JANUARY 2020

Sacajawea Audubon News

Sacajawea Audubon builds on an interest in birds to promote the conservation of our natural environment through enjoyment, education, and action

Monday, January 13th, 2020 Program:

Noah Comet: A Cultural History of Hummingbirds

Hope Lutheran Church, Fireside Rooms

Hummingbirds demand superlatives. Exceptionally tiny when at rest—the slightest species measuring just 2¼ inches—they are nevertheless unmissable in flight, clothed in sun-catching grandeur. Like dwarf stars of compressed energy, their nectar-fueled hearts prime them for bursts of 80 wingbeats a second, and for annual round-trip migrations of up to 5,400 miles. They are the only birds that can fly backward, an advantageous skill as they dart and hover and defend their territories ferociously. They sleep ferociously too, each night submitting to a torpor that can bring them to the edge of hypothermia. These birds may be small, but there is nothing small about them.

Calliope Hummingbird © Richard Pick: Audubon Photography Awards

Their abundant fascinations have earned hummingbirds a prominent if under-examined place in cultural history, and that is the subject of Noah Comet's presentation. Reaching back to the pre-Colombian Americas, Noah will explain how the bird evolved from a bloodthirsty deity into a transatlantic metaphor and commodity. Hummingbirds' bright plumage eventually inspired British Romantic poetry and adorned French milliner's shops as tokens of New World exoticism and trophies of imperialism; the birds also came to symbolize freedom within the anti-slavery abolitionist movement of the nineteenth century. Comet will trace these ideas and further explore the modern, pop-cultural gendering of the hummingbird.

About the speaker: Noah Comet holds graduate degrees from NYU and UCLA, and is a professor of English at the United States Naval Academy. He is widely published in the field of nineteenth-century British studies, his credits including a 2013 book from Macmillan Press and many essays in scholarly journals. He is also a certified State of Maryland Master Naturalist, an avid outdoorsman, and a nature writer whose work has appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Denver Post*, and the *Baltimore Sun*. A native of northeastern Ohio, he traces his love of birds to (among other things) a surprise encounter with a Barred Owl in Cleveland, who landed on a branch just inches from his head and shared several minutes with him in silent, mutual curiosity. Since then, Comet has made it one of his life goals to see all of America's owl species; he's more than halfway there. He lives in Annapolis with his wife and 7-year-old son.

Sacajawea Audubon Society programs feature a special guest speaker the 2nd Monday of each month, September through May, at Hope Lutheran Church, 2152 W. Graf (off of S. 19th). Programs are free and open to the public. Join us for a social at 6:30 pm, announcements at 7:00 pm, followed by the program.

Calendar *at a* Glance
JANUARY 2020

2	SAS Board Meeting at the Lehrkind Mansion
4	Ruby Valley Christmas Bird Count
11	*Epic Yellowstone: Life on the Wing,* Livingston Screening
13	SAS Monthly Program
15	SAS Book Group Discussion

BIRD NOTES

by John Parker

From late November and into December, there was quite a flurry of towhee sightings in our corner of Montana. Of the two towhee species that breed in Montana the Green-tailed Towhee's range is more limited, and it generally winters further south. So, it's expected that there would be considerably fewer winter records for Green-tailed Towhee than Spotted Towhee. But for the third time in the last two years, **Green-tailed Towhees** have turned up in Gardiner in either December or January. On December 6th Howard Weinberg and Katy Duffy were able to get pictures of a Green-tailed Towhee in their Gardiner yard, and then amazingly on the 12th a second Green-tailed Towhee joined the first. The first of the late season towhees was the **Spotted Towhee** Hobart Collins found November 15th near the bottom of the "M" Trail northeast of Bozeman. This sighting is about two months after most towhees have left for the winter. On November 28th Nancy Neiley had a Spotted Towhee spend the day in her south Bozeman yard. Two days before that Tom Forwood saw a Spotted Towhee in his Willow Creek yard which was exciting enough, but then the other foot dropped. In association with the Spotted Towhee was Montana's third state record Eastern Towhee! **Eastern Towhees** are a common bird as far west as the eastern Great Plains, but seldom found anywhere west of that. This Eastern Towhee was by far the western most of the three Montana records, and the only record further to the west in the United States was one that turned up at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge headquarters in 2008.

Eastern Towhee by Nate Kohler.

Speaking of extreme rarities for Montana, this past year five species were added to the state's official bird list. Three of these birds were seen during the past year and the other two were seen in 2015 and 1998, but after some detective work were added to the list of Montana birds this year. These new Montana species represent five different families of birds from all points of the compass.

