September, 2008

Birding Observer

Five Valleys Audubon Society **A Chapter of the National Audubon Society**

Calendar

* Tuesday, September 2nd, 2008: Bill Ballard will host the September Board Meeting.
* Saturday, September 6, 2008: The Owl Research Institute will host the 8th Annual Hat Party. Festivities begin at 4pm, food is served at 5:30, and music will be performed all night.
* Saturday, September 13th, 2008: Half-day field trip to Tower St. Open Space and Sleven's Island. Meet at the Tower St. Open Space parking lot at 8:00 AM.
* Monday, September 15th, 2008: The deadline for submissions to the October edition of the *Birding Observer*. Please submit articles to the editor, Beverly Orth Geoghegan via email to orthbev@hotmail.com.
* Saturday, September 20th, 2008: Full-day field trip to Flesher Pass to visit Rob Domenech's raptor banding site. Meet at 6:00 AM in the middle of the UM field house parking lot. A strenuous 2-mile hike will be required to reach the banding site. Good hiking shoes are a must and dress appropriately for the weather conditions. This trip will be limited to 10 people. To sign up, call Larry Weeks at 549-5632. (NOTE: This trip was originally scheduled for Sep. 27th.)

Birds of Colombia

Jerry Dirnberger will give a presentation at FVAS meeting on September 8th in the Gallagher Building on the University of Montana campus at 7 PM. Jerry has been a long time supporter of the local chapter and now spends six months of the year in Colombia, South America, as his wife is a native of that country. He has collected approximately 200 photographs of the 1700 species of birds that live in that country. He started this project a couple of years ago and says the collection will only get bigger and better as time goes on. The photos were taken at their home that is located in the mountains at an elevation of almost 9,000 feet near the capital city of Bogota. These mountains are in the eastern range of the Andes. He will also talk a little about Colombia, its people and the climate.

Audubon Hat Party Invite

The Owl Research Institute will host the 8th Annual Hat Party and Fundraiser on Saturday, September 6, 2008. All Auduboners and friends are welcome! Festivities begin with live music at 4:00, and food is served at 5:30. Live music goes on till midnight. Nationally known violin and fiddleplayer Kurt Sprenger with the Jackie Britton Band will play, as well as retro rock and blues dance band Déjà vu. After that, campfire music will be played into the wee hours… Bring your instrument! A $15 donation gets you barbecued pig and smoked beef brisket, pasta and green salads, pies and pastries, beer and wine, soft drinks…and outstanding music! Don't forget your hat!

Peeps From The Prez by Paul Loehnen

Wind power is the conversion of wind energy into a useful form such as electricity, using wind turbines. Wind power currently produces about 1% of world wide electricity use. Windiness varies and because most power is generated by higher wind speeds, half the energy available arrives in just 15% of the operating time: utilities that use wind power must provide backup generation for times that the wind is weak. Making wind power more consistent requires that storage technologies must be used to retain the large amount of power generated in the bursts for use later. Wind power advocates argue that periods of low wind can be dealt with by simply restarting existing power stations that have been held in readiness. The cost of keeping power stations idle is quite low since the main cost of running power stations is the fuel.

In recent years, the United States has added more wind energy to its grid than any other country; U.S. wind power capacity grew by 45% to 16.8 gigawatts in 2007. Texas has become the largest wind energy producing state. U.S. Department of Energy studies have concluded that the wind energy harvested in the top three of the fifty U.S. states could provide enough electricity to power the entire nation, and that off shore wind farms could do the same job.

Danger to birds is often the main complaint against the installation of a wind turbine. However, studies show that the number of birds killed by wind turbines is negligible compared to the number that die as a result of other human activities such as traffic, hunting, power lines and high rise buildings. In the U.K. the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds concluded "The available evidence suggests that appropriately positioned wind farms do not pose a significant hazard for birds." However, some paths of bird migration, particularly for birds that fly by night, are unknown.

The number of bats killed by existing onshore, and near shore facilities, is of concern. A study in 2004 estimated that over 2,200 bats were killed by 63 onshore turbines in just six weeks at two sites in the eastern U.S. Off shore wind sites, 10 km or more do not do not interact with bat populations.

