

# Bitterroot AUDUBON



APRIL 2015

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 29, NO. 8

## LEWIS'S WOODPECKER "Not Your Ordinary Woodpecker"

By William Blake

"The Lewis's Woodpecker is the only bird named after Meriwether Lewis, who first observed it north of Helena, Montana. He noticed that it didn't have the usual undulating flight pattern of other woodpeckers; instead it flapped slowly like a crow. Lewis wrote, "I saw a black woodpecker today about the size of the lark woodpecker as black as a crow. It is a distinct species of woodpecker; it has a long tail and 'flies' a good 'deal' like the jay bird." (quote from Lewis and Clark's Mountain Wilds by Sharon Ritter, 2002). Lewis did his most complete description of them in 1806.



Courtesy William Blake

Kate Stone releasing an adult banded Lewis's Woodpecker.

We are still learning about this "uncommon woodpecker" that migrates, unlike other woodpeckers, and catches insects on the fly instead of digging them out of tree bark. At the Bitterroot Audubon's April meeting we will learn about research underway at the MPG Ranch from William Blake, a Wildlife Biologist, who is specializing in the study of Lewis's Woodpeckers. He is currently

working in collaboration with Kate Stone, specifically focusing on the birds' breeding biology. Lewis's Woodpeckers are common and abundant throughout the Bitterroot Valley and on the MPG Ranch. From June to August 2014 they monitored the breeding population at the ranch. They color banded twelve adults, allowing them to identify each individual in the field. Contrary to the results of other studies, they observed high nesting success and high fledgling counts from nests in floodplain forests. They also used transect surveys to monitor post-breeding behavior and occurrence of non-resident woodpeckers. The transects suggest that Lewis's Woodpecker migration peaked in mid- to late August.



Courtesy William Blake

Adult Lewis's Woodpecker fitted with color bands for field identification.

This year they plan to increase the trapping and monitoring on the ranch. They will also set up a study throughout the Bitterroot Valley to compare nesting success in different habitat types. Finally, they are investigating the use of a tracking device to determine migratory routes and over-wintering areas, which are currently unknown. Their research offers unequalled perspectives for understanding Lewis's Woodpecker breeding biology and migration.

William grew up in France although his father is from Kalispell, MT. He came to visit his grandmother in Kalispell frequently and she introduced him to bird watching when he was six years old. Through the years it has become his passion and career. He obtained his Bachelor of Science degree in Wildlife Biology from the University of Montana (UM). Over the last seven years, he has worked for a variety of organizations doing bird biology research. He obtained his Federal Master Banding Permit in 2013 and began working full time at the MPG Ranch in 2014. He intends to return to UM to complete a Masters of Science in Wildlife Biology in the Fall. William is interested in a number of avian research topics.

**Come join Bitterroot Audubon Monday, April 20<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 P.M. at the Forest Service/Natural Resources Building, 1801 North 1<sup>st</sup> (north end of Hamilton, west side of HWY 93) Enter on the west side of the building. THE PUBLIC IS INVITED. Contact Kay Fulton for more information (642-3794).**

### **Letter from the President**

*By Kay Fulton, BAS President*

### **First of all, SPRING is**

**here!!** On Saturday, I was serenaded for two hours by close to 30 Red-winged Blackbirds right out my back door (I felt like I was at the Refuge). The American Goldfinches are all dressed up in their beautiful yellow spring plumage and last night a Pygmy Owl hooted for over an hour outside my window. Of course the Canada Geese are calling all day and night from the River behind my house and today I watched a Bald Eagle standing on the River shore for about 20 minutes. At a distance, he looked like a 3-foot tall, English statesman with a white wig, brown suit coat with tails and white socks. Ah, yes Spring! The birds and waterfowl are coming back and it is time for all of us to get out and great them.

**WELCOME BACK WATERFOWL**, Bitterroot Audubon's annual celebration of spring migration, will be **Saturday, April 11<sup>th</sup> at the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge from 10:00 to 2:00**. Judy Hoy and others will be set up on the road between the ponds to the west of the Visitors' Center. Be sure to stop and contribute the birds you see to the species list.

Then, come up to the Pavilion north of the Visitors' Center for the **CELEBRATION OF BITTERROOT AUDUBON'S 30<sup>TH</sup>**

**ANNIVERSARY**. Meet some of the Founders, eat cake and enjoy stories of the early years. In fact, bring your own early stories!

