

Bitterroot AUDUBON



JANUARY 2016

NEWSLETTER

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The Great Rimo Expedition: The Biggest Adventure of My Life

By Skip Horner

On January 18, 2016, Skip Horner, well-known Adventure Guide, popular lecturer and accomplished photographer will recount one of the most impactful adventures of his life, a program not to be missed.



Courtesy Skip Horner

“It was a multi-national expedition into India's remote and officially inaccessible Eastern Karakorum Mountains to climb Rimo I, 24,230', one of the highest unclimbed peaks in the world at the time, and to raft the wild and un-run Shyok River that drains it. It was a two-month expedition that lasted four months, highlighted by excellent climbing conditions and great camaraderie, but also fractious group in-fighting, and the theft of all of our film and the last morsels of food. Foul weather, government duplicity and intransigence, deceitful support staff, implacable border guards on horseback, and threats of espionage all played a part. It was a grand adventure.”

Skip has guided a wide variety of adventures worldwide for over 40 years. He was the first to guide the 7 Summits, the highest mountain on every continent. He led the first descents of over a dozen wild rivers on 5 continents, including the Zambezi,

the Indus, and the Yangtze. He has skied the highest peaks in the Arctic and the Antarctic, led camel caravans across the Sahara, and chased solar eclipses across 3 continents.



Courtesy Skip Horner

Come join Bitterroot Audubon, Monday, January 18th -7:00 P.M. at the Forest Service/Natural Resources Building, 1801 North 1st (north end of Hamilton, west side of HWY 93) for another of Skip's great adventures. Enter on the west side of the building. THE PUBLIC IS INVITED. Contact Kay Fulton (642-3794) for more information).

Chapter Members Renewal Deadline

If you are a BAS chapter member, your membership fee (\$15) is due by January 31, 2016. Please send payment to Bitterroot Audubon Society, PO Box 326, Hamilton, MT 59840.

Recap: 29th Annual Hamilton Christmas Bird Count (CBC)

By John Ormiston

December 19, 2015, What a great day! A fine day to spend looking for birds, counting birds, and enjoying the company of congenial folks. The weather was not the best but the snow storm of the early morning moderated to a mostly cloudy afternoon with temperatures in the low 30's. Bird numbers were down, especially waterfowl, but we saw 78 species- only 5 fewer than the all-time record from 2013. We had one new species, a Western Tanager, but only during count week. (He left Bitterroot Nursery on about 12/17.)

There were 29 field observers, 22 feeder watchers. We covered about 189 snow covered miles driving and 19 walking; there were 7 parties in the field. Feeder watchers are a very important segment of our counting efforts, they added 5 species to the list seen by people in the field.

We saw new record highs for only 3 species: American Kestrel (25), Long-eared Owl (7), and White-breasted Nuthatch (54) but there were only 3 fewer Mourning Doves (206) than the record. The number of Red-tailed Hawks (83, 50 above average) exceeded the number of Rough-legged Hawks (54, right at average) for only the fifth time. It was a great day for raptors, we saw every one of the species that normally winter here including Prairie Falcons, Merlin, and Kestrel, and the Accipiters for only the seventh time. Almost everyone had great looks at and some got pictures of a Ferruginous Hawk we've seen for only the third time.

We saw 6,510 birds, 40% of them waterfowl (below the average of 49%). We've seen 31 species every year and 21 species only once. With the addition of the Western Tanager, we have seen a total of 130 species in the Hamilton CBC Circle.

All in all it was a great day, thanks to those who spent their day helping add to the data base. Time to look forward to the 30th annual Hamilton CBC and another chili and Oreos lunch, December 17, 2016. Special thanks to Colleen Powell for coordinating Feeder Watchers and to Bill Good for the outstanding chili and Oreos lunch, both for the 29th time. The Teller has hosted our gathering each year of the Hamilton CBC.