Careful mapping of the wind resources of Montana indicates good to excellent wind resource areas are distributed throughout the eastern two thirds of the State. The region just east of the Rocky Mountains in northern Montana has excellent-to-superb wind resources, with other outstanding resource areas being located on the hills and ridges between Great Falls and Havre.

With the reality of Global Warming and our need to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, the increasing need for clean alternative energy is evident. Wind energy, although not without its drawbacks, likely will be an important component of our energy solution.

Saving Paper

Many Five Valleys Audubon Society members have discovered the convenience of viewing their newsletter, the *Birding Observer* on the internet, http://www.fvamissoula.org/newsletter.htm. And, nearly two-dozen members now view their newsletter entirely "online". They have elected to not receive a postal-mailed newsletter in order to save paper and postage expense.

If you would like join these folks and view your FVAS newsletter only the internet, please let Vick know at k7vk@arrl.net or at audubonfo@fvamissoula.org. We'll omit you from the hardcopy mailings and send you an email alert when the latest monthly newsletter is available online. Thanks and enjoy your *Birding Observer*.

Field Trips by Larry Weeks (and special submission by Paul Loehnen, June 21st and 22nd)

June 6-10, 2008: The Montana Audubon (MA) Bird Festival was held in Billings on June 6-8. This was followed by a Five Valleys Audubon Society (FVAS) field trip to the Pryor Mountains. FVAS was well represented at the Festival with 17 people participating. The Festival followed the usual format with a social on Friday evening, field trips on Sat. morning, afternoon presentations, evening banquet, and Sunday field trips. I participated in a Sunday field trip to Bear Canyon in the Pryors, which was led by Barb Jaquith. I used this field trip to scout the canyon for our Chapter's field trip which was scheduled for the following day. It rained during the Sunday field trip which challenged Barb and the participants, but at least I knew what to expect during our field trip. Immediately following the MA field trip, four of us from Missoula asked Barb if we could follow her back to Red Lodge to see the black rosy finches. Barb agreed, gave us a radio and led us on a 3-hour birding route using the back roads. A northern shrike and a great horned owl nest were highlights. The black rosy finches were waiting for us in her backyard along with Cassin's finches, common grackles, American goldfinches, pine siskins, one white-crowned sparrow, and one Calliope hummingbird.

The FVAS field trip to Bear Canyon was held on Monday, June 9th and we were blessed with a sunny day. The participants included Byron & Judy Olson, Shree & Ken Ballinger, Jerry Dirnberger, Angelo Rozo, Elizabeth Johnston, Mary Thomas, Paul Loehnen, Cynthia Hudson, Alex Taft, and the author. All 12 of us piled into 2 high-clearance vehicles to negotiate a short rocky stretch at the entrance to the canyon. The birding was good in the lower canyon with blue-gray gnatcatcher, green-tailed towhee, rock wren, lark sparrow, and lots of Brewer's sparrows. The "gumbo" that we had encountered the day before had dried out which made the driving and walking much better. We parked the vehicles and hiked approximately 2 miles up the canyon. Yellow-breasted chats and warbling vireos were numerous and we also saw western tanagers, chipping sparrows, western wood-pewees, Lazuli buntings, black-capped chickadees, and a golden eagle. Byron and Jerry heard a canyon wren and Byron saw a Say's phoebe. During our lunch break, Cynthia spotted a raptor perched in a snag at the top of the rim that turned out to be a Cooper's hawk. I was disappointed in the lack of warblers in the canyon. After the hike, we drove to a site with very little vegetation cover and found a mountain plover. Then we drove to Red Lodge to see the black rosy finches in Barb's backyard. We stopped at the great horned owl nest site and both juvenile birds were in the branches with an adult nearby. On Tuesday, everyone that was driving went their separate ways. The vehicle that I was riding in decided to return via the Fromberg to Joliet to Columbus route. We saw many lark and Vesper sparrows, eastern and western kingbirds and American kestrels between Fromberg and Joliet. We encountered wind and snow showers at the Continental Divide. We stopped at the Warm Springs ponds and found a fall-out condition that included western tanagers, thrushes, warblers, and flycatchers. We met Nate Kohler and he guided us around the habitat. We saw 8 species of flycatchers; willow, Hammond's, dusky, least, Cordilleran, olive-sided, western wood-pewee, and eastern kingbird. The thrushes included Swainson's and Veery, and warblers included yellow, yellow-rumped, Wilson's, and northern waterthrush. When we arrived at Paul's home, there was a wild turkey near his driveway, which is a bird we missed on our Birdathon. During our return trip, we had 33 species that we had not seen during our stay in the Bridger area. The total number of species that I recorded for the FVAS field trip was 98. Additional birds seen on the MA field trips included upland sandpiper, red-headed woodpecker, lark bunting, orchard oriole, and brown thrasher.

