

Bitterroot AUDUBON



MARCH 2012

NEWSLETTER

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Saving The Blue Pearl of Mongolia

by Doug Morris

The Bitterroot Audubon Society is privileged to host Doug Morris, who will speak about his most recent endeavor in Mongolia. Doug, a retired 40 year employee of the National Park Service (NPS), has worked in the United States providing direct services, developing policies and procedures, and training employees. He has also traveled to many foreign countries sharing NPS policies and practices. He was the key NPS representative advancing the implementation of a partnership between USNPS and the EUROPARC Federation. Since retirement he has continued working in the international arena, visiting several countries and providing training and consultation.



Lake Hovsgol.

Courtesy Doug Morris

The “Blue Pearl” is the traditional and spiritual name for Lake Hovsgol, the largest lake in Mongolia and the 17th largest lake in the world. It is located just south of the Russian Border and its outlet river flows into Lake Baikal in Russia, the world’s largest lake. Lake Hovsgol is located in a beautiful mountainous

setting that might remind us of western Montana.

Doug is a member of an organization called Global Parks, which was invited by the Mongol Ecology Center to assess what is needed to create a viable and sustainable national park that preserves the natural, cultural, and spiritual values, and creates ecologically sustainable tourism. The goal of his team is to develop a variety of plans designed to guide good stewardship of this “Crown Jewel” of Mongolia.

Join us Monday, March 19th at 7:00 P.M. to hear about this fascinating part of the world and Doug’s work. The program will be held in the Forest Service/DNRC Building, 1801 N. First Street (Hwy 93, north end of Hamilton). Enter the building from the west side. For further information contact Kay Fulton at 642-3794.

Welcome Back Waterfowl Day at Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge

by Bob Danley

Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge, in partnership with Bitterroot Audubon, will host Welcome Back Waterfowl Day on **Saturday, March 24 from 10 am to 2 pm** at the Refuge Visitor Center and along Wildfowl Lane. This special event is open to the public; the primary focus will be viewing all manner of birds using the Refuge wetlands. Bitterroot Audubon and Refuge staff will be present with high quality optical equipment to assist in identifying and observing some 19 species of waterfowl that may be present. An informal duck identification workshop will continually be “looping” to assist beginning birders. Judy Hoy will also be present with several rehabilitated raptors.

There will be family-friendly activities at the Refuge Visitor Center: birding (techniques, quizzes, reference materials), drawing (draw a duck 101), mammals (furs/skulls/tracks), and aquatic invertebrates (view the microscopic freshwater

inhabitants). The keynote activity will be a living history of naturalist John James Audubon performed in the outdoor amphitheater at 11 am.

Bring your whole family to see the birds in their beautiful spring plumage. Drinks and treats will be provided by Bitterroot Audubon Society members and the Refuge staff.

For more information or questions, please call Bob Danley at 777-5552 x203 or email Bob_Danley@fws.gov.

Riparian Habitat Grants Provided for Two Projects

by Sherry Ritter

Two parcels of land within the Bitterroot River Important Bird Area will become more bird-friendly thanks to help from Bitterroot Audubon. The first grant recipients, Colleen and LM Powell, will work with Bitterroot Audubon volunteers over a 2-year period to reduce the population of hound's tongue on their property north of Bell Crossing. The second grant provides \$1,000 for purchase of native shrubs to be planted on three properties along the Bitterroot River on the western edge of Stevensville. These parcels, owned by Tim and Shelley Hunter, Jim and Kathy Notaro, and John and Darlene Grove have been in the papers recently because of efforts to protect the stream bank from further erosion. This work has already included many local volunteers, including some members of Bitterroot Audubon.

Additional grants are still available for enhancing riparian habitat along the Bitterroot River within the boundary of the Bitterroot River Important Bird Area (IBA). We are soliciting proposals for projects to take place in 2012 or 2013. Grants will be provided for projects having 5 acres or more lying within the boundaries of the IBA. Adjacent landowners may work together to meet this qualification. Grants won't exceed \$1,000 per project and/or can request volunteer labor from Bitterroot Audubon. Examples of appropriate projects include fencing to keep livestock, deer, or elk from eating shrubs and trees, purchase and planting of native shrubs and trees, or pulling noxious weeds.

The deadline for proposals is **April 13, 2012**. Proposal forms are short; they can be obtained from Sherry Ritter at s287ritter@mac.com or 777-7409.

2011 Bird Rehabilitation Report

By Judy Hoy

In 2011, wildlife rehabilitators in Missoula and Ravalli Counties cared for a total of 201 birds; of which 121 or 60% were released back into the wild. The others died or had to be euthanized or were placed for use as education birds. Three of seven hatchling Northern Flickers raised and released, one male and two females, had red crescents on the back of their necks. The male flicker posed for a portrait after he was released.



