

Bitterroot AUDUBON



JANUARY 2019

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 33, NO. 5

REINTRODUCTION OF PEREGRINE FALCONS IN THE BITTERROOT

By Dave Lockman

These days it's relatively easy to spot Peregrine Falcons in the Bitterroot, if you know where and when to look, have some patience and decent optics, and are willing to do a little hiking. But a little more than 30 years ago, Peregrines were absent from the Bitterroot, the rest of Montana and most of the USA as well. Thinning egg shells resulting from widespread use of DDT and other insecticides had resulted in high rates of reproductive failure in many raptor species, which decimated populations of Peregrine Falcons, Bald Eagles and others in most of North America. Peregrines were listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 1973. Bans on the use of those insecticides coupled with the release of captive-bred Peregrines led to the reestablishment of sustainable Peregrine Falcon populations throughout much of their historic range, and is one of the shining success stories of the ESA.



Courtesy Rob Palmer

Adult Peregrine Falcon.



Courtesy USFS

Fund personnel transferring a juvenile peregrine from a shipping box to a hack box

The reintroduction of Peregrine Falcons in the Bitterroot was championed by now-retired Bitterroot National Forest (BNF) Wildlife Biologist and long-time Bitterroot Audubon Board member and Secretary John Ormiston, in partnership with the Peregrine Fund, Patagonia, Inc. and the Liz Claiborne/Art Ortenberg Foundation. Captive-bred, juvenile Peregrines were hacked (released from an enclosure after several weeks of feeding) from select cliff-top locations in the Bitterroot from 1989 through 1993. These releases were wildly successful in restoring a Peregrine population to the Bitterroot. Adult birds presumably originating from the reintroductions established territories in many of the Bitterroot canyons, and monitoring by BNF biologists, local birders and personnel from the Montana Peregrine Institute have documented occupied Peregrine territories in at least 19 Bitterroot locations, with several others suspected but not confirmed.



Courtesy USFS

Blodgett Canyon, site of a peregrine nesting cliff.

Current BNF Wildlife Biologist Dave Lockman has coordinated and participated in local Peregrine Falcon monitoring efforts for 25 years. At Bitterroot Audubon's January meeting, Lockman will present a slide show describing the spectacularly successful reintroduction of Peregrine Falcons in the Bitterroot and the rest of Montana, the monitoring efforts that have documented the growth in Peregrine numbers and distribution, some basic biology and identification of this iconic species, and suggestions on where and how to find them. He is counting on John Ormiston to add color commentary and humorous stories about the reintroduction effort.

Lockman graduated from the University of Montana with a degree in Wildlife Biology back before personal computers were a thing. He started working for the U.S. Forest Service seasonally while still attending UM, and performed a variety of jobs including marking and cruising timber sales, measuring vegetation on stand exam plots, lighting prescribed burns, fighting wildfires, counting fish in mountain streams by snorkeling and electrofishing (not at the same time) and measuring wildlife habitat on four National Forests in Montana, Idaho and Oregon. He came to the BNF in 1991 as a Wildlife Biologist, and has worked out of the Stevensville Ranger Station since 1993. He became

interested in birds while taking Dr. Phil Wright's Ornithology class at UM, and has been developing his birding skills ever since, with uneven success. He is a former Bitterroot Audubon Board member, Vice President and President. In addition to monitoring Peregrines, Lockman runs the BNF's two MAPS bird banding stations near Lake Como, is the compiler for the Stevensville Christmas Bird Count, and runs two Breeding Bird Survey routes. Fortunately, he is a morning person.

Come join Bitterroot Audubon Society for this fascinating program about saving the "World's Fastest Animal" (according to NOVA) right here in the Bitterroot Monday, January 21st, 7:00 P.M. at the North Valley Library in Stevensville, 208 Main Street. You will learn about the Peregrines' past, their present status and you might be motivated to help with monitoring their future progress as a citizen Scientist. The public is invited. For further information, contact Kay at 360-8664.