Saturday, June 14, 2008: Carole & Terry Toppins led the field trip up Lolo Creek with several stops at side roads and campgrounds up to Lolo Hot Springs. The original objective of this trip was to view the Camas flowers at Packer Meadow, but due to the cold spring, the road was still closed due to the lingering snow-pack. The first stop at Fort Fizzle produced a family of Clark's nutcrackers and the juveniles were squawking for food. At Howard Creek, everyone got a scope-view of a singing northern waterthrush. We also got good looks at a Townsend's warbler on a short hike up Howard Creek. At Lolo Hot Springs, there was a male rufous hummingbird sitting on a wire and two

Vaux's swifts were getting drinks at a small pond. Other birds of note included a Lincoln's sparrow, Steller's jay, golden-crowned kinglet, Cassin's vireo, and MacGillivray's warbler. There were 12 people on the field trip and 57 species were recorded.

June 21st and 22nd: Nine people joined Paul Loehnen overnight at Freezout Lake. The participants included Mary Thomas, Elizabeth Johnston, Rose Leach, Barbara Ross, Judy and Bob Bungarz, Colleen Powell, Angela and Gerry Dirnberger. We left Missoula early and met our wonderful guide, Nate Kohler at the visitors' center at Freezout. We spent the next several hours around the lake and surrounding back roads. We had great views of all the usual shore birds. We even had a Great Horned Owl perched on one of the outhouses. One of the unusual sightings was Brewers sparrows, apparently not seen or recognized previously. We had good looks at Clay-colored and Vesper sparrows. We heard (Nate and Rose) a Sprague's pipit and after considerable neck strain everyone eventually saw it many hundreds of feet in the air. We never did see its dive to the ground. That evening we saw an Upland Sandpiper sitting classically on a fence post.

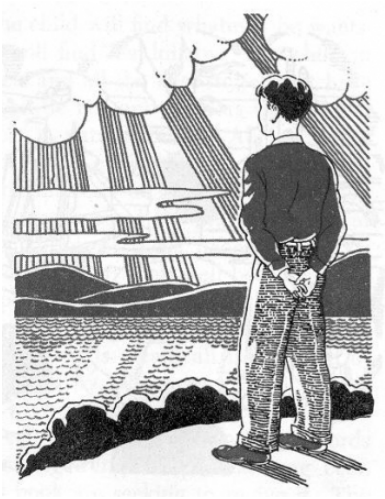
The next day we drove to the front. Highlights included a Black Tern, Bobolink, Long-billed Curlew with chicks and good looks at McCown's Longspur. At Pine Butte we saw Alder Flycatchers. In total we saw 116 species, had great weather and a fun-filled time with a truly excellent guide, Nate Kohler.

Saturday, June 28, 2008: This field trip consisted of a moderate 4-mile hike, which started at the top of Whitaker Drive and made a loop along Moose Can Gully on the Line Ranch. This area includes a section of land that was put into a conservation easement earlier this year. The target bird on this field trip was a rock wren but we failed to find one. However, we did see a nice mix of mountain species which included Lazuli bunting, western tanager, spotted towhee, warbling vireo, Vesper sparrow, and mountain bluebird. There were 9 people on the field trip and we tallied 27 species.

