

Bitterroot AUDUBON



FEBRUARY 2019

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 33, NO. 6

A BIRDING SAFARI IN EAST AFRICA WITH SKIP HORNER

Babblers & Chatterers, Broadbills, Waxbills, Shoebills,
Scimitarbills, Oxpeckers & Bee-eaters, Flufftails, Finfoots,
Loveleaves

By Kay Fulton

You mean SKIP HORNER, the well-known mountain guide, who has guided people to the highest peaks on each of the 7 continents, spent 30+ seasons guiding in the Himalayas, guided in Antarctica and the Arctic, and many, many more obscure ranges???



Courtesy Nancy Meyerhoffer

African Jacana.

Yes, in fact, Skip has been coming down from guiding people up Mount Kilimanjaro and then continued to guide his clients on Safaris!! He actually has guided many dozens of safaris in East Africa since 1981.

Skip confesses that his “thrill with large mammals remains, of course. They’re the icons of the continent. But he prefers to search for the quieter, smaller creatures. While others are peering north at a lion on a kill, Skip is looking south at an overworked male weaverbird building its fourth nest for his still-unsatisfied wife. While others squint into the sun to see that far-off rhino, Skip is whistling back to the honeyguide on a branch overhead that invites us with musical down-slurs to follow him to a hidden beehive for a shared feast of rich wild honey. Skip’s threadbare bird book has check-marks on every page.”



Courtesy Nancy Meyerhoffer

Open-billed Stork.



Courtesy Skip Horner

Kori Bustard.



Courtesy Skip Horner

Three-ringed Plover.



Courtesy Skip Horner

Crowned Crane.



Courtesy Nancy Meyerhoffer

Long Toed Lapwing.

Skip began birding as a young boy and has spent a lifetime honing his skills. Although many of his adventures take him into environments not very conducive for birds, he has looked for them in as many areas as possible and has found that “East Africa is the best place in the world to see the most and loveliest bird species the quickest and the easiest. You never realize that the rainbow holds so many color variations until you glance at an East African bird guide. It is home to over 1300 species

of birds, with some of the rarest birds anywhere, some still unidentified. From the rollicking flocks of millions of Red-billed Queleas, to the rare glimpse of a Shoebill, a giant stork-like bird, wading through the swamps at the headwaters of the Nile, birds are everywhere. Its wide-open plains, mixed Acacia forests, enormous lakesides, montane woodlands, and approachable rain forests make this a birder’s dream, the place to go to ramp up a life-list or just to experience the sheer glory of multifarious birdlife in unaltered bioscapes. Added to the mix are 100+ endemic species found only in their own little corner of the continent. All you need are your binoculars and your bird book, but a knowledgeable guide helps immensely.”

BITTERROOT AUDUBON INVITES YOU TO COME JOIN US MONDAY, FEBRUARY 18TH, 7 P.M. FOR A “PHOTOGRAPHIC ROMP THROUGH THE BUSH WITH SKIP!” THE MEETING WILL BE HELD AT THE NORTH VALLEY LIBRARY IN STEVENSVILLE, 208 MAIN STREET (NOTE THE UPDATED LOCATION) THE PUBLIC IS INVITED. FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT KAY AT 360-8664.



Courtesy Skip Horner

Squacco Heron.

Letter from the President

By Becky Peters, BAS President

You Count, so Count the Birds so that They Count!

<https://www.audubon.org/conservation/about-great-backyard-bird-count>



The Great Backyard Bird Count

I think I share this every February, but it is a good reminder. In this time of global climate change we

Calendar of Events

Feb 15-18: The Great Backyard Bird Count

Feb 18: Audubon Meeting “A BIRDING SAFARI IN EAST AFRICA WITH SKIP HORNER,” North Valley Public Library, Stevensville, MT, 7PM, Board Mtg. 5PM.

Mar 18: Audubon Meeting Location TBA, 7PM, Board Mtg. 5PM.

need an idea of how our birds are doing globally more than ever. So starting this February 15th and going till Monday the 18th you get to count birds for 15 minutes and then turn in your sightings to birdcount.org. Do this for just one day or for each of the four days. Watch your feeders from the warmth of your living room or go for a walk in a park. Go alone or grab a kid or two!

Why do you count so much that we need you to do a GBBC? Because you, as a citizen scientist, will collect data and turn it in and that helps to gather more information than a few scientists could ever do on their own. And this is a worldwide activity. We send in the data from around the world to Audubon and other avian scientists. If the scientists notice a trend where there is a decline in population then it is easier to study a possible threat to a species before it becomes endangered. The data we turn in can become early warning reports and maybe even healthy reports!! The scientists can produce reports about bird populations over time, impacts from development, deforestation, land conversion and climate change. Hopefully there are even reports of trends where populations of some species are rebounding due to human help. As one appreciative scientist put it “We’re a team. You have more eyes, more ears.”