Look for complete results of the 116th Annual

National Audubon Christmas Bird Count at <http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count>

Recap: 51st Annual Stevensville Christmas Bird Count

By Dave Lockman, Compiler

The 51st annual Stevi CBC took place on December 26th, 2015. The weather was cooperative, with temperatures ranging from 18 to 29 degrees, calm winds and good visibility. Running the Count on the day after Christmas limited participation to some extent, but we still had 30 field observers and 32 feeder watchers helping to count the birds around Stevi. Thanks to all those who participated!

Birds seemed kind of scattered, but we found a total of 80 species and about 12,000 individual birds, with one report still outstanding. About 23% of birds counted were either Canada Geese or Mallards. We didn't find any new species, so our cumulative count remains at 158 species over the 51 years of the Count. However, Chukar, Barn Owl, Chestnut-backed Chickadee and Ruby-crowned Kinglet were unusual species that had each only appeared on the Count once previously. We found new record high numbers for American Kestrel, Merlin, California Quail, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Dark-eyed Junco and House Sparrow. Waterfowl numbers were generally down, and raptor numbers were about average. Numbers of red-breasted and pygmy nuthatches were noticeably low, as were numbers of "winter finches", and we didn't find a single waxwing for only the fourth time in the history of the Stevi CBC. See the BAS website for a complete list, or <http://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count> for more information about this and other CBCs.

Recap: 9th Annual Big Hole Christmas Bird Count

By Kate Stone

Twenty observers ventured out into quite pleasant conditions for the Big Hole Christmas Bird Count. We counted 25 species, our highest species count ever in one day, and brought our overall count total to over 50. Top species included the Snow Bunting (195), Black-billed Magpie (131), and Common Redpoll (116). Curiously, we did not count any American Tree Sparrows, a species we've seen every other year. New species for the count

included the Ruffed Grouse, Bohemian Waxwing, Steller's Jay, and American Goldfinch



Courtesy Mike Daniels

Bohemian Waxwing, Big Hole CBC.

Letter from the President

*By Becky Peters, BAS
President*

To Feed or Not to Feed?

I hope that the Holidays were wonderful for you and yours. Did you get or give any bird related gifts?? Did you get to any CBC's? Sure hope so! Bill and I did not get to even one this year! Shame on us! Two of those CBC dates we were with grandchildren in Colorado and last January 3rd we were unpacking boxes and finally moving back into our restored house (from a water leak in June!!)

So here we are in January with snow on the ground and we clutch our warm coats to us as we brave the cold weather. What do our birds do? How do they survive and what can we do to help them? Those questions bring up some interesting points about feeding birds in the winter.

One viewpoint is that we don't need to feed birds at all. After all they have done fine without us for eons!

And besides, some studies are showing that when we place feeders close together and the various birds intermingle they end up sharing parasites and diseases that make other birds sick and weak.

You can read more at

<https://www.audubon.org/news/to-feed-or-not-feed>

In an article in the Audubon Magazine from 2000 "The Winter Banquet" -

<http://archive.audubonmagazine.org/backyard/backyard0001.html> the author, Stephen Kress, states that there are better things to do to help the birds in the winter, for example improve your backyard habitat through landscaping. Other authors suggest piling up leaves and debris before the snow flies so that bugs can collect there and then be eaten. Also make a log



and limbs pile for the birds to perch on and shelter under. One of the best ways to help our feathered friends is to establish some sort of heated water source during the cold winter months.

If you do feed the birds there are some important points to remember:

- They won't starve if you are gone for a while.

They will forage elsewhere (they know the territory) Their survival rates only depend on feeders if there is a prolonged period of extreme cold.

- If they should be migrating they won't linger too long just because you have put out food. It's the length of the day, not the feeder that motivates them.

- Have varied and multiple feeders in different places. Some birds like the feeders high, some like them near the ground. Useful types of feeders are: Ground-feeding tables, Tube feeders, Suet feeders, Hopper feeders and Thistle feeders.

- Clean up after the birds, don't let the seeds get gooey on the ground and spread disease. And clean the feeders about twice a year (10 % bleach solution; one part bleach to nine parts water)

- As Dug would say "Squirrel!!!" So yes, there will be squirrels! Did you know they are territorial? Simply get a squirrel feeder, or two, with corn and set it up far away from where you feed the birds. Give it a try.