The first addition to the Montana bird list this past year was an adult **Heerman's Gull** seen flying along the Fort Peck dam on December 29, 2018. John Carlson (past president of Sacajawea Audubon) spotted the gull while conducting the Fort Peck Christmas Bird Count. This species of gull seldom strays from the core of its range along the west coast of the United States and northern Mexico. For an idea of how unusual this sighting was-there has never been a Heerman's Gull documented in any of the contiguous states or provinces with Montana.

The next new bird added to the list was a **Tricolored Heron** that likely wandered to Montana from either the Gulf or East Coast. The heron was photographed on June 2, 2019 by Liam Waters, at a small pond near Ophiem north of Glasgow, only about ten miles from the Saskatchewan border. Other than a Tricolored Heron seen near Ketchikan Alaska in 1985, this is the furthest to the northwest the species has been recorded in North America.

A **Rivoli's Hummingbird** (formerly Magnificent Hummingbird) was the third new bird added to the Montana list in 2019. The hummingbird was first identified on July 17, 2019 by Lou Bruno, at a feeder near East Glacier. This hummingbird continued frequenting feeders in the area until September 17th. You know you are looking at something exotic when watching a Rivoli's Hummingbird, as they are twice the length and weigh three times as much as a Calliope Hummingbird. The Rivoli's Hummingbirds range extends from

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SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY

INDRELAND AUDUBON WETLAND PRESERVE
UPDATE: JANUARY 2020

WHY WETLANDS?

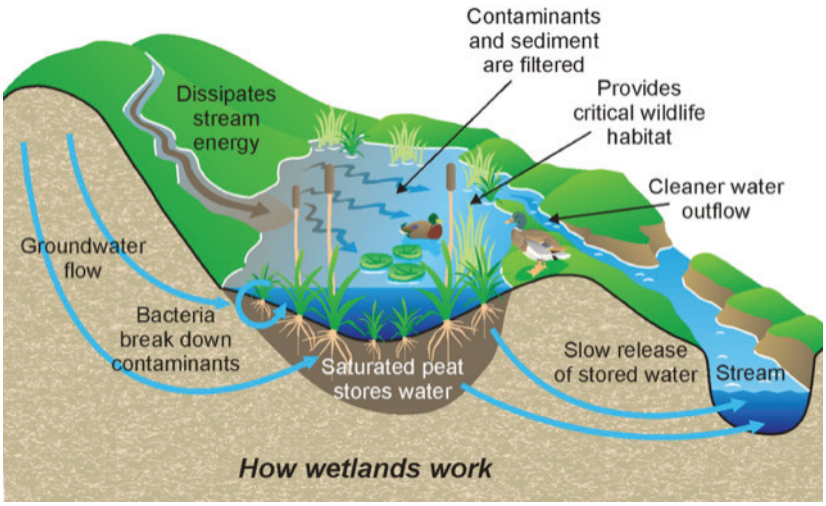
- **Preserve rare habitat, critical for resident and migrating birds.**
- **Replenish the East Gallatin watershed for the entire valley.**

Once secured and restored, this low-lying area near the east end of Bozeman's Main Street will provide substantial benefits to the City of Bozeman and Gallatin County. This restored wetland will:

- improve storm water filtration and retention;
- provide flood control;
- facilitate aquifer recharge; and
- mitigate drought for the East Gallatin River.

This river is a nationally recognized "Blue Ribbon trout stream," which is currently listed as a Stream of Concern by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

Wetlands are an incredibly valuable and declining habitat. Less than two percent of Montana's lands are classified as wetlands, yet more than 50% of Montana's wildlife depend on wetlands. To date over 100 bird species have been identified using the IAWP.



The IAWP is part of a larger remnant wetland complex, which Lewis and Clark described and mapped in their journals on July 14, 1806.

The restoration of this wetland and upland complex will offer a diverse array of habitats for wildlife within the IAWP and the greater landscape. Significantly, this property offers an opportunity to showcase multiple high-value types of wetland habitats, including rare forested wetland.

Sacajawea Audubon Society Membership 2020

Individual or Family

☐ Basic Membership $25

☐ Supporting Membership $50
(Supporting local conservation & education project)

☐ Additional Donation .....$_____
- ☐ *Bridger Raptor Study*
- ☐ *Education*
- ☐ *Story Mill Park Bird Feeding Station*
- ☐ *Wetland Campaign*
- ☐ *Wherever is Needed*

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☐ *I would like a paper newsletter mailed to me and have included an additional $10 to cover the annual cost.*

❖ We do not share your information except with Montana Audubon, so your contact information is safe with us.

