SEPTEMBER 2020

Sacajawea Audubon News

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

Monday, September 14th, 2020 VIRTUAL PROGRAM:

"The North American Prairies: An Introduction to a Little Known Ecosystem"

with featured speaker Beth Madden, Wildlife Biologist

Sacajawea Audubon Society is proud to announce that we will be hosting virtual program meetings. Due to COVID-19, our monthly meetings this fall (September through December) will be virtual meetings. Information on how to register and attend our virtual meeting will be on the SAS website.

Wildlife biologist Beth Madden will lead us in an exploration of the history, ecology, plants, and animals of one of North America's most threatened ecosystems. What exactly is native prairie? How does it operate as an ecosystem, and what are our challenges in maintaining it? Learn about the natural disturbance regimes that keep prairies functioning and healthy. Grassland birds will be a special focus, as we examine how different groups of birds adapted to life on the prairies.

Beth Madden is a wildlife biologist with more than 30 years experience, mostly as a federal biologist in Montana and North Dakota with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. She also worked for the US Forest Service, for MSU as a research associate studying Golden Eagles, and more recently as a biological consultant helping energy companies monitor birds and bats at wind farms. She has a BA in Zoology from the University of Montana, and an MS in Biology from Montana State University. Raised in upstate New York, Beth did not come to appreciate the prairies until her graduate research took her to North Dakota to study the importance of fire in maintaining habitat for prairie birds. Her subsequent work on national wildlife refuges focused on improving wildlife habitat by restoring natural disturbance regimes to the prairies.

Sacajawea Audubon Society programs are free and open to the public. Our programs feature a special guest speaker the 2nd Monday of each month, September through May. Join us for a virtual social at 6:30 pm, announcements at 7:00 pm, followed by the program. Visit the SAS website for instructions on how to attend this month's virtual meeting.

Prairie in Sweet Grass County, Montana. Photo by Beth Madden.

BIRD NOTES

by John Parker

This past summer saw a wide range of unusual birds discovered in southwestern Montana. Like most rarities, these sightings were brief encounters for the discoverers, with a couple of exceptions.

The first surprise of the season was the **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** seen by Mary and John Griffith on May 20th. This flycatcher was perched on a fence along the Brackett Creek Road, west of Clyde Park. Subsequent searches for this bird proved unsuccessful. Scissor-tailed Flycatchers have now been seen more than twenty times in Montana, but this is only about the third one to have been seen in this corner of the state.

This past spring migration five different **Summer Tanagers** were found scattered across Montana, three of which were in the southwestern part of the state. The first to be seen was an adult male southwest of Dillon, seen by Robert Wooley on May 9th. The second was another adult male that was frequenting Katy Duffy's Gardiner yard from May 21 to the 26th. Finally, Paulette Epple observed a first-year male at the upper Red Rock Lakes campground May 28-29.

During that same stormy period that brought the tanager to Gardiner, many other birds were grounded in the Gardiner Basin, which due to its geographic location, is prone to migratory fallouts. Among the multitudes of **Swainson's Thrushes** and other passerines, Forrest Rowland spotted a **Gray-cheeked Thrush**. This was just the second time this thrush has been documented in our area.

A couple of unusual warblers made an appearance locally. A **Black and White Warbler** was first sighted by Howard Wienberg in Katy Duffy's yard on May 30, with the bird continuing in this Gardiner yard until June 2nd. On June 19th, while doing a Birdathon, the Wrenegades (LAH, BM, AM, SN, AP, JT) found a singing male **Magnolia Warbler**, east of Bozeman up Kelly Canyon.

Townsend's Warbler. Photo by Kyle Dudgeon.

While on the Sacajawea Audubon Society June 26 field trip at Headwaters State Park, Beth Madden was the first in the group to hear a **Black-billed Cuckoo** at the picnic area. Up until 1970 Black-billed Cuckoos were considered fairly common (P.D. Skaar *Birds of the Bozeman Latilong*) in brushy and riparian areas as far west as the Jefferson River. Then, in the 1978 journal *American Birds*, Skaar noted that Black-billed Cuckoos "were described as rare in the Bozeman vicinity this year." Shockingly, this summer's Headwaters sighting is only the sixth record in this area for Black-billed Cuckoo since 1980.

