

Bitterroot AUDUBON



DECEMBER 2015

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 30, NO. 4

29th Annual Hamilton Christmas Bird Count (CBC), Saturday December 19, 2015

By John Ormiston

Deck the Halls, it's nearly Christmas and that means Saturday, December 19, Bitterroot Audubon Society and friends will count all the birds in the 176 square mile Hamilton Christmas Bird Count circle for the 29th time. We need to uphold tradition by meeting at The Teller Education Building (south of Quast Lane on Chaffin) at 7:30 AM, eating chili and Oreos at noon (thanks for the 29th time to Bill Good), and having a grand time with fellow birders. Just like always the total count will be heavily dependent on favorable weather, but we'll count no matter what the conditions. We'll organize into 6 or more groups, each with an experienced leader, and get out into the field shortly after daylight. At noon we'll reorganize and try to cover any place missed in the morning.

We annually see over 7,000 birds and about 65 species. In 2006 we saw about 6,900 birds of 74 species and led the state. Our cumulative species list contains 128 species with 31 species seen every year and 21 only once. The Hamilton Count annually finishes in the top 5 in the state, most often in the top three, competing with Big Fork, Missoula and Stevensville. We need the help of birders of all skill levels to help find and identify all the birds in the 7 ½ mile circle centered on the Hamilton Airport.

Feeder watchers provide essential help. Every year folks who can't go to the field add several species to our list. You can help by counting the birds at your feeder for the entire day, or for a few hours or minutes when you can take the time during the day. You all know someone who feeds birds; encourage them to report their findings to Colleen Powell, the feeder watcher coordinator for the 29th time, by calling her at 363-2116. We've only had about 20 feeder watchers each year; surely more folks than

that feed birds and can identify their beneficiaries.

Please call Colleen at 363-2116 or me at 360-9530 if you know someone who could count birds at their feeder, or if you need more information about the 29th annual Hamilton Christmas Bird Count.

John Ormiston, compiler
360-9530



Courtesy Mike Daniels

Song Sparrow.

51st Annual Stevensville Christmas Bird Count, Saturday December 26, 2015

By Dave Lockman

The 51st annual Stevensville Christmas Bird Count is scheduled for Saturday, December 26th. We hope you'll be able to join us for a fun day (or morning) of meeting new folks and finding birds in our local winter wonderland. It's a big area and we need all the help we can get. Experience is helpful, but certainly not required. Field observers will meet in the basement conference room of the Stevensville Ranger Station between 7:30 and 7:45 AM to form small teams and get area assignments. Birders who live in the Count Circle (anywhere within 7.5 miles of the Ranger Station) can opt to get up at their leisure and count the birds on their property. Both types of counters are critical to a successful count. You don't have to spend all day counting birds; any time you have is helpful.

Bird counters on last year's Stevensville CBC found 10,415 birds of 87 different species, which was the highest species count for any CBC in Montana in 2014. The only new species for the Stevensville CBC was a Brambling discovered near Florence. This Eurasian finch regularly strays into Alaska during migration, but this was only the eighth record for Brambling in Montana, and brought our cumulative species total to 158 over the 50 years of the Count. Several other birds had only been reported once or twice previously on the Stevensville CBC. There are always some interesting birds out there just waiting to be discovered, so come and help us find all the common and unusual birds hiding in our winter landscape. Please contact Dave Lockman at 381-7679 for more information.

9th Annual Big Hole Christmas Bird Count, Sunday January 3, 2016

By Kate Stone

Join members of Bitterroot Audubon on Sunday, January 3rd for the 9th annual Big Hole Christmas Bird Count. We will have options for both hiking and driving surveys. You will be sure to see several interesting species; commonly seen species include Snow Buntings, Common Redpolls, and Rough-legged Hawks. Participants usually spend about 4 hours in the field searching for birds, followed by lunch in Wisdom. If you'd like to participate, please contact Kate Stone (381-1115, krostone@hotmail.com) to register and for information about the meeting place and time.



Courtesy Kate Stone

Common Redpoll.