Mail this form with your check to:

Sacajawea Audubon Society
Attn: Membership
PO Box 1711
Bozeman, MT 59771-1711

Thank you for your membership and donation. We look forward to birding with you!

newsletter 1/20

Plants for Birds:

Red Osier Dogwood

(Red-twig Dogwood, Red Willow)

- **Scientific Name:** *Cornus sericea*
- **Height:** 6–10 feet
- **Hardiness:** Zone 2
- **Wildlife Value:** Highly desirable berries, cover, nesting sites, and browse

Red osier dogwood is a colorful, native shrub that brings zest to a garden as well as providing food, shelter and nesting places for birds. It has clusters of white blossoms in the spring, attractive white berries in fall/winter and delightful brilliant red stems in the winter. A wide variety of birds love the berries including catbirds, woodpeckers, finches, thrushes, waxwings, tanagers, grosbeaks, grouse and pheasants, just to name a few. Dogwood thickets also provide great cover and excellent nesting sites to rear young. They are particularly good habitat for little birds such as flycatchers, sparrows and warblers.

Red osier dogwood is common throughout Canada and Northern US. It is found in rich moist riparian areas, forest openings and often occurs with alder, willow, cottonwood, aspen, currants and horsetails. It is used in inventory and monitoring systems as an indicator species of wetland sites. It is adaptable to a wide range of soil conditions but grows best in moist, well drained soils and in full sun to partial shade. It can tolerate occasional drought but should receive some supplemental water in a home garden.

Red osier dogwood is a spreading multi-stemmed shrub that grows 6-10 feet high and can sucker up to 10 feet wide. For smaller areas use the 'Isanti' cultivar that stays 5 feet tall and 5 feet wide. Dogwoods bloom creamy white blossoms May to June and produce pea-sized white berries in the fall. Its autumn foliage is very colorful as the leaves turn bright red. Its winter red stems against white snow are stunning and add a major winter interest to the garden. Red osier dogwood is very cold hardy. It's easy to propagate from seed and cuttings and is a fast grower. In the landscape it's often used for mass plantings, hedges and screening, general garden use, naturalizing and in woodland gardens.

Plant this all-star native shrub in your backyard and you will be enticing pollinators to your garden and supplying food and habitat for many species of birds. Keep in mind that it may need to be fenced when young to protect it from deer browsing.

SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

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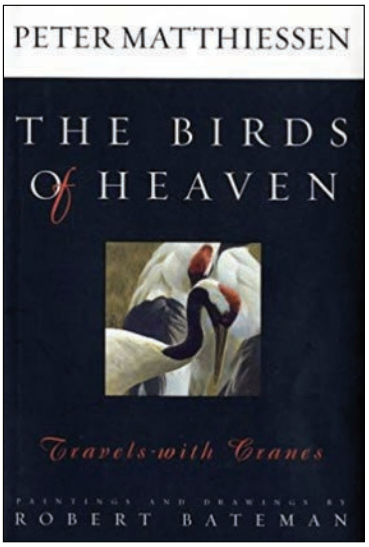
SAS January Book Group Discussion



Snuggle up with the book "The Birds of Heaven" by Peter Matthiess, in which the leading naturalist and writer travels the globe in search of a prized—and vanishing—bird. Then, join the Sacajawea Audubon Book Group discussion on Wednesday, January 15, 2020, at Pilgrim Congregational Church (2118 South 3rd St.) from 4:00 to 5:15 pm. All are welcome, but if you are coming for the first time, please contact Sherry Staub at (563) 370-0757 or email mayawindsong@gmail.com.

Bird Notes *(cont. from page 2)*

northern Central America to the southwestern corner of Arizona. Before this sighting a Rivoli's Hummingbird had never been recorded north of Colorado, except for one seen in south central British Columbia.

This past year the **White-winged Scoter** was split into three separate species: White-winged Scoter, Velvet Scoter, and Stenjneger's Scoter. Last summer while combing through old photos, a pre-teen birder in the eastern U.S. came across an old photo of a **Stenjneger's Scoter** taken in Montana. The scoter was originally found on the Helena Regulating Reservoir by Dan Olson on April 11, 2015. This scoter is arguably the rarest vagrant of the new additions to the Montana bird list. This northeastern Asian sea duck has only been reported east of the International Date Line a handful of times, primarily in the Bering Sea west of Alaska. This is the second Stenjneger's Scoter documented outside of Alaskan waters, and the first recorded from the interior of North America.

Early this fall a birder thought they'd seen a **Ruff** at Medicine Lake NWR, but later retracted the sighting. That got Jeff Marks (long time Montana Bird Records Committee member) thinking about another Ruff sighting from long ago. Jeff got in touch with of one of the observers, and fortunately they had retained the extensive notes and drawings of this old sighting. So, after a few twists and turns, the Ruff that Lance Tanino, Matt and Ted Nordhagen documented at Medicine Lake NWR August 7–8, 1998, is now officially on the Montana state bird list. Though this is a Eurasian shorebird, they have a predilection to wander far from their primary range. Wyoming is now the only state that hasn't recorded a Ruff.

What will your next best bird be?
Happy birding in 2020!

