

Bitterroot AUDUBON



APRIL 2016

NEWSLETTER

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Creating the Largest Nature Reserve in the Continental United States

By Kay Fulton



Located in northeastern Montana, American Prairie Reserve (APR) is using a bold new vision for 21st century conservation to build one of the largest conservation projects since the creation of our great National Parks. When complete, the Reserve will span 3.5 million acres of private and public land, all permanently set aside for wildlife and public enjoyment. Visitors to the Reserve already enjoy reconnecting with nature and iconic wildlife species including bison, pronghorn, elk, and prairie dogs, not to mention one of the largest concentrations of grassland birds in North America. The Reserve also plays a critical role in the preservation of a number of bird species, including Burrowing Owls, Long-billed Curlew, Greater Sage Grouse, American White Pelican and Swainson's Hawk.

APR was privately created in 2004 for the purpose of conserving surviving mixed grass prairie of the Great Plains ecosystem and restoring critical wildlife habitat. APR now owns and leases 305,000 acres in Eastern Montana. It is located one hour south of the hi-line town of Malta and east of Zortman. It borders public lands and the C.M. Russell National Wildlife

Refuge. This is truly history in the making and especially important in this year when we celebrate the 100th year anniversary of the establishment of the National Parks in the United States.



Bitterroot Audubon invites you to learn more about this amazing endeavor from Michael Wainwright, spokesman for APR and their Annual Giving and Foundations Manager, Monday, April 18th 7:00 P.M. at the Forest Service/Natural Resources Building, 1801 North 1st (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 Becky Peters, BAS
President*



So I missed last meeting's very informative session because Bill and I were off to Kauai with the grandkids. And I am missing this coming April's meeting because Bill and I will be doing a Bucket List trip by floating down the Colorado River and enjoying the Grand Canyon from the bottom. (I will NOT walk the trail from the top to the bottom again!!) And along with these two trips we drove down to Death Valley last month to see the Super Bloom of desert flowers! Now when we do these trips we do them with some guilt. "What about our carbon footprint on the environment?" We are very cognizant that we are harming our planet when we use up non-renewable energy and yet here we go again to enjoy what the planet has to offer. Montana Audubon is also aware of these contradictory issues when they organize bird tours to various countries and at the same time they work so hard to take care of the environment and our birds' habitats. The Montana Audubon Board has regularly discussed whether to offer bird trips out of state or not and we are gradually organizing less of them. There are so many beautiful bird sites here in our state and the U.S. It is an ongoing conundrum. Full disclosure: Bill and I have taken unbelievable and memorable Montana Audubon Bird Tours to Costa Rica and Veracruz Mexico. How did we assuage our guilt? By offsetting our carbon foot print. "A *carbon offset* is a reduction in emissions of carbon dioxide or greenhouse gases made in order to compensate for or to *offset* an emission made elsewhere." Some may scoff but at least we are going to keep donating to charities that will do some good for the planet. We choose our carbon neutral organizations by using Charity Navigator <http://www.charitynavigator.org>

Each trip we carbon offset for we update with Charity Navigator beforehand to see which organizations have the best ratings. Here are some sites we have used or looked at previously:

<http://www.carbonfootprint.com/carbonoffset.html>

(You can choose which carbon offset project you want to donate to. We usually go for planting trees!)

<http://www.terrapass.com/carbon-footprint-calculator/>

<https://gozero.conervationfund.org/calc>

If you have a major trip coming up or just want to

offset your daily household carbon footprint check out these or other sites. You will be helping hardworking charities which aim to help our beautiful spacecraft for future generations.

And remember you can always take several fantastic bird tours locally this June!! Just sign up for the Montana Audubon Bird Festival in Missoula. And sign up as soon as possible because tours are filling up fast.