Letter from the President

*By Becky Peters, BAS
President*



So the holiday season is upon us and you are probably wondering what present to get your birder friend or what present you could ask for!! Here are

just a few ideas to please the birder in us all:

A bird calendar of course (sorry no 2016 BAS calendar, but there will be others in the near future!)

Give a Citizen Science gift. Join the Cornell Lab Project Feeder Watch that goes from November 2015 to April 2016. Anyone interested in birds can participate. FeederWatch is conducted by people of all skill levels and backgrounds, including children, families, individuals, classrooms, retired persons, youth groups, nature centers, and bird clubs. Participants watch their feeders as much or as little as they want over two consecutive days as often as every week (less often is fine). They count birds that appear in their count site because of something that they provided (plantings, food, or water). The cost is \$18. Sign up online at <http://feederwatch.org/> or call toll-free in the U.S.: 800-843-2473

Give a subscription to Bitterroot Audubon, Montana Audubon, and National Audubon. After all, they are helping your birds when you join!

Give a gift certificate toward hiring a local landscape designer who understands the importance of our birds and the habitats they need. A designer can give you practical information about your soil, your sun orientation, the typical birds at your elevation, and the flowers, bushes, trees that you could plant for the birds. This would not only help our birds but our butterflies and bees.

Binoculars! Spotting Scope, and anything else really expensive that we only dream about having! If you want to check out buying guides check on the internet of course, Audubon and Cornell sites especially. Also, there are sites/blogs. For example, see <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/six-steps-to-choosing-a-pair-of-binoculars-youll-love>.

Bird Friendly Coffee! Really? Yep! Buy a gift of organic, full shade, fair trade coffee from plantations that shelter migratory birds. Birds and Beans will help you find a store.

<http://www.birdsandbeans.com/find-a-store.html>
Or the Smithsonian
<http://nationalzoo.si.edu/scbi/migratorybirds/coffee/search>

I'll give you a big hint about if there are any Bird

Friendly Coffee importers in Montana – nope!! But there are about 4 in Washington State and 1 in Idaho.

Give a gift of the Christmas Bird Count – either to yourself or to someone who is new to birding. Tell your friends that you are going to pick them up for one of our local CBC's. (Read the information in our newsletter) They will not only be needed to help count but they will have a wonderful time with great people! Along with that thought we could give a gift of our time to someone who doesn't get out much and take them to Hieronymus Park or to Lee Metcalf Refuge to look at the birds in the spring!

Make or buy a bird feeder or bird house (along with using the proper seed). Check out Naturalist's Mercantile on 131 E Main in Missoula if you haven't already. They have the best supplies and the best advice.

And you could always review the list of books and apps I mentioned in previous newsletters for other ideas.

See you at the Christmas Bird Counts!!

Sponsors needed for Audubon Adventures

By Amanda Bestor

8 of 16 classes are sponsored! Thank you! Sponsors are still needed for Audubon Adventures.

Bitterroot Audubon is proud to offer *Audubon Adventures* once again to teachers and students around the valley for no cost. This resource is free because generous Bitterroot Audubon members provide donations to cover the fees for all the materials. This year we currently have over 300 students in 16 different classrooms across the valley that are excited to learn about birds with this program.

NEW for 2015-2016! Action for Planet Earth Classroom Kit with print and online components. Three topics focus on protecting Earth's natural resources.

- (1) Why and how to protect habitats that are home to all living things.
- (2) Sources of and challenges to essential clean water resources and how to preserve them.
- (3) Different forms and sources of energy and their pros and cons.

Student newspaper for each topic in printed form plus online interactive features, teacher guide, e-

newsletter subscription, and resources.

There is a print and online kit that costs: **\$45.95** or a digital kit that costs: **\$16.00**

We currently have 12 classrooms that are interested in the print edition and 2 classrooms that are signed up for the digital kit. Many teachers liked the print option because they could use some of the lessons outside or were limited with technology access.