Letter from the President

By Becky Peters, BAS President

We love our birds and we are a bird loving organization. So my monthly letters are about what we can do to save the birds, which means saving the planet that we all live on. I hope you have had a chance to look at <https://phys.org/news/2017-07-effective-individual-tackle-climate-discussed.html#jCp>



To recap: If you change out your normal light bulbs for LED bulbs you are having only a small impact on helping stem climate change. If you hang your clothes outside to dry, recycle, wash your clothes in cold water and drive a hybrid car then you are having a moderate impact on reducing your contribution to climate change. But the Gold standard contributions are to eat a plant-based diet, to be car free, to buy green energy, to avoid long plane rides, and the real big one for Americans especially – to have one fewer child!

Our planet is on life-support and that means our birds are too. The insects are proving that. You may have seen the New York Times Magazines Nov. 27, 2018 article by Brooke Jarvis "Insect Apocalypse Is Here"

In short, scientists in several countries around the world have noticed the sharp decline in insects. It's called the Windshield Phenomenon. Studies are

coming up with an alarming decline in insect numbers – 75 percent of flying insects in 27 years in Germany alone.

And some of us have not noticed this decline in insects. Peter H. Kahn and Batya Friedman, summed up our blindness this way: “With each generation, the amount of environmental degradation increases, but each generation takes that amount as the norm. *The world never feels fallen, because we grow accustomed to the fall.*”

Our insects are dealing with herbicides and pesticides, losing meadows and forests and weeds while dealing with an increase in human spaces. Scientists call this “de-faunation: the loss of individuals, the loss of abundance, the loss of a place’s absolute animal-ness.” There are fewer resources for non-humans to live on and what resources are left over are often contaminated.

What can we do then here in the Bitterroot? Several things: Encourage your weeds. Let your lawn go wild or cut it once a year. Scatter milkweed seed. Don’t rake up those leaves or dead wood, or if you have to, then pile them up as mulch. Plant only native plants, food that insects will pollinate. Have a variety of layers on the ground: rough/smooth, dark/light, old concrete with vegetation clippings, chipped branches, etc. Make your place the best kind of “Bug Motel”. Our various governments could: Strictly regulate pesticides. Pay farmers to create insect habitats by leaving fields fallow. We could integrate insect habitats into designs of roads, and other infrastructures. We’ve got to start communicating these steps to others, our friends and family and elected officials. Go out and BUG someone, for our birds’ sake!

Calendar of Events

- Jan 21:** Audubon Meeting “Reintroduction of Peregrine Falcons in the Bitterroot,” North Valley Public Library, Stevensville, MT, 7PM, Board Mtg. 5PM.
- Feb 18:** Audubon Meeting Location TBA, 7PM, Board Mtg. 5PM.

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

Bitterroot College course offering: Explore the Zooniverse!!

By Kate Stone

Have you enjoyed the imagery and videos coming out of our Bitterroot Valley Winter Eagle Project? Would you like to learn how you can help us process the pictures from this project? Bitterroot Audubon’s Kate Stone is offering a course on learning Zooniverse skills for the spring session of Continuing Education through the Bitterroot College.



Zooniverse is a platform for crowd-sourced data processing; citizen scientists help out on everything from tagging wildlife images from camera traps, transcribing herbarium specimens, going through

WWI diaries, to mapping galaxies. Literally thousands of people from all over the world help with projects on this platform. In this class, our group will focus on classifying wildlife captured on camera as part of the Bitterroot Valley Winter Eagle Project. Instructors will spend the first 20 minutes of class providing ID and ecological information on a specific group of scavengers. Participants will gain skills to try new Zooniverse projects that suit their interest.

The class takes place at the Bitterroot College in Hamilton from 6-8 pm on Monday Jan 28, Feb 4, and Feb 11. There is a \$35 registration fee to cover administrative costs.

You can register for this class online (www.umt.edu/bitterroot-college), by phone (406-375-0100) or in person at 103 S 9th St in Hamilton.

Get your 2019 Bitterroot Audubon Calendar!