Have a great meeting and see you in May!

eBird workshop

By Kate Stone

Bitterroot Audubon is presenting a hands-on workshop on how to use eBird on Tuesday, April 26th at 7 pm. The workshop will be held at the North Valley Public Library's Community Meeting Room in Stevensville. Participants must register for this workshop by contacting Kate Stone (kroestone@hotmail.com)

We Need Your Help Monitoring Birds

By Sherry Ritter

Bitterroot Audubon is trying to get a sense of how bird populations are doing in the Bitterroot River Important Bird Area (IBA). The IBA stretches from Woodside Crossing near Corvallis north to Lolo. Besides getting general species lists for sites within the IBA, we're interesting in finding out how our focal species are doing and where they occur: Great Blue Heron, Bald Eagle, Lewis's Woodpecker, Red-naped Sapsucker, Willow Flycatcher, and Red-eyed Vireo.

We'd like to encourage Bitterroot Audubon members to survey for our focal species. Your surveys can start now, because the eagles and herons are on their nests. The other birds will start showing up in the valley in April and May.

Please see our [IBA web page](#) for information on where your birding can help us out and how to record information. If you have any questions, please contact Sherry Ritter, 370-4778, sherryritternature@gmail.com.

Thank you so very much to this year's sponsors for Audubon Adventures

By Amanda Bestor

We now have all 16 Audubon Adventures classes sponsored. These provide over 300 students lessons about birds, habitat, and environmental issues facing their survival. I really appreciate the

generosity of our members. I hope to see you out at the Bitterroot Audubon booth at the Teller Wildlife Refuge Youth Expo on Saturday May, 14th. If you are interested in joining us at the education booth, please let me know (amandabestor4@gmail.com).

Bitterroot Audubon Society's 31st Annual Welcome Back Waterfowl Day

By Judy Hoy

We had a gorgeous day for Bitterroot Audubon's 31st Welcome Back Waterfowl Day (WBWD) on Saturday, April 2 at the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge. Welcome Back Waterfowl Day is now an International Migratory Bird Day event. Thank you to the estimated 70 to 80 people who came to help us celebrate the returning migrants.



Courtesy Karen Griffing
Rehabilitated Long-eared Owl. Lee Metcalf NWR,
April 2016.

Even with warm sunny weather, attendees found only 39 species of waterfowl, raptors, songbirds and other birds, considerably fewer than the 51 species seen last year on a cold windy day one week later. Many common species we often see were not found this year. Two birds were seen that are quite unusual for our WBWD count, a Ring-billed Gull and a Say's Phoebe. We also saw a bird with unusual coloring. A male American Widgeon with gleaming white cheeks

and head stripe surrounding the brilliant green area behind the eye was actively courting female widgeons. A male American Widgeon usually has grey cheeks. I couldn't tell if the female widgeons were as impressed with his appearance as I was.



Courtesy Karen Griffing
Welcome Back Waterfowl Day participants.

Thank you to John Ormiston, Fred Weisbecker, Bob Hoy and Mike Daniels for assisting visitors in finding and identifying waterfowl and other birds. The Bitterroot Audubon Society sincerely thanks the staff of the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge for helping people learn about and enjoy the returning migrants. A special thank you to Bob Danley for doing the publicity and to Dave Lockman for making the bird check-off sheet.

These are the 39 species seen on WBWD this year:

Great Blue Heron	Green-winged Teal
Snow Goose	Mallard
Ross's Goose	Northern Pintail
Canada Goose	Cinnamon Teal
	Northern Shoveler
	Gadwall
American Wigeon	Bald Eagle
Canvasback	Northern Harrier
Ring-necked Duck	Red-tailed Hawk
Lesser Scaup	Ring-necked Pheasant

Common Goldeneye	American Coot
Bufflehead	Sandhill Crane
Hooded Merganser	Killdeer
Common Merganser	Northern Flicker
Ruddy Duck	Tree Swallow
Turkey Vulture	Black-billed Magpie
Common Raven	Song Sparrow
Black-capped Chickadee	Red-winged Blackbird
Marsh Wren	Western Meadowlark
European Starling	Ring-billed Gull
	Say's Phoebe



June 3-5, 2016 Missoula, Montana

The annual Bird Festival is fast approaching. You should have received your registration brochure by now, so please register early by mailing the registration page or go online at www.mtaudubon.org. Field trips are already filling up—while still plenty of options available, but you may not get your first choice. If you're registering online, you only choose one field trip per day as the system will not allow you to register for a trip that is full; if you are registering by mail, be sure to include 1st, 2nd and 3rd choices.