What are the steps? <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/get-started/> Create an account, count the birds then submit the observations on their gbbc home page or on your cell with eBird mobile app.

“When we save birds from large-scale threats we see that what’s good for the birds is also good for us. This is true about agriculture, fishing, and climate change. As we solve their problems we solve ours. This is about everyone’s quality of life.”
—**Gary Langham**, *National Audubon Science Director*

Falling in Love with a Bird!

By Becky Peters, BAS President

We had the gift of getting to know a Great Gray Owl in our neighborhood. Many of our friends would keep an eye on her, take her picture, and learn about her. We were in awe of this huge bird, she took our breath away! But we worried about her. She would fly from post to post, right next to our parked cars, in the middle of the day! She would perch on posts right by a busy intersection. I always thought that Great Gray Owls liked dense pine forests with a meadow nearby and hunted at

dawn and dusk. Not this young gal. She became precious to us and we would look for her every day on the way in to town. I started calling her Gracie.



Courtesy Larry Dewey

Gracie, the Great Gray Owl in flight, Hamilton, MT.

(I know, I know!) Then one night she hit a truck. She was stunned, but not critically injured and was transported to a rehab place and fattened up with electrolytes and mice. When released we set her loose up in the pines with several meadows nearby. Perfect place! No go, she went back down to the same intersection. She was happy there for a while, catching voles and staying away from cars. But one day some friends were looking for Gracie far off in a field and noticed the cattle were acting agitated and that Gracie was nearby, wounded on the ground. Raptor experts were quickly called in, scooped her up and took her to Wild Skies Raptor Center in Missoula. She had been trampled by the cows, possibly pregnant cows being overly protective. My reaction as I heard the news was to keep repeating “It’s just one bird. It’s just one bird.” Who was I trying to kid?



Courtesy Mike Daniels

Gracie, the Great Gray Owl, Hamilton, MT.

At the Wild Skies Raptor Center Brooke Tanner and her team are doing a marvelous job of rehabbing her. Surgery was done to repair a broken wing, and other broken bones will most likely mend on their

own. As of February 1st, Gracie was standing on her own, gaining weight and eating mice on her own. Depending on her rehab she'll either be released – again, but somewhere else! – or live as an Educational Raptor. We owe Wild Skies Raptor a lot for what they do for our avian friends. With this gift of getting to know Gracie we could all realize the gift of Wild Skies Raptor and go to their website <http://wildskies.org/> to see what materials they need and donate to their cause. Gracie thanks you!! So - ***“If you've found an injured raptor (eagle, hawk, owl etc.) or songbird please call 406-210-3468 or 406-244-5422 for assistance.”***

Audubon Adventures News

By Betsy Ballard

Greetings – Bitterroot Audubon Members!
Thank you very much to all who have contributed to the Audubon Adventures Classroom program. Audubon Adventures is an environmental education curriculum product created by the National Audubon Society for grades 3 - 5. Developed by professional environmental educators, Audubon Adventures presents standards-based science content about birds, wildlife, and their habitats. We have contacted teachers, home school parents and libraries and have received requests for kits they would like.

We would welcome more sponsors for these kits that will be provided. If you wish to participate this school year, we and the teachers and educators greatly appreciate your support. Below is a link to Audubon adventures if you wish to see what curriculums are available.

<http://www.audubonadventures.org/>

The Classroom kits are \$45.95, which includes shipping. If you would like to donate, you can mail donations to: Bitterroot Audubon, P.O. Box 326, Hamilton, MT 59840, or bring it to a monthly meeting. If you have questions please call or text Betsy Ballard (cell phone -239-5105) or email at; diamondback@cybernet1.com

BIRD REHABILITATION REPORT FOR 2018

By Judy Hoy

In 2018, my sub-permittees, Maggie Hirschauer, Kristi Swisher and I received 42 injured or orphaned birds for care. The total number of birds received was far less than last year, because we received fewer hatchlings and fledglings than in previous years. Of the 42 birds received, 24 (57%) were

released. Most of the birds were adult or juvenile birds that were injured by impact trauma (windows or vehicles) and cats. Most birds injured by cats had to be euthanized or died. Cats kill over a billion birds a year in the United States. Please keep all cats inside, especially during nesting season.

One rehab success story was Buddy, an approximately four-year-old Bald Eagle that was found on Groff Lane unable to fly because of an injury to the shoulder of his right wing. He was transferred to Brooke Tanner for X-Rays, rehabilitation and flight conditioning. The damaged shoulder bone healed and Buddy was successfully released back into his territory sporting a blue band with a large 15 on his right leg and a silver band on the left. The last we saw of him, he was soaring around with several ravens high above the Groff Lane area. If anyone sees Buddy on an eagle cam or while eagle watching, please report the date and location of your sighting to Brooke Tanner montanawildskies@gmail.com or to me, bjhoy@localnet.com.



