

Bitterroot AUDUBON



MARCH 2024

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 38, NO. 7

History of the Bitterroot Salish and the Rams Head Medicine Tree

By Dean Sonneah Nicolai

Mr. Nicolai has been employed as a full-time faculty member at Salish and Kootenai College in the Native American Studies Department since 2014, and as Department Chair from 2016-2021. Dean is now the department chair for the Tribal Historic Preservation Program at SKC and NASD Division Dean. He is an enrolled member of the Bitterroot Salish people of the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes. Dean holds an MA and BA in Anthropology from the University of Montana, MA in Indigenous Philosophy from the University of Tromsø Norway, and a BA in Native American Studies from the University of Montana. Dean has focused his research in relation to indigenous research methodologies in cultural resource management and archaeology. Current collaborative projects include archaeological field research in Glacier National Park, MT, Yellowstone National Park, and at Missouri Headwaters State Park, MT. Dean's overall goal is engage in collaborative projects that benefit SKC students.

This program is via Zoom on March 18th, 2024 at 7PM. Please register by 5 pm on the day of the meeting via the following link:

https://us02web.zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tZYlculiopzwoHtKwJyrSledXA-B_eDePvTCi

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. Please join the meeting before 7:15PM or you will not be allowed in.

Letter from the President

By Micki Long, BAS President

Happy March, the month we welcome Spring! The male Red-winged Blackbirds arrived in my yard, as usual, in mid-February. Judging by my photos from

last year, the females won't be back until April. The same is true of the other birds I start yearning to see this time of year. I will just have to be patient. And I start thinking about sitting in the canyons, searching the cliff tops, snags, and skies for pairs of Peregrine Falcons. But I won't be doing that until April. Again, I need to be patient. I hope some of you also want to monitor Peregrines—see the article elsewhere in this newsletter. But if you visit the ponds at Lee Metcalf or other bodies of water, you may have already seen some breeding behavior. A friend and I saw a few Bufflehead pairs on a very gray day; it was so gray that the photo of the male displaying looks as if it's black and white.



Courtesy Micki Long

Bufflehead pair.

Our recent event "Poets in the 'Root,'" cosponsored by Teller Wildlife refuge and Montana Natural History Center, was very successful and so much fun. So my mind has been on poetry more than usual. One poem I contributed is by Ada Limon, our U.S. Poet Laureate. Another poem by her, one that suggests the rebirth associated with Spring:

"Instructions on Not Giving Up."

*More than the fuchsia funnels breaking out
of the crabapple tree, more than the neighbor's
almost obscene display of cherry limbs shoving
their cotton candy-colored blossoms to the slate
sky of Spring rains, it's the greening of the trees
that really gets to me. When all the shock of white
and taffy, the worlds' baubles and trinkets, leave
the pavement strewn with the confetti of aftermath,
the leaves come. Patient, plodding, a green skin
growing over whatever winter did to us, a return
to the strange idea of continuous living despite
the mess of us, the hurt, the empty. Fine then,
I'll take it, the tree seems to say, a new slick leaf
unfurling like a fist to an open palm, I'll take it all.*

**UPCOMING: Raptor
Guardians/Peregrine Watch in the
Bitterroot**

Zoom Training with Dave Lockman on
March 13th, 2024 at 4PM. Email Micki at
MickiLong@gmail.com for access. We are
still looking for volunteers to monitor the
local canyons for Peregrine Falcons.

There is also a Peregrine Falcon cliff nest
field trip with Jay Sumner, on a river access
site east of Bonner at 10AM on March 14th,
2024. This is open to all BAS members. If
you wish to participate in this exciting effort
to monitor Peregrine Falcons in the Bitterroot
or the field trip, email Marrea at
mmatthews5@aol.com.

Spring officially begins on March 19th, the Vernal
Equinox, a time associated with rebirth in countless
cultures. Both eggs and rabbits or hares are symbols
of fertility and associated with Spring. And, as we
know, both are associated with Easter, which is on
March 31st this year. It occurs to me that a season of
rebirth is a much better time to make resolutions, to
decide if you want to make any changes in your life.
The energy of rebirth could, perhaps, make our
resolutions less likely to fail within a week or two (a
day or two?) like the ones people make for January
1st. Mine: birds in places I've never birded before!



Courtesy Micki Long

Cottonwood buds.

Welcome Back Waterfowl Day!

By Micki Long

Mark your calendars: Bitterroot Audubon will be
welcoming back waterfowl and wonderful birders at
Lee Metcalf Wildlife Refuge on Saturday, April 20,
2024. We'll meet on the dike west of the Visitor's
Center from 10AM-1:30PM. We'll observe the
waterfowl, other birds, and mammals that use the
refuge wetlands; we'll help the public identify what
we see. This special event is for everyone. Bring
binoculars, a scope (if you have one), and warm
clothes.



Courtesy Micki Long

*BAS member Robin Dewey at a previous Welcome Back
Waterfowl Day at Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge.*



Courtesy Janice Miller, Last Chance Audubon

Raptor Guardians/Peregrine Watch in the Bitterroot

By Marrea Matthews

Once again it is time to make room on your calendar for Raptor Guardians/Peregrine Watch monitoring in the Bitterroot in the Bitterroot. The first monitoring for occupancy generally occurs between late March to early May. Last year, most reports of occupancy occurred in April.