Courtesy Judy Hoy

Northern Flicker.

Of 59 young birds of various ages from small hatchlings to post fledglings received for care by Judy Hoy, 13 or 22% had one or more malformations consistent with disruption of the thyroid hormones during development. One Great Horned Owl hatchling had malformed neck bones and a malformed eye. Another young bird had an enlarged liver, three had malformed legs and three had malformed wing bones. Six hatchlings or 10% of young birds received for care had brachygnathia superior, which is characterized by the presence of underdeveloped upper facial bones and short upper bill.

Brachygnathia superior, a definitive symptom of fetal hypothyroidism, is being observed frequently on adult birds of various species throughout North America. Colleen Handle and colleagues of the United States Geological Survey (USGS) have been studying disrupted bill and feather growth on multiple passerine

species in Alaska. The results were reported in *The Auk* 2010, Vol. 127 (4):882-898.

Thank you to everyone who donated in 2011 to the Bitterroot Audubon Wildlife Rehabilitation Fund, which pays for food and medicine. Thanks are also due to everyone who rescued injured or orphaned wildlife and brought them for rehabilitation.

2012 *Wings Across the Big Sky* Bird Festival

Greening the Festival, Saturday Presentations, and Festival Registration

Greening the festival. Montana Audubon is dedicated to lessening our impact on the planet and the annual bird festival is no exception. We continue our efforts to become a carbon neutral organization, and in doing so, we plan to both reduce and “offset” the impacts from this year’s festival.

One of the best ways to reduce our carbon footprint is by carpooling. The festival transportation committee is working diligently toward that aim so that field trips and pre-festival workshops are covered by group transportation (vans, buses, or SUVs). This committee will also facilitate carpooling once festival participants have registered and confirmed their field trips. We’d very much like to hear from anyone who wishes to volunteer their minivan/SUV as a lead field trip vehicle, or recommend a person or organization with an available van or bus. Please contact Kathy Ross at mtkat@montanaport.net. If we could halve the number of cars coming to the festival, we would cut ~20 tons of carbon dioxide from the festival’s footprint!

In order to “offset” the waste we cannot reduce outright, we support carbon sequestration programs. What better place to embark on afforestation than at our Audubon Conservation Education Center in Billings? For a \$15 donation we will plant two trees that will sequester more and more carbon dioxide as they mature. The more trees we plant, the more carbon we can offset. Look for that option when you register.

At the hotel we plan to offer shade-grown coffee and compostable plates and cups when washable dishes are not available. Last but not least, remember to bring from home your refillable water bottle and coffee to-go mug!

Saturday presentations. We have a diverse lineup of speakers and topics for Saturday afternoon. We’re very excited to bring Cornell’s Brian Sullivan to the festival to talk about the **eBird program**. Brian will kick off the sessions with a presentation to all festival goers about how we can share our bird sightings and help conservation in Montana and beyond. He’s a

magnificent photographer and brings a truly compelling program to life. Then we’ll offer two sessions of concurrent talks. Choose topics ranging from ...

- raptor migration projects in Montana
- seeing tangible results when teaching kids about the natural world
- colonial nesting waterbirds on the Flathead Indian Reservation
- Montana Audubon’s Gambia birding tour
- recording bird sounds

No doubt, it’ll be hard to choose. Ponder your options after reading more via our website....

Festival registration. Begins the first week in April. Look for the registration brochure to arrive in your mailbox at the end of March. For additional updates, visit

<http://www.mtaudubon.org/birdwatching/festival.html>

and “like” us at

<http://www.facebook.com/MontanaAudubon>.

Bird Shots



Courtesy Sara Ashline

Snowy Owl, Polson, MT, February, 2012.



Montana
Audubon

2012
SOUTH TEXAS BIRDING
Sunday, April 22th – Sunday, April 29th



Green Jay

Because of its southern latitude, diverse mix of habitats and unique position along a major migration corridor, South Texas offers a nearly unparalleled opportunity to observe birds in North America. Not only are there a suite of resident species with limited North American ranges like Green Jay, Tropical Parula, Ferruginous Pygmy-owl, Great Kiskadee, Altamira Oriole, Olive Sparrow and more, but in late April, a tremendous variety of neotropical migrants sweep through the area. The first part of this trip will involve birding the spectacular King Ranch (825,000 acres), which encompasses a whole range of habitats from coastal grassland to thorn-scrub brush to stands of live oak that are home to nearly all of the South Texas specialty birds.