Rooms have been blocked at the Holiday Inn Downtown. Call 1-406-721-8550 or 1-800-399-0408 and mention you're with Montana Audubon (code MAS) to get the discounted rate.

Each year Montana Audubon recognizes outstanding 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 at www.mtaudubon.org/about/awards.html.

Nominations are due at the office by May 19, 2016. Mail completed forms to Montana Audubon, PO Box 595, Helena MT 59624.

Register soon and join us in Missoula in June. You will be treated to wonderful birding and non-birding tours, Friday evening and Saturday afternoon

speakers, Erick Greene, Kate Davis, Jeff Marks, and American Prairie Reserve. Special items this year: purchase your copy of the new *Birds of Montana Book*—co-authors will be available for signing; PLUS be in on the beginning of our celebration of our 40th year!

News and Notes

Corvid Intelligence Study

By Judy Hoy

Here is a link to an article about a study of Corvid intelligence that may be interesting to BAS members:

http://naut.us/blog/why-neuroscientists-need-to-study-the-crow#.Vu_h8ibouHg.linkedin

Calendar of Events

Apr 16-Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT 10AM-12PM.

Apr 18- Audubon Meeting, Forest Service/DNRC Building, Hamilton, MT 7PM, Board Mtg. 5PM

Apr 26-eBird Workshop, North Valley Public Library's Community Meeting Room in Stevensville. Contacting Kate Stone to register krosestone@hotmail.com, 7PM

May 14- Teller Wildlife Refuge Youth Expo

May 16-BAS Board elections

May 19-MT Audubon award nominations due date

Jun 3-5- Missoula, MT, Wings Across the Big Sky Festival

We Need Your Help! Sign the petition to put Initiative I-177 on the ballot

By Jill Davies

Trapping is cruel and indiscriminate and is contributing to a steep decline in populations of rare animals and birds, including Eagles.

Signatures are needed for a petition to get Initiative I-177 on the November Ballot, which would then let the public vote on the measure. I-177 would stop trapping on public lands only (about 1/3 of Montana), not on private lands. It allows trapping for certain management purposes. Around 25,000 approved signatures from 34 legislative districts must be gathered in order to put the measure up for a vote. There will be a table at the next BAS

meeting with petition sheets and more information. Call Jill Davies, 642-3601, for more information or go to www.trapfreemt.org.

For a Cleaner Environment -Sign Initiative 180

I-180 calls for a gradual increase in renewal energy supply from investor-owned utilities in Montana to 80 percent by 2050. Twenty-one states now have renewable requirements of more than Montana's 15 percent. For the state to export power it needs to be the type of power the market demands. Anticipating closure of coal mines, I-180 also would levy taxes on each kilowatt of electricity produced to fund worker retraining programs and pension safety nets, and to offset reductions in tax revenue from the coal severance tax.

I-180 is well thought out, thoroughly vetted, necessary, practical, and possible. More information can be found on www.mtcares.org. Pamela Morris is circulating I-180 petitions in Ravalli County: pamelamorris0602@gmail.com phone 961-8880.

Call for Montana Audubon Award Nominations

By Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon

Please nominate a deserving person for their work for conservation and/or Audubon! We are now seeking nominations for awards that will be given away at Montana Audubon's June annual meeting in Missoula. The awards acknowledge individuals who exemplify a commitment to birds, other wildlife, and habitat conservation. This year awards will be given for Conservationist of the Year, Environmental Educator of the Year, Special Achievement, Citizen

Scientist of the Year, and Lifetime Achievement Award.

To nominate your candidate, please visit our website at mtaudubon.org/about/award/. To be considered for this year's award, nominations must be submitted no later than May 19, 2016. Nominations can be submitted by email (PREFERRED!) or mailed to Montana Audubon, PO Box 595, Helena, MT 59624. Questions? Contact Janet Ellis at 406-443-3949 or <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 BAEditors@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 16th 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 Ginny Deck

Mountain Bluebird, Chaffin Butte, Corvallis, MT, April 2016

BITTERROOT AUDUBON
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At large	Skip Horner*	642-6840
	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

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Attn: Chance Mueleck