleheads, Northern Shoveler, Lesser Scaup and Ring-necked Ducks. A recently arrived Eastern Kingbird was seen well, as were several pairs of Sandhill Cranes flying overhead. 42 species were observed in total, trails were in good condition, and we ended the walk in sunshine, ready to move on to the rest of the weekend.

Sandhill Cranes.

Browns Lake Field Trip Summary
By Jim Brown

On May 5, a group of 23 birders rendezvoused for our trip to Browns Lake and vicinity to search for waterfowl, raptors and early migrants. This was our 40th year in a row to make the spring birding trip to the Browns Lake area. Dates have ranged from April 15 to May 6. Good thing we picked a later date this year because the Ovando country was just thawing out from a snowy winter and cool spring. Ice had just left Browns Lake the week before. Water had filled all the potholes and depressions across the landscape, which should bode well for nesting waterfowl. At our first pothole stop we enjoyed good views of Bufflehead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup and Red-necked Grebe among a crowd of American Coots. Sandhill Cranes could be seen in the distance and winnowing Wilson's Snipe repeatedly heard somewhere overhead. A flyby White-faced Ibis was a first for the Browns Lake spring trips. But the best bird was a Say's Phoebe that Steve Flood managed to hear and locate, also a first time observation for these spring trips.

We then wound our way to sapsucker flats, a grove of aspen next to a large area of conifers. We had good views of a Red-naped Sapsucker but only a brief glimpse of a Williamson's Sapsucker that came and quickly disappeared probably to the nearby conifers.

White pelicans.
Photo by Gerhard Knudsen

Larry Weeks and Kristi DuBois spotted a Pileated Woodpecker, which surprisingly was also a first time observation for the Browns Lake spring trip. At Browns Lake the water was calm like a mirror, which made for good viewing of many waterfowl species including Barrow's Goldeneye, Canvassback, Common Loon and Ruddy Duck. A flock of Snow Geese was resting nearby allowing clear views of their characteristic grinning patch but we could not locate a Ross's Goose mixed in the flock. We saw all six species of grebes found in Montana including one Clark's Grebe. As Bill Thomas quipped, "we grebed out." Close by a pair of Western Grebes several times performed their mating dance

Western Grebes.
Photo by Gerhard Knudsen

ritual of running side by side across the water and then collapsing in a coordinated fashion. South of Browns Lake we birded our way along more ponds and flooded meadows. Two things were noteworthy: a number of Tundra Swans were seen at several spots, apparently late migrants to their arctic nesting grounds and good views of Sandhill Cranes and Long-billed Curlews. In all we recorded 81 species, 28 being waterfowl.

New Ornithology Course at Flathead Lake Bio Station
July 23-27, 2018

The University of Montana's Flathead Lake Biological Station is offering a special course entitled, Field Methods in Ornithology, during the week of July 23-27, 2018. Megan Fylling, Director of Banding and Education Programs, will lead this immersion-style course at the Bio Station with field trips to area locations for hands-on training. Participants will:

* Gain conceptual and practical understanding of advanced techniques in ornithology.
* Learn high-level field research skills in avian biology from instructors/trainers certified by the North American Banding Council.
* Develop experience identifying birds (including molt, ageing and sexing).
* Participate in mist-netting and banding, point count surveys, telemetry, recording and bioacoustical analyses.

The cost of the program is $490. Please note that this does not include food or housing. If you have questions about the program, please contact Administrative Associate, Marie Kohler (marie.kohler@umontana.edu or 406-982-3301, ext. 235) or the Instructor, Megan Fylling (megan.fylling@mso.umt.edu or 06-243-2056). If you would like to register please visit: http://flbs.umt.edu/apps/education/.

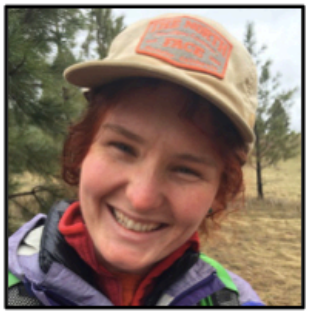
Bluebird Project: Interns Monitoring Bluebirds in Summer 2018
By Ahva Lynn Potticary and Kathy Heffernan

Summer has brought the bluebirds back to Montana from their southern sojourns. Also, back for the summer season, are three interns with Dr. Renee Duckworth's bluebird project. Since 2001, Dr. Duckworth has monitored the health of bluebird populations in western Montana. During the winter, just like the bluebirds she studies, Dr. Duckworth heads south where she is an evolutionary biologist and professor at the University of Arizona in Tucson. As part of the project, wildlife interns help to band and monitor bluebirds in the North Hills of Missoula, Blue Mountain, Paws Up Resort, Blackfoot Clearwater Game Range, and Ovando. The interns undergo intensive training to handle and band birds properly. They are careful to band birds quickly and efficiently and never open nest boxes in damp or cold weather or during egg-laying. If adults are to be banded, the interns leave feeders in the area, allowing the birds to become accustomed to the feeder (and mealworm treats!) before attempting to trap and band the adults. Traps are never set unless an intern is present and ready to quickly band and release the bird. (Please note that it is illegal for untrained persons to band or even handle birds, and Dr. Duckworth's project has all requisite permits for banding birds). If you see their equipment, please do not disturb it.