### **Join BAS at the 2015 Youth Conservation and Education Expo**

*By Rachel Ingram*

The 2015 Youth Conservation & Education Expo will be held on Saturday, May 9 at the Teller Slack Barn in Corvallis. Many local sporting and conservation groups will host booths at the event with the goal of providing fun activities to educate kids about the outdoors and inspire them to get out and play. There will also be a climbing wall. Children of all ages are welcome to attend.

### **Creepers and Curlews- the Montana eBird Challenge continues!!**

Last month, participants in the Montana eBird Challenge reported over 200 Bald Eagles and 40 Golden Eagles. In April, the challenge will focus on Long-billed Curlews and Brown Creepers, two Species of Concern in Montana. We will award prizes for the person who submits the most records for either of these species.

If you'd like to participate in the Challenge, please send an email to: [montanachallenge2015@mpgranch.com](mailto:montanachallenge2015@mpgranch.com). You'll receive instructions on how to participate.



*Courtesy Kate Stone*

*Long-billed Curlew*

### **Follow the Osprey**

Curious where our local Osprey over-wintered and how they travel back to the Bitterroot Valley? Check out this interactive map maintained by Raptor View Research Institute and the MPG Ranch:

<http://ranchmpg.appspot.com/ospreylocator.html>

## **BITTERROOT AUDUBON'S 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

**Come Join the Celebration**

**Saturday, April 11 from 10:00 to 1:00**

**Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge  
Pavilion north of the Visitors' Center**

*By Kay Fulton*

Thirty years ago, a small band of stalwart “Birders” living in Ravalli County came together to establish a chapter of National Audubon in the Bitterroot. The idea of a local chapter had been “incubating” for months among them and then, with the urging and support of Byron Weber, the then president of the Five Valleys Audubon Chapter in Missoula, the idea was “hatched” and soon “fledged”! The group was required to recruit an additional 35 members which they did easily. Bitterroot Audubon officially received its chapter charter in November 1985. These early founders included John Ormiston, Colleen Powell, Jim Story, Alta and Arnold Gibson, and Bob Sizer. John was the first president. Jim served as first Vice President and Colleen was the first Treasurer. The first meetings were held in Colleen’s kitchen. (See detailed article by Perry Backus in Ravalli Republic, March 30, 2015).



*Courtesy Perry Backus*

*Founding Bitterroot Audubon members: Jim Story, Colleen Powell, and John Ormiston.*

Over the last 30 years, the Chapter has sponsored the “Christmas Bird Count,” an annual National Audubon bird survey across the country. This is a fun experience for all ages, which often includes cold, snowy weather and fascinating discoveries. Other activities have included “breeding bird surveys” in the spring, numerous field trips, conservation projects, workshops and classes and for the last three years development and sale of the “**Birds of the Bitterroot Valley**” calendars. Profits from these

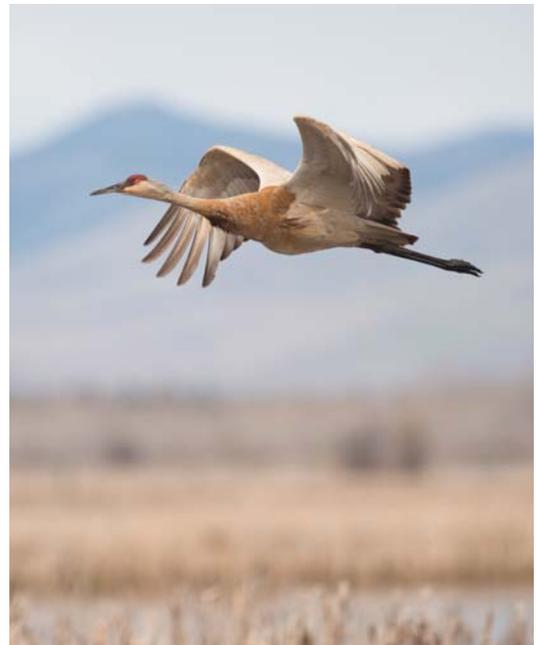
sales are used for a college scholarship fund, educational activities and conservation projects. Sponsoring the “Bitterroot Important Bird Area” (Bitterroot IBA) is another important endeavor of the Chapter.

