October 2018

Birding Observer

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

Calendar of Events

- **Monday, October 1st, 6:45-8:45pm:** The FVAS Board meeting will take place at the home of Board President, Rose Leach. The address is 4600 Edgewood Drive in Missoula.
- **Saturday, October 6th:** Raptor banding field trip to Roger's Pass. **Please note, this field trip is full.**
- **Monday, October 8th, 7:00pm:** Join us for the October program meeting to hear Gary Swant discuss how birds are being protected at the Berkeley Pit. He will present in Room 123 of the Gallagher Business Building on the UM campus.
- **Monday, October 15th:** The deadline for the November edition of the *Birding Observer*.
- **Saturday, October 20th:** 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 are available.
- **Sunday, October 28th:** All-day field trip to Brown's Lake to look for loons and scoters. Meet at 8:50 am in the northwest corner of the Adams Center parking lot.
- **Saturday, November 3rd:** All-day field trip to the Lee Metcalf NWR. Meet at 8:50 am in the northwest corner of the Adams Center parking lot.

Reducing Bird Morality at the Berkeley Pit

Last fall 99.7% of all birds that landed in the Berkeley Pit in Butte were successfully hazed off the pit thanks to the efforts of Gary Swant and his fellow board members of the Berkeley Pit Waterfowl Mitigation Advisory Board. This board is tasked with finding solutions to the waterfowl and white goose migration issues at the pit.

At our October chapter meeting, Swant will be sharing the methods used to achieve this high rate of success in both preventing birds from landing in the pit and preventing mortality in birds that do land. In 2018, Swant along with his co-researcher Professor Stella Capoccia of Montana Tech's Biology Department received the 2018 Wildlife Conservation Award from the Montana Chapter of the Wildlife Society for their work in reducing bird mortality at the Berkeley Pit.

Swant received his Bachelor's in Education with an emphasis in Biological Sciences and his Master's in Education with an emphasis in Environmental Education from the University of Montana. Swant taught biology and field ecology at Powell County High School in Deer Lodge for 25 years and retired in 1993. During his teaching career he authored and co-authored several curriculums that were used in Montana schools. The National Park Service contracted with Swant to produce field guides on birds, flowers, and animals of the Grant-Kohrs Historic Site. In addition, he held offices in the Montana Environmental Education Association, Energy and Man's Environment Corporation, and the Montana Energy Education Council.

In 2005, Swant founded GoBirdMontana, LLC, which continues today, and conducts field ornithological research for private corporations, state, and federal agencies. In 2016, Montana Audubon recognized Swant's work by presenting him the 2016 Citizen Scientist Award. Swant writes birding articles for three newspapers in Montana and received first place in outdoor writing for small newspapers in 2018. He also holds the record for the most birds seen in a single year in Montana, a record which he set in 2007. He is also in first place on ebird for total number of birds seen in Montana. When Swant is not birding professionally, he enjoys traveling with his wife, Laura Lee, to increase his birding life list. In this endeavor they have travelled to 25 countries.

Come join us to hear about Swant's vital work at 7pm Monday, October 8th, in Room 123 of the Gallagher Business Building on the UM campus.

Peeps from the Board:
Open space benefits people and wildlife
By Poody McLaughlin & the FVAS Board

As more people move into our valley and surrounding areas, we put the squeeze on wildlife and the very special areas that we treasure so much. The 2006 Open Space bond in Missoula County protects many of these areas in Missoula County. Most of these areas are important bird habitat that provides sustenance to our resident and migratory birds. Funding from the bond now protects 14,796 acres of wildlife habitat, including 40 miles of waterways and 1,003 acres of wetlands that are so crucial to the majority of Montana bird species.

Why a new bond is needed

The 2006 Open Space Bond has done its job, but it's nearly gone. Open space bonds allow our community to respond quickly to timely opportunities to protect special places that we value and habitats that wildlife requires. Potential projects include:

- Improving public access to the Clark Fork River from downtown Missoula to Frenchtown and beyond, as well as floodplain by the Smurfit-Stone plant;
- Reducing risk of wildfires by buffering developed areas on forested land adjacent to public lands;
- Developing new trails on Mount Dean Stone and Marshall Mountain; and
- Protecting the livelihoods of working family ranches and farming operations.

In many respects, a mosaic of open space lands defines Missoula. Lands used for parks, trails, and agriculture are all part of the blend. A viable bird population assures there are conditions that support a range of other plant and animal species. Given the significance of avian habitat, it is important we continue to focus attention on protecting these resources by preserving and continuing the open space heritage of our community.