Past projects have traced migration and dispersal patterns of Montana's bluebirds and reasons for changes in those patterns. Bluebirds are very interesting because their likelihood of moving to a new population or returning home depends on their mother's experience when she is putting nutrients and hormones into her eggs. Mother bluebirds living in healthy habitats make sons that are more likely to return to that habitat, even as "helpers" (sons that help their parents to raise their siblings instead of having their own nest!) Bluebirds who are born into habitats that were stressful for their mothers, such as due to high competition for nest boxes, are more likely to disperse to new habitats. Another interesting discovery involves the pair bonds between bluebirds. While bluebird couples appear to be wholly devoted to one another, several researchers have discovered that bluebirds are not entirely faithful to their mates: about 15% of offspring were sired by a male that was not their social father! Observations by Duckworth's team corroborated these studies.

This year's interns include Ahva Potticary, Savannah Miller, and Vicki Morgan. Back for her fourth season of fieldwork, Ahva graduated from the University of Montana, and after working in Borneo and Australia for several years, is now a doctoral candidate at the University of Arizona. Back for a second season, Savannah earned a degree in Molecular Environmental Biology from UC Berkeley. Previously, Savannah worked for USGS in Hawaii, trying to uncover the food sources of native Honeycreepers and Bats amongst native invertebrates. Vicki Morgan hails from the University of North Carolina at Asheville, and has banded over a thousand birds in many locations including Washington, DC, NYC, Louisiana, and American Samoa.

All three interns share an enduring commitment to wildlife conservation and curiosity about the natural world. They hope that their work will lead to better understandings of bluebird ecology and behavior.



Savannah Miller

Vicki Morgan

Ahva Potticary

wings MONTANA AUDUBON across the big sky

Bird Festival, June 8-10, 2018
Red Lion Hotel, Kalispell, MT

Montana Audubon's 19th annual *Wings Across the Big Sky* bird festival is nearly here! Have you registered yet? This event brings together birders and other nature enthusiasts from around the state for a weekend of camaraderie, amazing field trips and informational presentations about Montana's diverse birds and landscapes. The festival is co-sponsored by Flathead Audubon.

This year for our Nature Adventure Tour festival fundraiser, we're offering over 20 remarkable experiences! Winning bids can enjoy adventures such as: a 5-day guided birding tour in Southeast Arizona; weekend getaway at a secluded Flathead Lake cabin; "birds and blooms" excursion in and around Grand Teton Park; an autumn birding tour of California's Central Valley; high country raptor survey in Northwest Montana and many more!

Also on tap are fun festival standbys like the "Cakes for Conservation" dessert auction, field trips to beautiful locations around the Flathead region, and informative talks about birds and conservation in Montana. To register online, visit www.mtaudubon.org, call 406.443.3949 or email at info@mtaudubon.org.

Remembering and Thanking an Audubon Friend
By Poody McLaughlin

In the early 80s when my husband Joe and I began our love affair with birds and birding, Jim Dayton recruited this eager couple into labeling, sorting, and mailing the chapter newsletter. Every month we'd get together and Jim would make the repetitive newsletter mailing process fun. So we continued our active membership with the chapter, all the while developing our friendship with Jim. For 20 years or so he joined us on the Christmas Bird Count on Kelly Island. Having missed the boat early in the morning, he frequently would just pop up somewhere on the island, and enjoyed maintaining the mystery of how he got out there.

Jim Dayton was a lifelong conservationist and member of Five Valleys Audubon. He passed away in 2016 at the too-young age of 69. Through the years, Jim wore many hats in support of our chapter such as board member and chairman of several committees including conservation, education, and circulation. A passionate supporter of wilderness, Jim helped launch Wilderness Watch in 1989 and was its first Executive Director.

With his passing, Jim has donated $5,000 to Five Valleys Audubon. The chapter deeply appreciates his gift. To honor his interests, the board has allocated $4,000 to the conservation fund, specifically to promote bird habitat development of the gravel pit at Fort Missoula Regional Park. The remaining $1,000 will support the chapter's education fund.

The Board of Directors appreciates the legacy that Jim provided the chapter and the community. We will work hard to ensure his contribution comes to fruition.

Welcome New Members:

Blanche Almendinger	Will Butler
Carolyn Corey	William Elison
Jerome Imbiorski	Janice Jones
Susan Kerns	Kristi Lawrence
Brigette Murray	Catherine A. Nolan
Philip O'Connell	Ted Soldowski

The Five Valleys Audubon Society would also like to thank those of you who renewed your membership this past month. We generally encourage our members to receive your newsletter via email (to conserve resources and our expenses), which is the default mailing option if provided by new members. If you want to change how your newsletter is delivered or have any changes to your mailing preferences, please contact the Membership Chair, Poody McLaughlin, at pmcregan@bresnan.net.

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. 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: 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.

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