July 10-13, 2008: This year's camping field trip to Glacier Park was a 4-day affair which was staged on the East side of the Park. For the second year in a row, the Park had the Inside North Fork Road to Polebridge closed. Twenty people participated in at least a portion of the trip. There were couples from Idaho and Oregon and 4 people from Illinois that joined the regulars from our Chapter. The field trip started at Two Medicine Thursday afternoon with a group dinner. This was the day that a cold front with wind gusts up to 60 mph passed through the park. Fortunately for us, the wind subsided at 4:30 AM on Friday. We awoke to fresh snow on the mountain tops. Friday's activities included hikes on the North and South sides of Upper Two Medicine, and Running Eagle Falls. Lou Bruno joined us for the morning hike along the North side of the lake. The best birds on Friday were several fox sparrows, a pair of Lincoln's sparrows on Inspiration Point and a Cooper's hawk. A few of us stopped at Lower Two Medicine and found a common loon, a red-necked grebe and an American redstart. We camped at St. Mary's Campground on Friday and Saturday nights. On Saturday, we awoke to a heavy layer of frost and drove to Many Glacier and birded the trail to Grinnell Lake. This hike was referred to as the "death march" by some of the participants. We saw the best birds of the trip on the trail between Josephine Lake and Grinnell Lake; a singing Tennessee warbler and a white-winged crossbill. And we saw both birds at the same location at the same time. After the 7-mile death march, a few of us hiked up the Iceberg Lake trail for about 1.5 miles. That night, we were treated to some fireworks from a 3-day celebration of the Blackfeet Indians. On Sunday, we did a 3-mile loop that included part of the Red Eagle Lake trail by St. Marys. We got excellent looks at 2 soras in a small pond and also saw a brown creeper and a family group of clay-colored sparrows. The final birding was done at Logan Pass but we were limited by the snow cover. We missed seeing the gray-crowned rosy finches which were at the Visitors Center before we arrived, and the Ranger on site said they have not seen a ptarmigan this year. We did manage to see some American pipits and heard a hermit thrush. Four-legged critters seen on the trip included big horned sheep, moose, mountain goat, deer, grizzly bear, coyote, marmot, and weasel. One of the persons from Illinois, who only birded near the trailheads, encountered a young grizzly, and Kathy Baird and 2 others from Illinois had a grizzly sow and cub run across the road as they were leaving Many Glacier. Botany was also a major topic of discussion during the hikes. We ended up with 83 bird species and hike approximately 21 miles.

Welcome New Members

Anne Binninger
Louise Cameron
Pat Little
Cyndy Braun
Gladys & Barney Considine
Charla Murray
Sara Boyett
Bob Kane
Ellie Steinberg



Thanks to Our Returning Members

Richard Auerbach
William Boggs
Susan & Ken Dvorak
Toni Julian
David C. Moomey
Mike & Jan Sousa
Carol & Terry Toppins
Geneva Van Horne
Richard & Adele Wolff
Tony & Marlene Beltramo
Sharon Dill
Susan Gutowski
Jan Mc Arthur
Roland & Marjorie Redmond
Barry & Cynthia Swidler
Bruce Turlington
Patricia Vogel
Jeanne Worthy

Important Note To Our Valued Members:
Please note the expiration date of your membership on the address label of this newsletter. We wouldn't want your membership to expire. We would miss you! A renewal form is on the last page of every newsletter for your convenience. Please renew your membership so that you don't miss any newsletters or any of the upcoming events of the Five Valleys Audubon Society.

Join The National 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 an individual or family

[ ] $15 for students and seniors

Please make the check payable to National Audubon Society and mail to: National Audubon Society, Membership Data Center, PO Box 51001, Boulder, CO 80323-1003. **N53 7XCH**