The rarest bird of this past summer was the **Yellow-throated Vireo** that Tom Forwood discovered northwest of McAllister on June 19th. This is only Montana's seventh record for this vireo, that seldom strays from its breeding range which extends into the eastern Great Plains. This sighting was also the furthest west, by a good margin, that a Yellow-throated Vireo has been seen in Montana.

And then on the night of July 18th lightning struck again for Tom. While driving home with the windows down on a warm evening, past a marsh outside of Willow Creek, he heard a distinctive tick-tick-tick. A **Yellow Rail**! While this secretive bird quite likely breeds in far northeastern Montana, it has only been documented in the state fifteen times. This very obliging rail continued to be heard well into August, giving many birders the opportunity to hear this special bird.

Photo by Kyle Dudgeon

SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY LAUNCHES 29TH ANNUAL

BRIDGER RAPTOR COUNT

The Sacajawea Audubon Society announces the start of the 29th annual Bridger Raptor Migration Count. Will Britton and Joanna Morelli, highly experienced hawk watchers, have been recruited as the official season-long observers for the 2020 season to scientifically document all raptors migrating along the crest of the Bridger Ridge (above Bridger Bowl Ski Area). The Bridger Project is designed to assess the status and long-term trends of Golden Eagles and other raptors using this Rocky Mountain flyway. This project is also intended to monitor landscape-level environmental changes using these widespread, apex predators as useful barometers of ecological health.

Sacajawea Audubon Society, in partnership with HawkWatch International (HWI), is collaborating for the fourth consecutive season to conduct the project. HWI initiated these scientific, season-long counts in 1992. A total of 17 raptor species are recorded each season, including Golden & Bald Eagles, as well as many species of hawks and falcons, including Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks, Red-tailed and Rough-legged Hawks, Northern Harriers, Northern Goshawks, American Kestrels as well as Peregrine and Prairie Falcons and many other raptor species. These migrants originate primarily from breeding locales in western Canada and Alaska; their destinations include a wide range of latitudes (varying by species and population), from the American West and Mexico to Central and South America.

Golden Eagle counts in the Bridger Range have varied from 1,000 to 1,800 per season, with up to 150 or more on a single migration day (maximum Golden Eagle numbers are generally observed during the first two weeks of October). However, it is noteworthy that counts of Golden Eagles at this and other western sites have shown significant declines, particularly during the 2000 through 2010 period. Importantly, however, in recent years Golden Eagle counts have stabilized, and even increased slightly. The cause of the Golden Eagle decline is not fully understood, but these findings in the Bridgers have stimulated additional research throughout the western United States, which is ongoing.

The best overall raptor viewing for a variety of migrant raptors atop the Bridgers is from mid-September through mid-October. Counts are conducted daily (weather permitting) from 27 August through 31 October. The general public is welcome to join Joanna and Will to witness one of nature's most spectacular phenomena as these majestic birds fly south for the winter. From the parking area above the Bridger Bowl Ski Area facilities, it is a 2-hour hike to the observation point (elevation gain is 2,200 feet).

For additional information about the Bridger Raptor Project, including more detailed directions to reach the observation site, please contact Steve Hoffman at swhoffman0322@gmail.com or 406-461-5714.

THE FINAL CUSTER/GALLATIN NATIONAL FOREST PLAN IS AVAILABLE FOR COMMENTS

The 2020 Land Management Plan, Final Environmental Impact Statement, and draft Record of Decision is now available. You may go to the following links to read the plan and to **make comments by September 8, 2020.** You may read the document at:

https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public//ReadingRoom?Project=50185

You may make comments at:

https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public//CommentInput?Project=50185

Where Have All The Wetlands Gone?

As seen in the Bozeman Daily Chronicle 08/02/2020

Bozeman Must Act Now To Protect Our Remaining Wetlands

The Native Americans that relied upon the abundant resources of the Gallatin Valley once knew it as the "Valley of Flowers." A mosaic of twisting streams braided through lush woodlands and meadows, with game trails crisscrossing the distance between the Bridger and the Gallatin Ranges. For current day inhabitants to envision this setting, the vast wetland complex teeming with swans, ducks and other waterfowl interspersed among the elk, bison, moose, and bear would, frankly, require a good deal of imagination.