- If your feeders are on the northern side or in a windy area consider placing them in a more sunny and sheltered area.

- Of course no cats outside if you are setting up feeders.

- Have a variety of seeds and fruits and suet to offer the variety of birds you would get in your area.

- And take your feeders down during the mating season in the spring, especially if you have large picture windows. The males will attack the reflection in the window to protect their territory.

I will have copies of these two articles for anyone at our next meeting. They go into greater detail about the different feed, the variety of feeders and the birds that like them. I'll also include some landscaping suggestions in a spring newsletter so that we can all plant even more beneficial winter habitat for our birds.

See you on Monday, January 18th!

Winter Meadowlarks

By Kate Stone

How often have you seen Western Meadowlarks in the winter? Birders pick them up on approximately half of the Stevensville and Hamilton Christmas Bird Counts, with 12 this year in Stevensville, and 8 in Hamilton. We'd like to improve our knowledge of their winter abundance and distribution in the Bitterroot Valley. We encourage you to report your observations to eBird. If you aren't an eBird user yet, email us (contactus@bitterrootaudubon.com) with information about location, date, time, and number. The person who submits the most observations between December and end of February will get a prize!!



Courtesy Kate Stone

Western Meadowlark.

News and Notes

National Audubon Photo Awards Call for entries! The 2016 Audubon Photography contest is now open. From now until midnight ET on February 19, 2016, you can enter your best bird photos at audubonphotoawards.org.

Your best shots, in the categories of amateur, professional, and fine art, could win a cash prize. The youth winner (and a parent or guardian) will win a five day session at Audubon's Hog Island camp in Maine.

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 January 16th 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.

2016 Great Backyard Bird Count Feb 12-15, 2016

1. [Register for the count](#) or use your existing login name and password. If you have never participated in the Great Backyard Bird Count or any other Cornell Lab citizen-science project, you'll need to [create a new account](#). If you already created an account for last year's GBBC, or if you're already registered with eBird or another Cornell Lab citizen-science project, you can use your existing login information.
2. **Count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the GBBC.** You can count for longer than that if you wish! Count birds in as many places and on as many days as you like—one day, two days, or all four days. Submit a separate checklist for each new day, for each new location, or for the same location if you counted at a different time of day. Estimate the number of individuals of each species you saw during your count period.
3. **Enter your results on the GBBC website by clicking "[Submit Observations](#)" on the home page.** Or download the free [eBird Mobile app](#) to enter data on a mobile device. If you already participate in the eBird citizen-science project, please use eBird to submit your sightings during the GBBC. Your checklists will count toward the GBBC.

Calendar of Events

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

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

Jan 31- Chapter-only membership renewal due, \$15

Feb 12-15-Great Backyard Bird Count

Feb 19-National Audubon Photo Award Contest deadline

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



wings across the big sky

June 3-5, 2016 Missoula, Montana

Field Trips

During the winter months, many birders find themselves dreaming of long summer days chasing diverse species of our feathered friends across beautiful Montana landscapes. Remember, it's not too early to begin planning your summer birding adventures! When migration season begins in earnest, come join us in Missoula for **Montana Audubon's 16th Annual Bird Festival, this year co-hosted by Five Valleys Audubon, June 3 - 5 at the Holiday Inn Downtown at the Park.**

We have over 20 field trips planned for each day!— guided by knowledgeable birders and naturalists familiar with the species and their habitats in the Missoula area. Here is just a brief sampling of some of those trips to contemplate as you anticipate the upcoming Bird Festival:

Bass Creek

This trip will explore upland meadows (including irrigated hayfields), foothill forests and riparian habitat. The primary goal of the trip is to observe a large breeding colony of bobolinks, and renew our knowledge of bobolink ecology. Companion species in the fields are savannah sparrow, common yellowthroat, Wilson's snipe, red-winged and Brewer's blackbirds. Species observed in the riparian portion on past field trips include; least and willow flycatchers, warbling vireo, northern waterthrush, American redstart, Bullock's oriole, song sparrow, spotted sandpiper, belted kingfisher, and several species of ducks. We may also visit with local landowners to discuss conservation projects.

