

Bitterroot AUDUBON



DECEMBER 2023

NEWSLETTER

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It's Christmas Bird Count Time in The Bitterroot

By John Ormiston, Hamilton CBC Compiler

Christmas time for birders means it's time to clean the binoculars and spotting scopes, find the warm field clothes and be sure to find the bird guide. It's Christmas Bird Count time in the Bitterroot and nationwide. For the 124th time citizen scientists will go to the field to count as many as possible of the birds occupying a 7.5-mile radius, 177 square mile circle. Compilers will report the results of nearly 2,000 count circles across the U.S. and another 500 in Canada, Mexico and Central America. Bitterroot Audubon sponsors two annual counts around Hamilton and Stevensville, MT. The 37th Hamilton CBC occurs on December 16th and the 59th Stevensville count on December 30th. The Stevensville count, started in 1963, is one of the two oldest in Montana. Yellowstone Audubon in Billings initiated their count the same year or in 1964.

We welcome participation of anyone interested in learning more about winter birds in the Bitterroot. We especially like beginning birders who will always be paired with more experienced folks who know the area and the birds. The groups gather at about 7:30 AM with the intent of getting to the field by daylight at about 8:00. Hamilton counters gather at The Teller Education Barn (for the 37th time) and honors a 36-year-old tradition by meeting back at The Teller for lunch featuring homemade chili and Oreos, and of course some delectable Christmas goodies. The counts are serious endeavors, but congenial birders interested in sharing their knowledge with beginners make the atmosphere competitive and lots of fun.

Hamilton counters see an average of 67 species with a high count of 78 in 2013. The Hamilton area averages nearly 7,500 birds seen, many of them

waterfowl on the Mansion Pond where open water remains available every year. We've recorded 133 species in the Hamilton circle.

Feeder watchers, folks who identify the species and count the birds out their windows or in their yard, annually add around five species not seen in the field at each of the Stevensville and Hamilton counts. If you live within 7.5 miles of either the Hamilton Airport or the Stevensville Ranger Station you could help our citizen science project. Call John Ormiston, 406-360-9530 (Hamilton); or Dave Lockman (Stevensville), 406-381-7679 to participate as a feeder watcher.

Please take the opportunity to enjoy a day out with a great group of people and help the effort to enumerate all the birds in two official National Audubon Christmas Bird Count Circles.

2023 Stevensville Christmas Bird Count

By Deborah Goslin, Hamilton CBC Compiler

The 59th Annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) will be December 30, 2023 starting at 7:30 am. Those with less experience or new to the valley are welcome and will be paired with experienced birders.

Participants will meet in the basement meeting room of the Stevensville Ranger District (88 Main St, Stevensville, MT). From there we'll form carpools and decide who will count which areas of the count circle. Then, you can count for just the morning or into the afternoon. This year we will NOT be meeting for lunch, so please bring your own snacks/food you need for the time you're birding.

I'd like to introduce myself. I'm Deborah Goslin, the new Compiler for this CBC. I've participated in counts since 1975, and the Stevensville count since 1985. And I need some help! Our past Feeder Watch coordinator has moved away and I would love it if a volunteer stepped forward to help call people who

just count birds from their feeders. I can be reached at (406) 214-7879.

If you are a person who usually starts counting an area on your own, please call me and introduce yourself, so I can coordinate with others.

Please note NEW EMAIL for the Stevensville CBC: lstevicbc@gmail.com Please send your results or call me by Jan 2, 2024.

In 2022, Counters tallied 12,674 birds representing 77 species. We didn't find any species new to the Count, so our cumulative total remains at 158 species over our 58 years.

So let's make the most of a winter's day to see how many birds we can find around Stevensville!

Letter from the President

By Micki Long, BAS President

It's December, and the holidays are upon us! While that may mean decorations, gifts, family, and friends, it also means no program meeting. You'll have plenty of time to prepare for our January 15th program meeting! January, February, and March meetings will be via Zoom, as we want everyone to be safely at home on those cold winter nights.



Courtesy Micki Long

Clark's Nutcracker.

The January meeting will be a bit different from our usual meetings. During the second half of the meeting, Raptor View Research Institute will talk to us about vultures. During the first half, BAS's subcommittee on Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion will make a presentation, including recommendations. The subcommittee asks that you do some thinking, some reading, more thinking, and more reading before the meeting. To help with that

thinking and reading, you'll find a brief list of relevant articles at the end of this letter. And you're sure to find many other articles by searching online. Before I leave this topic, let me remind you that my favorite species is the Clark's Nutcracker. A logical new name for this species is the "Whitebark Nutcracker." Others have suggested the same name, as Whitebark Pine and Clark's Nutcrackers have a mutualistic relationship. To learn more, check out the Whitebark Pine Ecosystem Foundation at <https://whitebarkfound.org>

Oh, wait, I'm still not quite done with this topic. Here is a haiku by Cindy Swidler on changing eponymous bird names:

Haiku for Renaming a Bird

What is your name, Jay?
You with colors of the sky,
And crayon box blues.