As Bozeman rushes to accommodate its burgeoning economy and the rapid influx of individuals and families moving here in search of clean air and the great outdoors, we are forced to build new homes, commercial buildings, and infrastructure. To make room for people, we are forced to sacrifice the remaining wetlands and natural areas in the valley. But does it have to be so?

Firstly, we must understand the importance of our riverine wetlands. Wetlands are the single greatest ecological resource for protecting water quality. Wetlands improve water quality by retaining sediment and nutrients which pass through them, providing clean waters downstream. Imagine a series of huge sponges next to the river, storing and filtering water before it enters the stream, filtering contaminants. Wetlands also provide critical important wildlife habitats and migration corridors, and act as a sponge to provide flood control during periods of high runoff. Wetlands maintain groundwater levels and support the increasing demands of our population on the water supply. As these wetlands continue to shrink or be eliminated, their ability to maintain the ecological health of Bozeman's clean waters and abundant habitat are lost. "No net loss" of wetlands is not only a phrase, it's a legislative mandate.

National wetland policy, under the Clean Water Act, requires that when wetlands are destroyed, they must be replaced or restored elsewhere; a process known as "mitigation." Why aren't we seeing this in the Gallatin Valley? Where did all the wetlands go?

Unfortunately, many of Bozeman's wetlands have been lost to development action. As it stands, the lion's share of mitigation for our destroyed wetlands goes, to be replaced, to a private "wetland bank" that is nearly ninety miles away. Whenever this happens, the Bozeman community forever loses these critical natural resources. Fortunately, the City of Bozeman can develop policies today that prevent wetland loss from continuing or temporarily delay mitigation until a local site becomes available.

The Sacajawea Audubon Society and others are working hard to prevent future wetland loss by creating a local wetland bank as they restore the degraded wetland complex east of town. We need your help to protect the valley's remaining wetlands and streams. Make your voices heard. Help us protect your water resources. Wetlands are essential for Bozeman's clean and accessible water resources for future generations. Will you join us in letting the Bozeman City Commissioners know that you, too, believe this is important for our community and their policies should be changed to prevent this loss now?

Wendy Weaver, Montana Aquatic Resources Services
Chris Nixon, Sacajawea Audubon Society

SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY

INDRELAND AUDUBON WETLAND PRESERVE UPDATE: SEPT. 2020

Sewer Line Construction Begins

The City of Bozeman is in the process of upgrading the sewer main that runs through Sacajawea Audubon Society's wetland. COP, the sewer construction contractor, has begun clearing trees on our property. In the portion of the sewer route that is outside the wetland area, which is more than 90% of the sewer route, they will be removing trees along a 30 ft wide zone to accommodate the construction equipment. In the wetland area, which is only a small portion of the sewer route, the clearing will be about 15 ft wide. SAS members Andy Epple and John Edwards are monitoring the sewer construction process to make sure they are following the requirements of the sewer construction plans and the federal wetland permit. Disruption of bird life is unavoidable, but the tree removal company is working to minimize the impact where they can.

On August 7, 2020 members of SAS Board of Directors and the Wetland Preservation Project Committee led Bozeman's new City Manager, Jeff Mihelich, and several City of Bozeman staff members through the IAWP and informed them of our current plans for the property. The SAS Board is currently working with Rich McEldowney and others of Confluence Inc. to generate the first phase of the Restoration Design. Look to upcoming newsletters for updates on the design process.

Plants for Birds:
Showy Goldeneye

- **Scientific Name:** *Heliomeris multiflora* (Asteraceae Family)
- **Height:** 18" to 36"
- **Hardiness:** Zone 4
- **Wildlife Value:** Attracts native bees and butterflies, seeds for finches, siskins, sparrows, and chipmunks.