Let's talk numbers

The Open Space Bond approved by city and county leaders is for $15 million. County residents will only vote on the bond. City residents will vote on the bond and a proposed maintenance levy of $500,000 per year to manage the open space lands. The bond and levy will be separate votes.

The proposed bond will cost the median Missoula County homeowner less than $18 annually, or $1.50 per month. In the city, the bond and the maintenance levy will cost the median homeowner approximately $30 annually, or $2.50 per month.

YES for Open Space, Rivers & Farmland

The funds will be used, as they have in the past, to leverage funding from other sources. Every dollar of the 2006 Open Space Bond was matched by $2.8 dollars in outside funding. This 1:2.8 match ratio is for all projects (city and county), while the match ratio for county projects are 1:4.7. What a great bang for our buck!

Five Valleys Audubon has a history of, and ongoing commitment to, habitat protection for birds. The chapter has established the Clark Fork River – Grass Valley Important Bird Area west of Missoula and continues with bird surveys of the IBA as well as other potential conservation lands. Because the Board believes that passage of the Open Space Bond will benefit Missoula County residents now and into the future, we have donated $1,000 to the Yes for Open Space Committee. We urge you to vote on Tuesday, November 6, and to vote yes for open space.

Montana eBird

Montana Audubon recently launched its Montana eBird portal during their 19th annual Wings Across the Big Sky bird festival in Kalispell. On this webpage you can find a great deal of Montana-specific bird information on species, recent checklists and links to data collected by other eBirders across the state.

In addition, photos from local birders, sightings of uncommon or rare birds and Montana Audubon's news feed can easily be accessed there.

Visit https://ebird.org/mt/home today!

Field Trip Summaries
By Larry Weeks

Saturday, August 18th: This field trip was scheduled to go to Canyon Ferry to look for shorebirds. However, due to the high water level in the reservoir, the mud flats were still covered with water. I checked with Nate Kohler about the shorebirds in the Deer Lodge Valley. He checked the Ducks Unlimited Pond on August 16th and discovered a Short-billed Dowitcher along with a few other shorebirds. So the trip was changed to the Ducks Unlimited Pond and the Job Corps Ponds. Nate and Sharon Dewart-Hansen met us at Warm Springs and we started at the Ducks Unlimited Pond. We found several Long-billed Dowitchers but no Short-billed. However, there were several Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, 2 Wilson's Snipe, a Solitary Sandpiper, a Spotted Sandpiper, and some Killdeer. A quick stop at the sewage ponds yielded several Wilson's Phalaropes and some Baird's Sandpipers, but it was a long look. Then we hiked into 2 newer ponds in the Job Corps complex and found a Semipalmated Plover, 3 Semipalmated Sandpipers and much better looks at Baird's Sandpiper. After lunch, we returned to the Ducks Unlimited Pond hoping that the Short-billed Dowitcher had showed up but no success. However, we did add a Least Sandpiper to the list. There were 7 people from Missoula on the field trip and Nate had 66 bird species.

Sunday, September 16th: The destinations on this field trip were Pablo, Kicking Horse and Ninepipes Reservoirs. The focus was on migrating shorebirds again. Thirteen people left Missoula; we added 2 more at the Cenex in Ronan and met 3 more at the dike on Pablo Reservoir. A scouting trip on the previous Friday had a good mix of shorebirds on Pablo and Kicking Horse Reservoirs. However, when we arrived at the Pablo Reservoir, the 3 people waiting for us pointed out a Peregrine Falcon sitting on a rock. Although it is always nice to see a Peregrine, it means that the shorebirds will be scarce. A little later, we found 2 more Peregrines. The only shorebirds found at Pablo were 3 Baird's Sandpipers and 6 Black-bellied Plovers. Rather than spent much time at Pablo, we headed to Kicking Horse. On the road into the south end of Kicking Horse, we stopped at a small pond and found 3 Least Sandpipers, 2 Killdeer and a Wilson's Snipe, which flushed along with 4 more snipe. As we birded the shoreline at Kicking Horse, there was a Black-bellied Plover, a Greater Yellow Yellowlegs and 2 Semipalmated Plovers. Then Rose Stoudt pointed out a small plover that was much lighter than the Semipalmated Plover. All the attention was then focused on the light-colored plover and it was determined that it was a Piping Plover. It allowed us to get close and Steve Flood and Cindy Swidler got excellent photos. According to Jeff Marks, it was the first confirmed sighting of a Piping Plover west of the divide. As we left Kicking Horse, we stopped at the same small pond and added a Lesser Yellowlegs. We then hiked to the edge of Ninepipes and added a Semipalmated Sandpiper. We ended up with 10 species of shorebirds.