To sponsor a classroom, please make your check payable to:

Bitterroot Audubon and send it to-
Bitterroot Audubon

Attn: Audubon Adventures

P.O Box 326, Hamilton, MT 59840

For more information or to register a program, teachers should contact:

amandabestor4@gmail.com

“Three levels” of Audubon

By David Cronenwett, Development Specialist with Montana Audubon

When I tell people I work for Montana Audubon, I often get a response like, “That’s great, I’m a member of the Audubon Society.” I then ask if they are also a member of *Montana Audubon*, and they come back with a quizzical, “Isn’t that the same thing?” There is sometimes confusion when the word “Audubon” is used in an organization’s name so with this in mind, I’d like to take a moment to explain the “three levels” of Audubon.

In 1976, the local National Audubon chapters in Montana came together to establish an independent organization that could deal directly with important conservation issues across the state. Perhaps this was done because of Montana’s physical remoteness and cultural distance from the National Audubon office in New York City. At the time, chapter leaders were especially interested in affecting policy change by lobbying the Montana Legislature. Thus, Montana Audubon, an independent entity from both National Audubon and its local chapters, was born.

While each “Audubon” shares nearly identical mission statements, they play different roles on the broader conservation stage. National Audubon frequently deals with issues on a continental, even global scale such as climate change and long-

Calendar of Events

Dec 11-MT Audubon Wildlife Project Grant
Applications due

Dec 19-Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR,
Stevensville, MT 10AM-12PM.

Dec 19-Hamilton Christmas Bird Count, Teller
Education Building, 730 AM

Dec 26-Stevensville Christmas Bird Count,
Stevensville Ranger Station, 730 AM

Jan 3, 2016-Big Hole Christmas Bird Count, contact
Kate Stone (381-1115, krosestone@hotmail.com) to
register

distance flyways. They also carry the heavy political clout one would expect from a big, century-old organization.

Local chapters of National Audubon, such as **Bitterroot Audubon Society**, tend to engage in very-localized conservation projects as well as education and outreach efforts. Montana Audubon's niche in the "Audubon family" is somewhere in the middle; through our conservation policy, bird science and education programs, we seek to protect the wildlife and landscape qualities that we all cherish about our magnificent state.

In short, National Audubon, Montana Audubon and local chapters of National Audubon while historically related, are each *independent nonprofit organizations*. That said, we often work cooperatively, share data, information and occasionally even financial resources. Montana Audubon for example, in addition to other fundraising, receives a small percentage of membership dues from the chapters on a voluntary basis. It works in the other direction as well, with Montana Audubon contributing expertise and staff time to chapter-level projects.

Though a bit confusing, all three "levels" of Audubon fill important niches in working toward the goal of bird and habitat conservation. If you have further questions about the work of Montana Audubon, please feel free to contact David Cronenwett at david@mtaudubon.org.

News and Notes

Montana Audubon Wildlife Grants Available—Apply Today! Are you working on a project benefiting non-game wildlife? Montana Audubon is

offering small grants (\$500 maximum/\$1,600 total) for wildlife research and education projects through our Audubon Wildlife Fund of Montana endowment. Funds can be used for mileage, equipment, printing, and communications (but not salaries, stipends, and personal equipment). To apply for a grant, visit <http://mtaudubon.org/about/wildlife-grants/>. Applications must be emailed (*preferred*) or postmarked by Friday, December 11, 2015. Grant recipients will be announced by February 1, 2016. For more information, contact Janet Ellis at jellis@mtaudubon.org.

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.

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 December 19th at 10AM for a two hour bird walk. Bring binoculars if you have them. Contact the refuge at [\(406\) 777-5552](tel:4067775552) for more information.

Bird Shots



Trumpeter Swan.

Courtesy Carol Babel

BITTERROOT AUDUBON
PO BOX 326
HAMILTON MT 59840-0326

Officers

President	Becky Peters*	369-5210
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	370-4778
Programs	Kay Fulton*	642-3794
Website	Kate Stone*	381-1115
Education	Amanda Bestor	369-1482
Newsltr Eds &	Sara Ashline* baseditors@gmail.com	
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	Alex Shaffer*	

* 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 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

National Audubon Society, Inc.
225 Varick Street, 7th Floor
New York, NY 10014
Attn: Chance Mueleck