Pattee Canyon - Sam Braxton Trail

This field trip will follow a three-mile loop on a National Recreation Trail through ponderosa pine, western larch and Douglas fir forests with an elevation gain of 300 feet. Possible specialty birds include Clark's nutcracker, Steller's and gray jays, three-toed woodpecker, pileated woodpecker, Williamson's sapsucker, brown creeper, red crossbill, and pine grosbeak.

Upsata Lake – Monture Creek

This trip through the Ovando Valley will include a drive up Woodworth Road to Upsata Lake, looking for bobolinks, sandhill cranes, long-billed curlews, trumpeter swans, common loons, warblers, and a variety of ducks. We'll walk around part of the lake, birding the prairie potholes and surrounding grasslands. If time permits, we will drive to Monture Creek Campground and look for riparian and forest species such as American redstart, ruby- and golden-crowned kinglets, pileated woodpecker, and perhaps an American dipper.

Keep watch in early March: Festival Registration Brochures with all field trip information, speakers and schedules will be in the mail, and the online system for registration will be active.

For more information please contact Montana Audubon Bird Festival Coordinator, Cathie Erickson, cerickson@mtaudubon.org, or call (406) 443-3949.

Hamilton CBC 2016 Results					
Species	Ct.	Species	Ct.	Species	Ct.
AMERICAN COOT	18	GRAY JAY	2	FERRUGINOUS HAWK	2
AMERICAN CROW	2	GRAY PARTRIDGE	8	GOLDEN EAGLE	1
AMERICAN DIPPER	10	GREAT BLUE HERON	17	GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET	1
AMERICAN GOLDFINCH	85	GREAT GRAY OWL	3	PRAIRIE FALCON	2
AMERICAN KESTREL	25	GREAT-HORNED OWL	3	PYGMY NUTHATCH	16
AMERICAN TREE SPARROW	39	GREEN-WINGED TEAL	10	RED CROSSBILL	9
BALD EAGLE	16	HAIRY WOODPECKER	18	RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH	57
BALD EAGLE TOTAL	16	HARLAN'S HAWK	3	RED-TAILED HAWK	83
BARROW'S GOLDENEYE	4	HOODED MERGANSER	1	RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD	217
BELTED KINGFISHER	18	HORNED LARK	97	RING-NECKED DUCK	24
BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE	256	HOUSE FINCH	475	RING-NECKED PHEASANT	50
BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE	233	HOUSE SPARROW	400	ROCK DOVE	159
BREWER'S BLACKBIRD	1	KILLDEER	3	ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK	56
BROWN CREEPER	7	LONG-EARED OWL	7	SHARP-SHINNED HAWK	2
BUFFLEHEAD	16	MALLARD	422	SHORT-EARED OWL	1
CALIFORNIA QUAIL	440	MARSH WREN	1	SONG SPARROW	22
CANADA GOOSE	1689	MERLIN	1	STELLER'S JAY	23
CLARK'S NUTCRACKER	13	MOUNTAIN CHICKADEE	15	THREE-TOED WOODPECKER	3
COMMON GOLDENEYE	57	MOURNING DOVE	206	TUNDRA SWAN	1
COMMON MERGANSER	11	NORTHERN FLICKER	103	WESTERN MEADOWLARK	8
COMMON RAVEN	52	NORTHERN GOSHAWK	1	WESTERN Tanager	CW
COMMON REDPOLL	34	NORTHERN HARRIER	18	WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH	54
COOPER'S HAWK	2	NORTHERN PINTAIL	1	WILD TURKEY	91
DARK-EYED JUNCO	146	NORTHERN SHOVELER	4	WILSON'S SNIPE	4
DOWNY WOODPECKER	34	NORTHERN SHRIKE	2		
EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE	335	PILEATED WOODPECKER	6	Total Species	78
EUROPEAN STARLING	130	PINE SISKIN	108	Total Birds	6510

Bird Shots



Courtesy Jim Hamilton

Steller's Jay taking a raw peanut from a feeder, Florence, MT.

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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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