**Come help us celebrate April 11<sup>th</sup>  
with both Birding and Eating Cake!**

## **Bitterroot Audubon's Welcome Back Waterfowl Day**

*By Judy Hoy*

Bitterroot Audubon will host a very special Welcome Back Waterfowl Day on Saturday, April 11 from 10 am to 1:30 pm. at the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge north of Stevensville. A big part of the event this year is a celebration with cake and cookies at the Refuge Visitor Center to mark the 30th Anniversary of the Bitterroot Audubon Society. Also as usual, there will be Audubon members and refuge staff with high quality optical equipment to assist in identifying and observing 19 or more species of waterfowl and other birds that use the refuge wetlands. The scopes will be stationed along Wildfowl Lane on the county road between the ponds west of the Visitor Center. This special event is open to the public. Judy Hoy will do programs on-demand on Wildfowl Lane near the scope stations, with a Long-eared Owl and a Northern Saw-whet Owl. For more information or questions, please call Bob Danley at 777-5552 x203 or email [Bob\\_Danley@fws.gov](mailto:Bob_Danley@fws.gov) or call Judy Hoy at 777-2487.



*Courtesy Sara Ashline  
Sandhill Crane at Lee Metcalf NWR.*

## Raptor Migration Field Trip

Join Raptor View Research Institute for a day counting raptors at the MPG Ranch in Florence on Thursday April 23rd from 10-5. This trip will involve a short hike over uneven terrain to access the count site. Once at the site, participants will spend most of the day stationary, counting raptors as they fly past. Participants should be prepared for challenging weather conditions, including cold temperatures and wind. Participants will need to provide their own optics, warm clothing, portable chair, and food/water for the day. Some participants will need to drive their own high-clearance, 4WD vehicle to access the count site. Participation is limited; you will need to register for this field trip by 4/17 by contacting Kate Stone at 381-1115 or [kroystone@hotmail.com](mailto:kroystone@hotmail.com). Additional information will be sent to registered participants.

## News and Notes

### Bitterroot Audubon Society is going GREEN

*By Sara Ashline and Karen Griffing, BAS Editors*

Beginning Fall 2013, Bitterroot Audubon began delivering monthly newsletter electronically. If you haven't already done so, please send us your email address to receive your newsletter via email. Starting fall 2014, we'll be sending the newsletter electronically only, and it is always available at

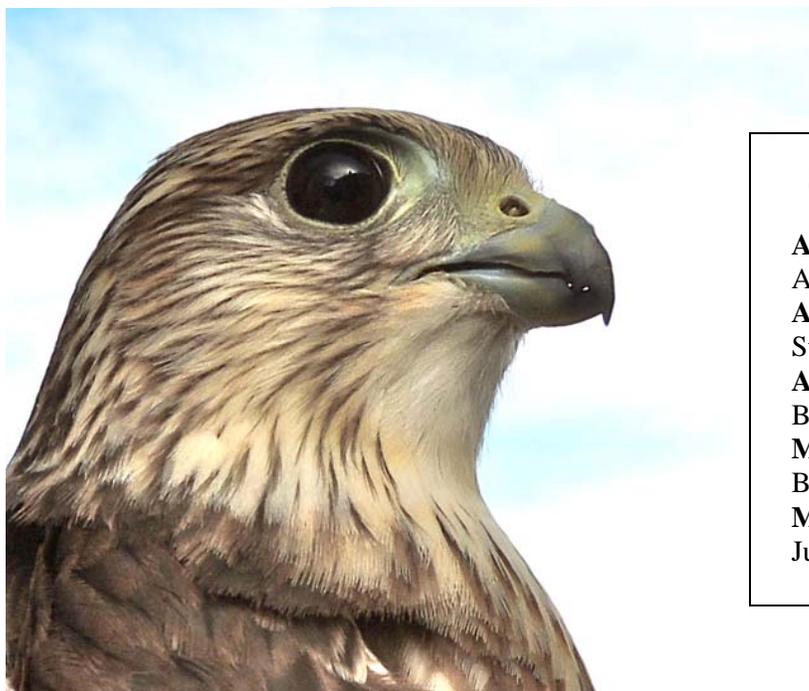
[www.bitterrootaudubon.org](http://www.bitterrootaudubon.org). For those without computer access, we will continue to mail you an individual copy of the newsletter; please send a note to Bitterroot Audubon, PO Box 326, Hamilton, MT 59840 requesting this service. Please send your email address to Susie Duff at [audubonmembership@gmail.com](mailto:audubonmembership@gmail.com) to begin receiving your newsletter electronically

**Bitterroot Audubon is on Facebook!** If you use Facebook, please look for Bitterroot Audubon and "Like" us!

**Call for Photos** Bitterroot Audubon is seeking images of birds for a 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, to [BASeditors@gmail.com](mailto:BASeditors@gmail.com).