Courtesy Micki Long

Steller's Jay.

While you won't see your BAS friends at a program meeting this month, you may see them at a Christmas Bird Count! Look elsewhere in this newsletter for more info about the Hamilton CBC (December 16) and Stevensville (December 30). Participating in the Stevensville CBC has become a special tradition for me and many others. If you have never participated, make this the year you start! Be sure to share eBird lists you generate during the CBC with BAS2023.

List of Sources to Help You Prepare for the January Program

These articles are relevant to the name changes that have been in the news for over a year (mostly on the name “Audubon” but some on the names of birds named after humans—the rationale for change is similar). Many have very helpful links.

American Ornithological Society on its announcement that birds named after people will get new names. Their reasoning is here:

<https://americanornithology.org/american-ornithological-society-will-change-the-english-names-of-bird-species-named-after-people/> also look at the comments.

Audubon’s decision not to change name:

<https://www.audubon.org/news/national-audubon-society-announces-decision-retain-current-name>

It’s interesting that the rationale includes mention of the organization as a “nonpartisan” force.

Backlash to not changing name, including 3 Board members resigning:

<https://www.npr.org/2023/03/18/1164293652/audubon-faces-a-backlash-after-deciding-to-keep-name-that-evokes-a-racist-enslav>

Detroit Audubon, soon to be Detroit Bird Alliance. They also are still affiliated with National. I would like to know the rationale of these groups for dropping JJA’s name as offensive on a local level but not on a national

level? <https://www.detroitaudubon.org/>

Madison Badgerland Alliance (formerly Madison Audubon) A very useful page about the process they used to find a new name. Some great links: [Badgerland Bird Alliance](#)

<https://madisonaudubon.org/new-name> And here is their explanation of their continuing relationship with National Audubon:

<https://madisonaudubon.org/two-orgs> (not unusual for these groups that changed their name to stay affiliated with National).

Chicago Bird Alliance:

<https://www.chicagoaudubon.org/blog/2023/10/19/b5fck20t7bwoelh6aav039ie4whrk>

Laura Erickson. “What’s in a Name?”

https://lauraerickson.substack.com/p/whats-in-a-name?utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=web&fbclid=IwAR3XfHna_ToQtUrCbA1_U9JksEDjsCM9ZZ-oYTIAtbJIwk7qxPecz3mXJ68

Golden Gate Bird Alliance (San Francisco) A good description of their process and reasoning for changing their name: [Our New Name – Golden Gate Bird Alliance](#)

How We Found Our New Name—Birds Connect Seattle

<https://birdsconnectsea.org/2023/03/27/how-we-found-our-new-name/>

Midwestern chapters of National Audubon Society drop ‘Audubon’ name, citing racist views of organization’s namesake: <https://www.cnn.com/2023/10/25/us/midwestern-audubon-societys-change-name-citing-founders-racist-views-reaj/index.html> The society’s chapters in Detroit, Chicago and Madison, Wisconsin, have announced they will now be known as chapters of the “Bird Alliance.”

National Audubon Society, Pressured to Drop Enslaver’s Name, Keeps It.” *Washington Post*. This is a good summary of arguments of both the “drop” and “keep” camps.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2023/03/15/national-audubon-society-name-change/> If people don’t want to wade through all the other sources, this one is a good place to start.

“North American Birds Will No Longer Be Named For Racists.” Opinion Piece in New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/13/opinion/bird-names-colonialism.html?unlocked_article_code=1.-Uw.R_nz.sKyUe31-8v8J&smid=url-share Like other articles, this piece ties the Audubon name issue to the renaming of birds named for humans.

Portland: <https://audubonportland.org/blog/portland-audubon-commits-to-dropping-the-name-audubon/>

This page brings up JJA digging up Indigenous remains and sent them to Samuel George Morton, an early figure in ‘scientific racism,’” in Wikipedia’s terms. Here is an article on University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archeology and Anthropology, on their decision to about their commitment to repatriation of human remains in the Morton Cranial Collection. Samuel G. Morton was a physician who collected human crania. JJ Audubon stole remains of Indigenous people from their graves and sent them to Morton :

<https://www.penn.museum/about-collections/statements-and-policies/morton-cranial-collection>

Calendar of Events

- Dec 16:** Hamilton Christmas Bird Count, Teller Wildlife Refuge, 7:30AM.
- Dec 30:** Stevensville Christmas Bird Count, Stevensville Ranger District (88 Main St, Stevensville, MT), 7:30AM.
- Monthly:** Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, 3rd Saturday of each month, Stevensville, MT 10AM-12PM.
- Jan 15:** Audubon Meeting/Program; details TBA. 7PM via Zoom.
- May 31-Jun 2:** Wings Across the Big Sky birding festival, Carroll College, Helena, MT. Details TBA.