By Becky Peters



Have you purchased your copy of that exquisite 2019 BAS Calendar yet? You can purchase a calendar for only \$15 and all proceeds stay here in the valley for our Education, Conservation and Scholarship Funds! This is truly a one of a kind calendar! You won't get one in the mail like this because no one makes them like this, not even National Audubon! We give you a place to track the birds you see each month, information about where to find which birds each month plus simply stunning photos of birds taken here in the Bitterroot by photographers from the Bitterroot. There is an added bonus of adorable drawings of birds done by Victor 4th and 5th graders. Everything is locally made by your non-profit Bitterroot Audubon! You can purchase the calendars from our website for \$20, or for \$15 at these fine stores that support us: In Hamilton – Bitterroot Drug, Art Focus, Robbin's Hallmark, Hamilton Gifts, and Artisans on 2nd. In Corvallis – Corvallis Merc. In Victor – Noah's Ark.

In Stevensville – Valley Drug and Variety, and Ace Hardware. In Florence – Ace Hardware. This is our only fund raiser. Thank you so much for supporting us and what we do to help the birds and their habitat here in the valley.

What's the story, Story?

By Jim Story

Question: *Why do some birds hop while others walk?*

Answer: Many birds walk with alternating steps like a biped, while other birds, especially small arboreal birds, hop. Reasons for these different locomotion strategies are not known, but may be due, in part, to economy of energy. Small birds move farther in a single hop than by striding, whereas it is more efficient for a large bird with longer strides to move one leg at a time. Most birds within a taxonomic group share a similar means of locomotion but there are many exceptions. Most passerines hop but some like meadowlarks, pipits, and starlings walk. Among the Corvids, crows walk while jays hop. Some birds like robins and ravens both hop and walk. In short, there is considerable variation in locomotion strategies among birds, probably due to energy conservation, leg length, foraging strategy, and many other factors. (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.

Montana Wings Across the Big Sky Festival



Courtesy John Lambing

Fort Peck Lake, Montana.

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!

Hamilton 32nd CBC, 12/15/2018

By John Ormiston

You could say the 32nd Hamilton CBC was just mediocre. We had 22 people in the field, most for just the morning, and 20 feeder watchers. The weather was decent, temperature above the average, overcast in the morning and mostly cloudy afternoon. The low was 38 at daylight but the high was only 40. We saw only 61 species, 6 below average, and 7,780 total birds, just 200 above average. The highlights of the day were the two species we added, Savannah Sparrow and Lesser Goldfinch. The total list now numbers 133 including 22 seen only once. We've seen 27 species every year.

The sparrow appeared to a hardy trio of ambitious folks who spent the day walking about 5 miles in the Lower Willow Creek area. It was in a mixed flock of House and Song Sparrows. The Lesser Goldfinches regularly visit niger seed feeders west of Victor and in Grantsdale, MT. They were mixed with American Goldfinches at both feeders.

The feeder watchers added 4 species to the list, about the usual numbers. They provide valuable additions every year.

GREAT BLUE HERON	10
TRUMPETER SWAN	1
CANADA GOOSE	2081
GREEN-WINGED TEAL	6
MALLARD	1943
GADWALL	3
RING-NECKED DUCK	35
BARROW'S GOLDENEYE	2
COMMON GOLDENEYE	51
HOODED MERGANSER	3
BALD EAGLE ADULT	25
BALD EAGLE IMM	15
BALD EAGLE UNK	1
BALD EAGLE TOTAL	44
NORTHERN HARRIER	11
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK	2
RED-TAILED HAWK	114
HARLAN'S HAWK	5
ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK	44