*Courtesy Montana Wild Skies
Buddy, the Bald Eagle, after being banded and released,
Hamilton, MT.*

Another interesting rehab bird is a female juvenile Great Gray Owl that was photographed by Mike Daniels prior to being injured when she flew into the side of a pickup. She was rescued by John Ormiston and brought to me by Bill and Becky Peters. The owl was an excellent patient and recovered fairly quickly from the bruises she received; fortunately, no bones were broken. After

practicing flying in a flight room she was released just west of where she was found in the Peter's beautiful forest habitat. Mike Daniels and others took photos of her on release day. She wasn't seen for a while, until Mike relocated her and began posting amazing photos of her on Facebook. On January 23, one of his photos of her was shown on KPAX. Good job, Mike! At some point she was given the name Gracie and is now a Facebook star at the following link.

https://www.facebook.com/groups/410471582361830/permalink/2040658249343147/?comment_id=2041511502591155&reply_comment_id=2044021685673470

My fellow rehabbers and I would like to thank everyone who donated to the Bitterroot Audubon Wildlife Rehabilitation Fund, all the people who rescued injured or orphaned wildlife, the Bitterroot Audubon Society and to all who helped wildlife last year. If you would like to donate to help with the cost of food and medicine for the birds being rehabilitated, make your check to Bitterroot Audubon WRF and mail it to Jim Story, 1136 Honey House Lane, Corvallis, MT 59828.

What's the story, Story?

By Jim Story

Question: *What is the purpose of "wing spreading" in cormorants and vultures?*

Answer: Birds like cormorants, pelicans and some storks, herons, vultures and hawks often spread their wings in a posture called "sun bathing" or "wing drying". To increase underwater speed, the feather structure of cormorants reduces buoyancy, which results in a lack of waterproofing. So, wing spreading by cormorants is probably done to dry the wings. Vultures and other birds apparently use wing spreading (often in the morning) to aid in body temperature regulation. The frequency of wing spreading appears to be related to sunlight intensity and occurs more often when the birds are wet. (some info from Birder's Handbook)

Local birding expert Jim Story answers your questions about birds and their habits. Jim welcomes your questions at jstory4689@gmail.com.

Pygmy Nuthatches in the Bitterroot

By John Ormiston

Did you notice in the results of the Hamilton CBC there were no, zero, nada Pygmy Nuthatches seen in the field or by feeders? Very unusual. We've

averaged 39 a year for the 32 years of the count and only missed one previous year, 1989, the second year of the count. We saw a high of 110 in 2002 and have been below average every year since 2012. On the Stevensville count one observer found a flock of 5, the only Pygmy Nuthatches seen there. The picture was much better in Missoula, they had 51 this year and averaged 50 for the last 10 years with a high of 107 in 2012 and a low of 17 in 2017. Should we make an effort to report any sightings to the eBird site? I think it would be a good idea. I have no idea if the population is decreasing for some strange reason or if we've just been unlucky in the recent past.

February 5, 2019 – Montana Legislative Action Alert

Montana Audubon

406.443.3949

www.mtaudubon.org

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO KEEP TRACK OF LEGISLATIVE BILLS THAT WOULD HELP OR HARM OUR AVIAN FRIENDS HERE ARE TWO KEY WEBSITES TO KEY INTO THIS SESSION. THESE ARE EXAMPLES FROM THE WEEK OF 2/4 – 2/8

The 4th week of the legislature began and ended with petroleum issues which of course, is directly related to climate change, an issue affecting all of us. We worked all week to make it clear to our elected officials that continued dependence on oil and petroleum products have negative impacts on our birds, wildlife, and their habitat.

You can help us spread this message: our citizen lobbying days are fast approaching and we hope that you will join us on **February 6th and March 13th**, locations TBD. If you are planning to attend, please RSVP by contacting Amy Seaman (aseaman@mtaudubon.org) or Wyatt Smith (wsmith@mtaudobon.org).

Thanks for your support,
Amy & Wyatt

In this Action Alert:

- **[HB 271: Keystone XL Pipeline and Montana waterbodies](#)**
- **[SB 121: Establishing a disposable bag fee](#)**
- **[HB 193: Putting a price on carbon emissions](#)**
- **[Click to learn about these important bills and what you can do to help.](#)**

MEIC - MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION CENTER

Clean and healthful. It's your right, our mission.