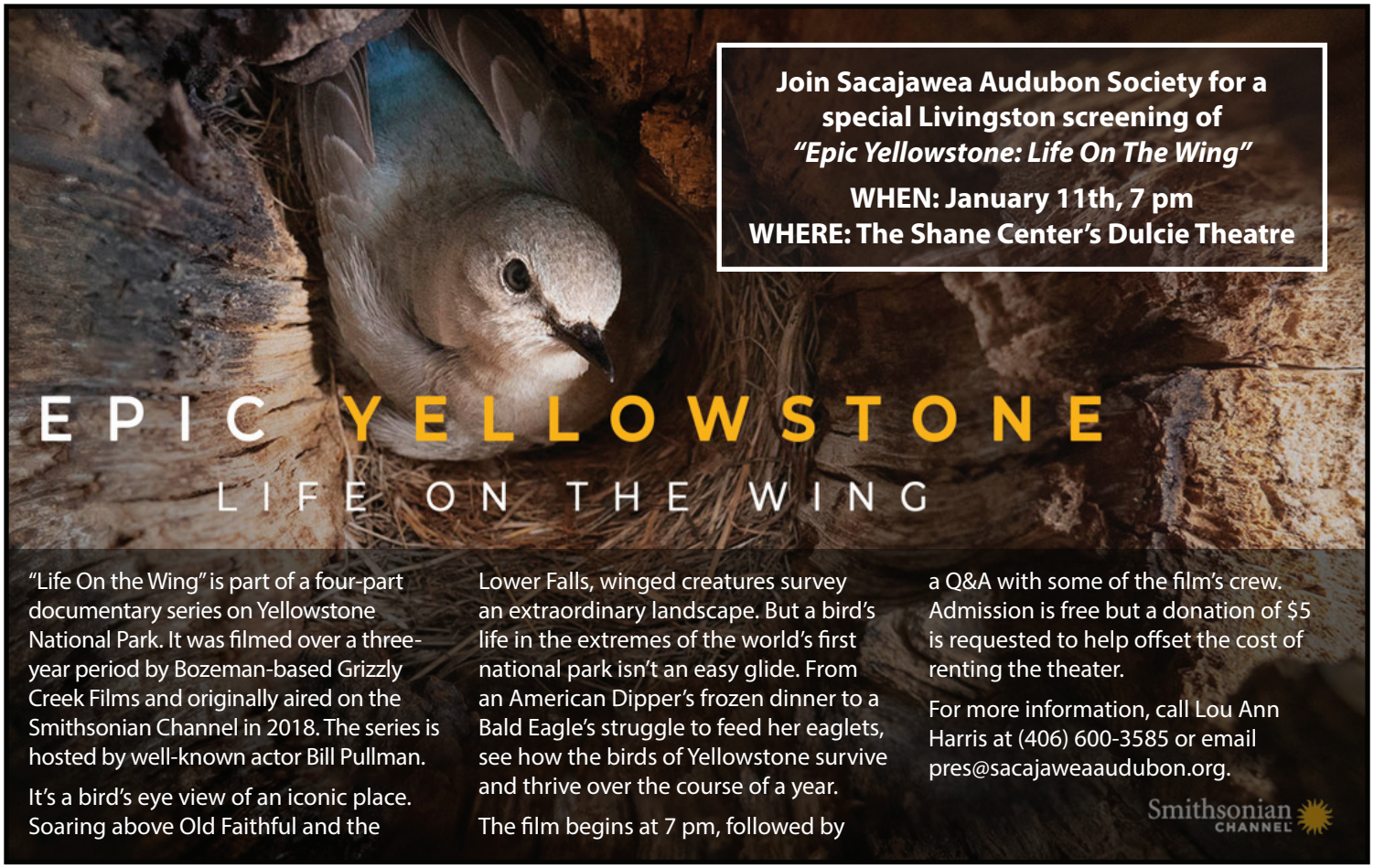
Sacajawea Audubon Society
P.O. Box 1711
Bozeman, MT 59771-1771

Change Service Requested

Sacajawea Audubon Society, affiliated with the National Audubon Society, meets on the second Monday of each month, September through May.

Sacajawea Audubon Society Monthly Newsletter is available electronically to all Sacajawea Audubon Society members September through May. Members and non-members can receive a mailed paper newsletter for an annual $10 subscription fee. Please send your check to the address above.

Deadline for article submission is the 15th of the month preceding the month the articles will appear. Send articles electronically to Stephanie Nelson at: newsletter@sacajaweaaudubon.org.

Change of Address: If you have a change of address or are away, please notify membership@sacajaweaaudubon.org. Undeliverable mailed newsletters are returned to us for an extra fee.

Find more at the **Sacajawea Audubon Society website** at: sacajaweaaudubon.org