GOLDEN EAGLE	4
AMERICAN KESTREL	17
PRAIRIE FALCON	6
CALIFORNIA QUAIL	273
RING-NECKED PHEASANT	39
WILD TURKEY	93
ROCK PIGEON	93
MOURNING DOVE	82
EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE	311
GREAT-HORNED OWL	10
LONG-EARED OWL	1
SHORT-EARED OWL	3
BELTED KINGFISHER	4
DOWNY WOODPECKER	24
HAIRY WOODPECKER	12
NORTHERN FLICKER	94
PILEATED WOODPECKER	2
STELLER'S JAY	6
CLARK'S NUTCRACKER	1
BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE	271
AMERICAN CROW	12
COMMON RAVEN	127
BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE	134
MOUNTAIN CHICKADEE	2
RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH	49
WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH	7
BROWN CREEPER	1
HOUSE WREN	1
MARSH WREN	5
AMERICAN DIPPER	2
GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET	3
TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE	2
BOHEMIAN WAXWING	13
NORTHERN SHRIKE	4
EUROPEAN STARLING	374
AMERICAN TREE SPARROW	21
SONG SPARROW	27
SAVANNAH SPARROW	1
DARK-EYED JUNCO	73
RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD	260
HOUSE FINCH	181
RED CROSSBILL	10
PINE SISKIN	7
AMERICAN GOLDFINCH	105
LESSER GOLDFINCH	5
HOUSE SPARROW	653
Total Birds	7780
Total Species	61

News of the wild.

By Judy Hoy

The Yellowstone Raptor Initiative monitored Red-tailed Hawks in Yellowstone National Park from 2011 to 2015. The first two years, there was nothing surprising and in 2012 the nesting success rate was 89%. Then, during subsequent years, nesting success plummeted (32% in 2014), and nobody knows why. From 2015 through 2018, the number of immature Bald Eagles in the midwinter eagle counts along rivers in IL and surrounding mid-western states, headed by eagle researcher Terry Ingram, declined to an average of less than half the number prior to 2015. Again, no one knows why.

Terry's most recent report on January 2, 2019, is as follows for the sites he and his wife recently visited. "The eagle numbers are way down. We checked four roosting sites for different historic winter Bald Eagle communities and two dams on the Mississippi, finding only 16 Bald Eagles. Only two of the 16 were immature birds; there should be more than 30% for a healthy population. Thirty years ago, we would have seen as many as 250 to 300 eagles in the areas we recently counted. In the same recent time period that nesting success for Bald Eagle young and Red-tailed Hawk young declined in the reported areas, nesting success for other birds also appears to be in decline." According to Terry and his colleagues in Illinois and surrounding states, there has been an observable decline in insects and in the number of common songbird young fledged. It would seem important to determine the cause or causes and do everything possible to mitigate the loss of birds and insects. Are bird watchers observing fewer insects and/or fewer fledgling songbirds in their area of Montana? If you are, please report this to Judy Hoy <bjhoy@localnet.com> or to other Bitterroot Audubon board members.

As for good news, a beautiful bird, the Blue-eyed Ground Dove, was rediscovered in the tropical savannas of eastern Brazil. It was thought to be extinct, as it had not been seen since 1941. After Rafael Bessa rediscovered it in 2015, efforts have been undertaken to conserve the habitat of this lovely dove.



Blue-eyed Ground Dove.

News and Notes

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 Alex Kearney
Lesser Goldfinches and American Goldfinch seen during the Hamilton Christmas Bird Count, December 2018.

BITTERROOT AUDUBON
PO BOX 326
HAMILTON MT 59840-0326

Officers

President	Becky Peters*	369-5210
Vice-Pres.	Mike Daniels*	
Secretary	John Ormiston*	360-9530
Treasurer	Jim Story*	493-9813

Directors & Committee Chairs

IBA Program	Sherry Ritter	370-4778
Programs	Kay Fulton*	
Website	Kate Stone*	381-1115
Education	Betsy Ballard*	
Nwsltr. Eds. &	Sara Ashline* baseditors@gmail.com	
Distribution	Karen Griffing	
Hospitality	Rosan Stover	
Membership	Heather Miller*	
Publicity	Dave Lockman	777-2929
Rep. to MT		
Audubon	Becky Peters*	
Scholarship	Skip Horner*	642-6840
Aud. Adv.	Betsy Ballard*	
Field Trips	Michelle Long*	
At large	Judy Hoy*	777-2487
At large	Susan Nelson*	
At large	Michele Falivene (Mimi)*	

* 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