Have you ever wondered why medieval plague doctors' masks were shaped like a bird's head?
Information taken from www.historyanswers.co.uk

Plague doctors wore a mask with a bird-like beak to protect them from being infected by the disease, which they believed was airborne. In fact, they thought disease was spread by miasma, a noxious form of 'bad air.' To battle this imaginary threat, the long beak was packed with sweet smells, such as dried flowers, herbs and spices.

However, though the beak mask has become an iconic symbol of the Black Death, there is no evidence it was actually worn during the 14th Century epidemic. Medical historians have in fact attributed the invention of the 'beak doctor' costume to a French doctor named Charles de Lorme in 1619. He designed the bird mask to be worn with a large waxen coat as a form of head-to-toe protection, modelled on a soldier's armour.

The costume was worn by plague doctors during the Plague of 1656, which killed 145,000 people in Rome and 300,000 in Naples.

How Do Hurricanes Affect Birds?
An Interview with Audubon's Kenn Kaufman
Reprinted from www.audubon.org

Birding expert and Audubon field editor Kenn Kaufman's interest in hurricanes began 35 years ago, when he covered the aftermath of Hurricane Kathleen, a storm that brought droves of seabirds into the American Southwest, for American Birds. We spoke with him about the surprising methods bird have for dealing with a hurricane in their path.

How do hurricanes affect bird migration?
Any day in late August, September, or October, vast numbers of little birds are heading southward during hurricane season. When they fly into one of these systems they have no way of detecting what's ahead.

You've probably heard about the radio-tagged Whimbrel story: The bird flew through the recent storm Irene and made it out the other side. They're pretty tough birds—one of the larger shorebirds. I'd doubt that little warblers and thrushes could do that. There are probably substantial numbers of little migrants that just get taken out during the storm. Storms can also drop a lot of exhausted birds back to some point that presumably they'd left a day or two before.

How do birds travel with a storm?
The birds get into the end of the hurricane's spiral and they move toward the eye of the hurricane. They may not necessarily do that in any organized way; more likely they're out there in all this wild wind and when they chance into the calm of the eye they may make an effort to stay there and travel with it rather than fighting the winds again.

When the storm reaches land, some of them may start fighting the winds. Others may go with it and travel with the eye until the hurricane dissipates. The majority of seabirds, if they are not too weakened from having flown for so long without food, will probably find their way back to shore quickly. They have great powers of navigation.

Do birds have any specialized response to hurricanes?
Presumably a bird tends to take off when the wind is favorable, just after the passage of a low-pressure system. Because regular airflow of a hurricane moves counterclockwise, after the system passes to the east, there may be winds from the northwest. The birds will take off with that. If they take off when conditions are good, there's a chance that they're not going to run into a hurricane.

Why do some birders chase hurricanes?
First, I need to point out that for people to deliberately put themselves in harm's way, in a hurricane's path, they have to be totally crazy.

That said, a bunch of my friends have done just that. With Hurricane Irene, some friends of mine were out at dawn the next day and saw all kinds of tropical seabirds, like Bridled Terns, Sooty Terns, and Brown Noddies.

I think the big deal about Irene was all of the white-tailed tropicbirds that were carried up along the coast and even inland. These are strictly offshore birds—they nest in the Caribbean. Today we know that if you are far enough offshore or in the Gulf Stream, you'll see Black-capped Petrels regularly. But 50 years ago most records of Black-capped Petrels were sighted after hurricanes. At one time, if you wanted to see a Black-capped Petrel, you just prayed for a hurricane.

What happens to a bird's habitat after a hurricane?
Changes in habitat are going to change the composition of bird life in a given spot. I remember reading about an area in New England where a bunch of hurricanes knocked out most of the trees in 1938, but afterward, the density of breeding birds went up. It opened up the area and birds that favor second-growth and openings, such as Mourning Warblers, came in and occupied the new spaces.

There are always winners and losers when habitat changes.

Thanks & Welcome to New Members:

Maureen A. Buckley
Loreen Folsom
Anne Harris
Debbie & Marc Steinberg
Ann Marie Verde
Bruce Wetherby
Patrick Dougherty
Betty Freudenberg
Jacqueline Norris
Evelyn M. Thomas
Joyce Wahler

The Five Valleys Audubon Society would 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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