Join The 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:** _____

Email (optional): _____

[ ] $15 is enclosed for Chapter 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 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS:				
President	Paul Loehnen	11556 Bench Road, Missoula, MT 59808	721 – 7517	loehnen@bigsky.net
Vice President	Gerhard Knudsen	4400 Scott Allen Dr, Missoula, MT 59803	251 – 2765	gmk@bresnan.net
Secretary	Char Murray	50 Brookside Way, Missoula, MT 59802	549 – 5223	murray555@bresnan.net
Treasurer	Alex Taft	439 Connell Ave, Missoula, MT 59801	218 – 8438	alextaft9@msn.com
DIRECTORS:				
2006-2008	Suzann Stickney	2312 Duncan Dr, Missoula, MT 59802	549 – 0063	sstickmt@aol.com
2006-2009	Bill Ballard	5120 Larch Ave, Missoula, MT 59802	549 – 5097	wballard@onewest.net
2006-2007	Carole Toppins	1210 Tower, Missoula, MT 59804	549 – 6027	tertop@aol.com
2007-2010	Carolyn Goren	PO Box 7189, Missoula, MT 59807	544 – 1060	goren@marsweb.com
2008-2011	Bill Boggs	PO Box 7881, Missoula, MT 59807	728 – 3088	claybody@cybrmail.com
COMMITTEES:				
Member Records	Vick Applegate	303 Rimrock Way, Missoula, MT 59803	549 – 0027	k7vk@arrl.net
Membership Promotion	Vacant			
Program	Judy Bungarz	17579 Remount Road, Huson, MT 59846	626 – 5761	bungaiz@peoplepc.com
Conservation Advocacy	Vick Applegate	303 Rimrock Way, Missoula, MT 59803	549 – 0027	k7vk@ arrl.net
Habitat Protection & Restore	Jim Brown	1504 Woods Gulch Rd, Missoula, MT 59802	549 – 8052	woodsy@onewest.net
Field Activities	Larry Weeks	2428 W Kent Ave, Missoula, MT 59801	549 – 5632	bwsgenea@onlinemt.com
Publicity	Elizabeth Johnston	1784 Elison Lane, Missoula, MT 59802	327 – 1525	birder@bigsky.net
Education	Larry Weeks	2428 W Kent Ave, Missoula, MT 59801	549 – 5632	bwsgenea@onlinemt.com
PL Wright Endowment	Bill Gabriel	PO Box 520, Florence, MT 59833	273 – 6880	
University Liaison	Dan Pletscher	509 Arbor Dr, Missoula, MT 59802	543 – 4865	dan.pletscher@umontana.edu
Newsletter Editor	Bev Orth Geoghegan	3130 Corlear Ave, Bronx, NY 10463	(406) 750 – 0149	orthbev@hotmail.com
Newsletter Circulation	Shirley Holden	2319 Valley Dr, Missoula, MT 59802	549 – 5706	
Web Site	Clare Kelly	2909 Highwood Dr, Missoula, MT 59803	251 – 7207	
Archivist	Shirley Holden	2319 Valley Dr, Missoula, MT 59802	549 – 5706	
Audubon Adventures	Judy Bungarz	17579 Remount Road, Huson, MT 59846	626 – 5761	bungaiz@peoplepc.com
Christmas Bird Count	Larry Weeks	2428 W Kent Ave, Missoula, MT 59801	549 – 5632	bwsgenea@onlinemt.com
Bird Hotline	Terry Toppins	1210 Tower, Missoula, MT 59804	721 – 9799	tertop@aol.com
Past President	Jim Brown	1504 Woods Gulch Rd, Missoula, MT 59802	549 – 8052	woodsy@onewest.net

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MONTANA AUDUBON – PO Box 595, Helena, MT 59624 (406) 443-3949 www.mtaudubon.org

Executive Director:	Steve Hoffman	shoffman@mtaudubon.org	Board President:	Larry McEvoy	mcschmid@mcn.net
Program Director:	Janet Ellis	jellis@mtaudubon.org	Director of Education:	Paul Belanger	pbelanger@mtaudubon.org
Office Manager:	Sandy McIntyre	sandymc@mtaudubon.org	Global Warming Advisor:	Amy Cilimburg	amy@mtaudubon.org

Five Valleys Audubon Society

PO Box 8425, Missoula, MT 59807

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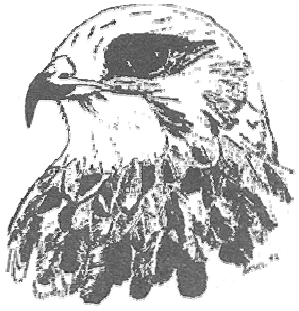

TO:

Note To Members: Please Check The Mailing Label For Expiration Of Your Membership.