Dave Lockman, retired BNF Wildlife Biologist, will conduct monitoring training via Zoom March 13, 2024 at 4PM. Email Micki at MickiLong@gmail.com for access. Dave established the Watch Territories of the Bitterroot and Sapphire Mountains decades ago and has continued working closely with Jay Sumner and the Montana Peregrine Institute.

Further, limited data indicate that the migratory destinations of many Peregrines lie south of the American border in regions of the world where regulation of pesticides, including the chlorinated hydrocarbons, is virtually unknown. Plainly, immediately identifying any major downward flux in populations is crucial, lest infamous history repeat itself.

—Jay Sumner

If you are interested in volunteering with the monitoring project or know someone who might be interested, please contact Marrea Matthews mmatthews5@aol.com

Byron Weber Memorial Scholarship

Skip Horner, BAS Scholarship Chair

Twice a year, Bitterroot Audubon awards our Byron Weber Scholarship to an upper-class student at one of Montana's four-year colleges. Applicants must be

studying a Natural Resource-oriented major, have excellent grades, supply two letters of recommendation, and write an essay. Preference is given to Bitterroot Valley residents. Our Scholarship Committee reviews all applications and recommends our choice to the Board for their approval. This semester our choice is Maiya Roelen, a sophomore at University of Montana, studying Wildlife Biology. While carrying a 4.0 GPA and studying through the Davidson Honors College at The University of Montana, she also volunteers for *Families for a Livable Climate*, and for *The Ecology Project International*, both in Missoula.

She's a busy, productive, and mature young woman with a host of other academic and extracurricular activities, so we're proud to help her pursue her educational goals. If you know a local student who qualifies for this scholarship, we urge you to have them get in touch with Bitterroot Audubon.

2024 Montana Audubon Citizen Science Projects

By Lauren Smith, MT Audubon

Help contribute valuable observations to science—and have a great time doing it! Montana Audubon is recruiting volunteers to help with four different surveys this year, including a new project surveying for Screech-owls.

2024 Montana Audubon Citizen Science Projects:

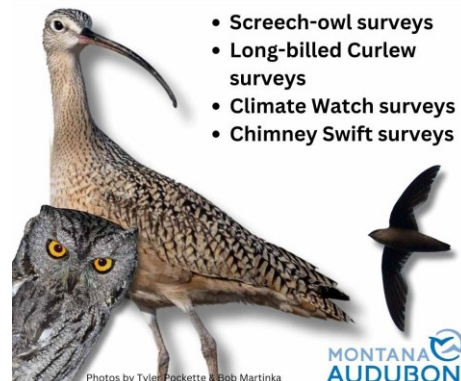
- Long-billed Curlew surveys | April – May
- Climate Watch surveys | May 15-June 15
- Chimney Swift surveys | June - July

Curlew training is scheduled for March 26th, 6:30PM, via Zoom. To sign up, or for more information about any of the projects, email Gwynne at gwynne@mtaudubon.org.

Learn more about each of these projects on our Citizen Science website:

<http://www.montanabirdsurveys.com/>

2024 Citizen Science projects



Wings Across the Big Sky Birding Festival

Keynote Speaker

By Lauren Smith, MT Audubon

Montana Audubon and Last Chance Audubon are pleased to announce the keynote speaker for the 2024 Wings Across the Big Sky Birding Festival: Tiffany Kersten!

About her presentation: *Birdie Big Year: Elevating Women Birders*. Tiffany Kersten didn't set out to do a Big Year, but after a series of unanticipated and serendipitous events, she suddenly found herself amidst one. As a sexual assault survivor, she spent 2021 traveling to all corners of the Lower 48 States, tallying birds and gifting personal safety alarms to women she met along the way. Her goal was to see 700 species, and to raise awareness of women's safety in the outdoors. She ended up surpassing her goal and setting a new record, of 726 species. In her presentation, Tiffany will lead us through the fear, empowerment, struggles, and healing that all played vital roles in the personal growth she experienced on this wild adventure. Learn more about Tiffany and Nature Ninja Birding Tours on her website: <https://tiffanykersten.blogspot.com>.



Calendar of Events

- Monthly:** Beginner Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR, 3rd Saturday of each month, Stevensville, MT 10AM-12PM.
- Mar 13:** Raptor Guardians/Peregrine Watch training, 4PM via Zoom. See newsletter article for details.
- Mar 14:** Peregrine Falcon cliff nest field trip, 10AM. See newsletter article for details.
- Mar 18:** Audubon Meeting/Program; History of the Bitterroot Salish and the Rams Head Medicine Tree, presented by Dean Sonneah Nicolai. 7PM via Zoom.
- Mar 26:** Montana Audubon Citizen Science Zoom Curlew Training, 6:30PM. See newsletter article for details.
- Apr 20:** Welcome Back Waterfowl Day, Lee Metcalf NWR, Stevensville, MT, 10AM-1:30PM.
- May 31-Jun 2:**
- Wings Across the Big Sky birding festival, Carroll College, Helena, MT. See newsletter articles from Montana Audubon as details and announcements are shared.

22-24
MARCH



WILD WINGS
LIGHT GOOSE FESTIVAL
2024



Entry Ticket

FREE

Doors Open

4 PM

Friday

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR EVENT
SCHEDULE, PRE-REGISTRATION,
TOUR, AND LODGING
INFORMATION:

<https://www.wildwingschoteau.org>



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EMAIL: contactus@bitterrootaudubon.org

WEBSITE: www.BitterrootAudubon.org

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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: _____
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State: _____ Zip: _____
Email: _____

Send this application with \$15 to:



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