Chlorothalonil, Salmonella and Birds

By Judy Hoy

From December 2020 to May of 2021, there was a multi-state outbreak of Salmonella in birds, other animals and people. There were more than 1,700 Salmonella cases in people in the United States caused by contact with live poultry or their environment and 24 cases in people in Montana.

In 2001, Greg Blank and colleagues found that exposure to pesticides increased Salmonella bacteria growth at least 1000-fold, with the fastest growth being caused by exposure to Chlorothalonil. Chlorothalonil is the most used fungicide in the United States and one of the top six teratogenic pesticides. When birds are exposed to pesticides that damage their immune systems at the same time as they are exposed to pesticides like Chlorothalonil that cause common bacteria to grow at an accelerated rate, the birds are far more likely to succumb to the bacterial infection.

An article in Audubon magazine reported in 1997 that an estimated 67 million birds, 10% of our total bird population, die each year because of pesticide exposure. That does not include the birds that are dying from bacterial and viral infections. The bird loss from pesticides and disease combined is much higher. Also, the birds, which do not die immediately from the pesticide exposure, suffer lasting symptoms leading to lowered fertility levels, weakened egg shells, reduced survivability of hatchlings, disorientation during migration, immune system damage, respiratory damage, cancer tumors, and multiple serious health problems often resulting

in mortality.

Exposure to pesticides like glyphosate, neonicotinoids, 2,4-D, and many others which cause hormonal imbalance during development of the egg in the female bird, during development of the embryo in the egg, or during development of the hatchling bird, results in a high rate of mortality and a much higher than normal rate of visible developmental malformations. Even if the pesticides do not cause the bacteria or virus to have accelerated growth, they disrupt the bird's immune system so they are much more likely to get a bacterial or viral illness if exposed and be more likely to die if they do get it. This has been devastatingly illustrated by the high numbers of birds that have recently died of Avian Influenza.

Chlorothalonil is one of the three top teratogenic pesticides in use in the United States. The other two are the insecticide, imidacloprid, which kills birds or disrupts their ability to navigate and the herbicide, glyphosate (called Roundup), which damages their immune system. Exposure to all three simultaneously puts our precious bird populations in serious jeopardy.

Byron Weber Memorial Scholarship, presented by Bitterroot Audubon

By Skip Horner, for the BAS Scholarship Committee

Each semester, Bitterroot Audubon presents a \$1000 scholarship to an upper-class student majoring in a Natural Resource field at a Montana four-year college or university. Preference is given to a Bitterroot Valley resident. This semester our winner is Rocky Verrue, from Florence, who studies soil science and entomology at Montana State.

Each applicant is required to write a 500-word essay describing what they feel to be the most pressing issue in the Natural Resource field. We also require two letters of recommendation and a copy of their Transcript. Our Scholarship Committee reviews each application and presents their selection to Bitterroot Audubon Board for approval.

This is not such a difficult process for college students, especially for such a significant reward. The few applications we receive each semester represent highly qualified students, but we would like to attract even more, to make this scholarship truly competitive. We define 'Natural Resource' very broadly, covering many related disciplines, so this should not dissuade possible candidates. If you

know of a student who might meet our qualifications, please tell them to go to our website, bitterrootaudubon.org, to download our application. Spring semester applications are due January 31, 2024. We're eager to give away our money, so we would love to have Bitterroot Valley students apply. Please help us spread the word!

Please Support Audubon Adventures

By Betsy Ballard

Greetings – Bitterroot Audubon Members! We are asking for support for 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 are contacting the teachers from last year to see what kits they would like and also outreaching for additional teachers or home school parents who might be interested in participating. If you wish to participate this year, we and the teachers 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 your donation 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



Bald Eagle | Photo by Janice Miller,
Last Chance Audubon

Courtesy Janice Miller, Last Chance Audubon



Bitterroot Audubon's

BIG YEAR

2023

Let's see how many total species our chapter members see **in Montana** from 1/1/23 until 12/31/23.

We'll count by using eBird and sharing our lists to a group eBird account.

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and on Facebook!

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
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NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION



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