The second part of the trip will be in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, home to more birds that have slim U.S. ranges. Throughout the trip we'll have the flexibility to take advantage of favorable weather patterns to visit coastal migrant traps where a vast number and diversity of migrating songbirds can be seen at close range. We will likely see between 175 and 200 species on this tour, possibly more if conditions are good. Brian Williams and Steve Hoffman will be your expert guides. *The cost is \$1795/person which includes double occupancy lodging (single supplement \$350), meals, and transportation from Harlingen, Texas. A \$425/person deposit reserves your place.*



Painted Bunting

All tours are on a first come, first served basis. Complete trip itineraries and bird species lists are available upon request. For more information please go to: <http://mtaudubon.org/birdwatching/tours.html>.

For reservations call the Montana Audubon office 406-443-3949 or email norane@mtaudubon.org

News and Notes

Call for Photos

Bitterroot Audubon is seeking images of birds for a new feature in our newsletter: *Bird shots*. If you have taken a great photo and would like to submit it for consideration, please email the jpeg image with a brief description (who took the photo, what is the subject, where the photo was taken, and any interesting details) to BASeditors@gmail.com.



Roosting Wild Turkeys

Courtesy Mel Holloway

A New IBA Brochure is Available

Bitterroot Audubon and its Important Bird Area Committee are excited to announce a new brochure. *Our Birds Call This Home*, downloadable from bitterrootaudubon.org, provides guidance for managing riparian habitat for birds. This brochure was a collaborative effort by Bitterroot, Five Valleys, and Montana Audubon.

Bitterroot Audubon is on Facebook!

To increase the scope of our outreach efforts, Bitterroot Audubon has created a Facebook page. If you use Facebook, please look for Bitterroot Audubon and "Like" us!

Would you like to see the newsletter in **COLOR**? Visit www.BitterrootAudubon.org and click the link to download the current newsletter or visit the archives.

You can sign up to have an e-copy sent to your email inbox by contacting Susie Duff, our Membership Chair at 961-5455 or sduff1@aol.com. Please include "Newsletter" in the subject line.

Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT

New to birding? Beginner Bird Walks at the refuge sponsored by Bitterroot Audubon and Five Valleys Audubon are held the third Saturday of each month.

Meet at the Refuge Visitor's Center on March 17th at 9AM for a two hour bird walk. Bring binoculars if you have them. Contact the refuge at (406) 777-5552 for more information.

Calendar of Events

Mar 17-Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, 9-11AM

Mar 19- Audubon Meeting at the Forest Service/DNRC Building, 7 PM, Board Mtg. at 5 PM

Apr 13-2nd Deadline for Riparian Habitat Landowner Grant. Contact Sherry Ritter for a proposal form: s287ritter@mac.com

Apr 16- Audubon Meeting, Location TBD, 7 PM

Jun 8-10, 2012-Montana Bird Festival, Kalispell

Local Chapter Members

To simplify record keeping the board has approved making all chapter only memberships due on the first of the year, except for those joining in October, November or December of the previous year. Those memberships will expire December 31st one year later.

As this is the first year for this policy, no local only members will be removed from the mailing list before the May newsletter.



Courtesy Sara Ashline

Gray Jay, Chief Joseph Pass, MT.

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Vice-Pres. & Conservation Chair	Fred Weisbecker*	375-9317
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Treasurer	Jim Story*	961-4689

Directors & Committee Chairs

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IBA Program	Sherry Ritter	777-7409
Website & Field Trips	Kate Stone*	381-1115
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Newsltr Eds	Sara Ashline*	529-6749
	Karen Griffing*	961-0181
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At large	Judy Hoy*	777-2487
At large	Skip Horner*	642-6840
At large	Campbell Massey*	381-0197

* Board Member

EMAIL: contactus@bitterrootaudubon.org

WEBSITE: www.BitterrootAudubon.org

Chapter Only Membership

The Bitterroot Audubon Chapter Only Membership is \$15/year. These members will be supporting local chapter activities, receive the newsletter, and enjoy Chapter benefits. To join as a Chapter Only Member, complete this form.

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
State: _____ Zip: _____
Email: _____

Check this box to receive full color email-only newsletters delivered to your inbox.

Send this application with \$15 to:



Bitterroot Audubon Society
PO Box 326
Hamilton, MT 59840-0326

NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Become a member of the **National Audubon Society** and **Bitterroot Audubon** [Chapter Code C1ZN580Z]. You will receive *Audubon* magazine, *Bitterroot Audubon Newsletter* and a membership card. *Introductory membership is \$20.*

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
State: _____ Zip: _____

Send this application and your check to:



Audubon

Membership Data Center
PO Box 422250
Palm Coast FL 32142-2250