**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 April 18th at 10AM for a two hour bird walk. Bring binoculars if you have them. Contact the refuge at [\(406\) 777-5552](tel:(406)777-5552) for more information

## Bird Shots



*Courtesy Judy Hoy*

*Rehabilitated immature Merlin.*

## Calendar of Events

**Apr 11**-Welcome Back Waterfowl/BAS 30th Anniversary, Lee Metcalf NWR

**Apr 18**-Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT 10AM-12PM.

**April 20**- Audubon Meeting, Forest Service/DNRC Building, Hamilton, MT 7PM, Board Mtg. 5PM.

**May 9**-Youth Expo, Teller Wildlife Refuge, Slack Barn, Corvallis, MT

**May 18**-Audubon Meeting, TBD

**Jun 5-7**-Helena, MT, Wings Across the Big Sky

# wings across the big sky

June 5-7, 2015 Helena, Montana

The annual Bird Festival is fast approaching. You should have already received your registration brochure, so please register early by mailing the registration page or by going online at [www.mtaudubon.org](http://www.mtaudubon.org).

Rooms have been blocked at the Red Lion Colonial Inn. Call 1-406-443-2100 and mention you're with Montana Audubon Bird Festival to get the rate, or book online with the booking code MONT0604.

Last Chance Audubon, co-sponsors of the event are offering something different and fun this year. Read the following and then sharpen your pencils and create your own bird or birding-themed limerick or haiku masterpiece and submit for prizes.

*A limerick's not too hard to write  
If you keep the rhyme sequence in sight;  
Just let your mind go.  
The ideas will flow.  
So you don't want to try it? You might.*

Haiku is traditionally a 17-syllable poem arranged in 5 – 7 – 5 syllable lines without rhyme. Limericks are five lines with rhyming as illustrated above.

You may submit up to two of each. Be sure to keep copies for yourself and submit your entries to:

Jo Lace  
210 S California St  
Helena MT 59601

Or email to Janice and Jo at [jan2854@gmail.com](mailto:jan2854@gmail.com) NO LATER than May 1, 2015.

Each year Montana Audubon recognizes individuals who work for the conservation and protection of birds and other wildlife by presenting **Awards** at the Saturday evening banquet. We are currently seeking nominations in the following categories: Lifetime Achievement Award, Educator of the Year, Conservationist of the Year, Citizen Scientist of the Year, and Special Achievement Award. To make a nomination, download a nomination form from [www.mtaudubon.org/about/awards.html](http://www.mtaudubon.org/about/awards.html). Nominations are due at the office by May 22, 2015. Mail completed forms to *Montana Audubon, PO Box 595, Helena MT 59624*.

Register soon and join us in Helena in June. You will be treated to wonderful birding and non-birding tours, Friday evening and Saturday afternoon speakers, which include the keynote speaker, Scott Weidensaul, plus Vince Yannone, Dan Ellison, and Andrea Silverman (Prickly Pear Land Trust.) Oh—and did we mention wonderful meals and beautiful accommodations?

BITTERROOT AUDUBON  
PO BOX 326  
HAMILTON MT 59840-0326

### Officers

President	Kay Fulton*	642-3794
Vice-Pres. & Conservation Chair	Fred Weisbecker*	375-9317
Secretary	John Ormiston*	363-5464
Treasurer	Jim Story*	961-4689

### Directors & Committee Chairs

IBA Program	Sherry Ritter	777-7409
Website	Kate Stone*	381-1115
Field Trips	Sherry Ritter	777-7409
Education	Rachel Ingram* <a href="mailto:zephyrmer@gmail.com">zephyrmer@gmail.com</a>	
Newsltr Eds &	Sara Ashline* <a href="mailto:baseditors@gmail.com">baseditors@gmail.com</a>	
Distribution	Karen Griffing*	961-0181
Hospitality	Rosan Stover	
Membership	Susie Duff*	961-5455
Publicity	Dave Lockman	777-2929
Rep. to MT		
Audubon	Becky Peters*	
At large	Judy Hoy*	777-2487
Scholarship	Skip Horner*	642-6840
At large	Campbell Massey	381-0197
At large	Alex Shaffer*	

\* Board Member

EMAIL: [contactus@bitterrootaudubon.org](mailto:contactus@bitterrootaudubon.org)  
WEBSITE: [www.BitterrootAudubon.org](http://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 full color e-newsletter, and enjoy Chapter benefits. To join as a Chapter Only Member, complete this form.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_  
State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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