107 W. Lawrence St., #N-6, Helena, MT
59601/P.O. Box 1184, Helena, MT 59624
P: (406) 443-2520 | F: (406) 443-2507**2019**

Montana Legislature Bill Tracker

<https://meic.org/2019/>

Use MEIC's Legislative Bill Tracker tool to stay current with the most recent legislative happenings. You can see where a bill is in the process, read facts about different legislative proposals, and contact legislators about specific pieces of legislation. Know how your legislators voted on critical legislation.

MEIC Supports:

- [HB 292: Extends Coal Board Funding](#)
- [SB 190: Requires State Plan for Greenhouse Gas Emissions Scale Back](#)
- [SB 189: Establishes Tax on Industry Greenhouse Gas Emissions](#)
- [HB 314: Allow PSC to initiate rate cases every three years](#)
- [HB 165: Phase out Use of Styrofoam in Montana Food and Hospitality Industries](#)
- [HB 193: Carbon Tax and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan](#)
- [HB 267: Establish privacy regulations and opt-out provision for smart meters](#)
- [HB 271: Protects Water Resources and Cultural Sites from Keystone XL Development](#)
- [SB 121: Establishes Fees for Plastic Bags, Funding for Waste Management](#)
- [SB 120: Cuts Down on Massive Plastic Straw Waste Stream](#)

MEIC Opposes:

- [HB 144: Eliminate solar and energy conservation tax credits](#)
- [SB 33: Public "Right to Participate" during Subdivision Development Phases Jeopardized](#)
- [HB 203: Should State Bail Out Uneconomic Coal Plant?](#)

News and Notes

Montana Wings Across the Big Sky Festival

Montana Audubon is pleased to announce its 20th Wings Across the Big Sky bird festival, scheduled to take place in Glasgow, Montana on June 7th-9th, 2019. Our lead sponsor for the event is the

American Prairie Reserve. Presentations and field trips on grassland birds, prairie ecology and other unique features of Montana's Glaciated Plains will be the focus this year. Please visit mtaudubon.org for updates and festival information in the coming months. We hope to see you there!

Chapter Members Renewal Deadline

If you are a BAS chapter-only member, your membership fee (\$15) is due by January 31st. Please send payment to:

Bitterroot Audubon Society
PO Box 326
Hamilton, MT 59840

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.

Bitterroot Audubon is on Facebook and Instagram

If you use Facebook or Instagram, please look for Bitterroot Audubon and "Like" us!

Bird Shots



*Courtesy Jim Hamilton
Steller's Jay and Blue Jay at a feeder, Florence, MT.*



Pledge to Help Birds at Risk From Climate Change

Climate change threatens more than 300 species of birds, such as the Baltimore Oriole, Osprey, and Mountain Bluebird. Below are four ways to help by taking simple actions at home, in your community, and online. Share these actions with your chapter members or friends and pledge to take action together. **Let us know what you pledge to do by emailing climateaction@audubon.org.**

Grow Native Plants



Baltimore Oriole. Photo: Sandra Rothenberg/Audubon Photography Awards

Add native plants to your yard, container garden, or patio to attract birds and help them adapt in the face of climate change. As an extra bonus, bird-friendly plants often need less water and maintenance. Use Audubon's Native Plant Database at audubon.org/native-plants to find the best plants for your area.

I pledge to add native plants to my outdoor space.

Go Solar

Putting solar panels on your roof is a great way to lower your carbon footprint and help birds. If you rent your home or can't get panels on your roof, you may be able to join a community solar garden or sign up for a renewable energy program that works with your electricity supplier. Visit audubon.org/solar to learn about solar in your state.



Rooftop solar panels. Photo: Dan Streiffert

I pledge to request a quote for solar panels.

Count Birds



Mountain Bluebird. Photo: Richard Pick/Audubon Photography Awards

Join Climate Watch, Audubon's pilot community science program, to track how birds are responding to climate change. Audubon chapters, centers, and birding clubs count birds each year in January and May–June. Visit audubon.org/climate-watch or email climatewatch@audubon.org to sign up.

I pledge to sign up for Climate Watch.

Make Your Voice Heard

From the local to national levels, decision makers need to hear that you care about birds and want common-sense solutions to address climate change. You can call your representatives, attend a town hall meeting, or join an Audubon advocacy day. Sign up for action alerts at action.audubon.org for more ways to get involved.



Osprey. Photo: Alfred Forns/Audubon Photography Awards

I pledge to contact a public official about birds and climate change.

Your name

Date

Email address

BITTERROOT AUDUBON
PO BOX 326
HAMILTON MT 59840-0326

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|------------|----------------|----------|
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* Board Member

EMAIL: contactus@bitterrootaudubon.org

WEBSITE: www.BitterrootAudubon.org

INSTAGRAM: @bitterroot_audubon

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



Audubon

Renew or Sign up
for your
National Audubon Membership at
Audubon.org