Showy goldeneye is a native herbaceous perennial that brightens many of our western landscapes. It's one among thousands of species in the composite family (Aster family) but one of only 4 species of the *Heliomeris* genus. The bright yellow ray flowers are long blooming and bring a sunny golden color to the garden. The flowers attract a wide variety of native bees, insects, and butterflies, but it's the tiny seeds that the birds enjoy. Watch for American goldfinches and pine siskins doing acrobatic tricks as they try to perch on the thin flimsy stems and reach for the drying seed heads in late summer and fall.

Heliomeris multiflora is a subalpine species and grows best from 6,000–9,000 ft but does very well in lower elevation gardens. It naturally occurs with sagebrush, juniper, spruce, fir and in cottonwood communities and is seen growing on hillsides, in meadows and along roadsides across the west. Showy goldeneye is easy to grow, is often seeded in native plant restorations, and is used in mixed borders and meadow gardens.

This beautiful perennial grows 24–36" tall in clumps of multiple stems which are topped by small golden flowers that resemble miniature sunflowers. It blooms midsummer to October providing wonderful fall color. It prefers full sun to partial shade, is highly drought tolerant (needing little supplemental water once established), and grows best in loamy, sandy type soil. It naturalizes by seed into other areas of the garden and is easy to propagate by lightly sowing its seed in the fall.

Plant this cheerful beauty in the garden for a lush splash of gold and as a food source for many of our native feathered and non-feathered friends.

~ Paulette Epple

Sacajawea Audubon Society's Fall 2020 Field Trips

Missouri River Headwaters State Park. Photo by Water for Food.

September 5, Saturday: **Three Forks—Headwaters SP**

Trip Leader: **Robin Wolcott** (pajaros@wewolcotts.com)

Meet at 8:30 AM at the Three Forks Ponds.

Early September is the peak of fall migration with an amazing diversity of birds passing through Montana. This field trip will take advantage of the many birding opportunities in the greater Three Forks and Headwaters State Park areas. This trip will last until early–mid afternoon, so bring a lunch. Bring a scope if you have one. To reserve a spot or for more information please contact the trip leader.

Participants limited to 8 people.

Friday, September 11: **Glen Lake Rotary Park Fish Hatchery**

Trip Leader: **John Parker** (conundrumjp@gmail.com)

On this trip we will hope to see primarily passerines during the prime fall migration period. This migration is different than spring migration in that the timing of the migration for most birds is more dependent on the weather, and they aren't in such a rush to arrive at their breeding grounds. Flycatchers, catbirds, sparrows, and warblers should all be present at these local birding hotspots. For more information, please contact the trip leader.

Participants are limited to 8 people. Masks are required.

Friday, September 18: **Glen Lake Rotary Park & Story Mill Park**

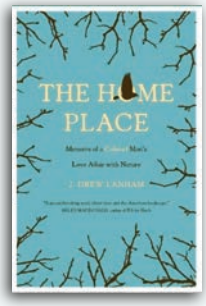
Trip Leader: **Lou Ann Harris** (montlou311@gmail.com)

Join SAS Past President Lou Ann Harris for a socially distanced bird walk through the nature trails of Glen Lake Rotary Park and Story Mill Community Park. This is a perfect time to catch the fall migration of warblers, vireos, sparrows, and flycatchers as they make their way south. This will be an easy stroll on flat terrain at both parks. Please contact Lou Ann to sign up.

Participants are limited to 8 people. Masks are required.

A NEW SEASON OF SAS BOOK CLUB

Ready to curl up with another season of SAS Book Club books? Cap off your summer reading list with a book or two from our schedule?



We will kick off the season on **September 16th** with a book relevant to the current social reality of Black Lives Matter: ***The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair with Nature*** by Drew Lanham.

This book explores the roots of his passion for Nature and experience as an ornithologist as well as what it's like to be "birding while black."

The book club normally meets the 3rd Wednesday of the month from September through April from 4 to 5:15 pm at Pilgrim Congregational Church, 2118 S. 3rd Avenue.

HOWEVER . . . in light of the COVID-19 situation, we may have to meet on a virtual platform. Watch the website for updates on when and where. Meeting outside may also be an option. Just stay flexible and stay tuned!

Here is a list of all of the books and dates for the rest of this season:

- **October (21st):** ***The Geese of Beaver Bog*** by Bernd Heinrick
- **November (18th):** ***Secret Lives of Bats: My Adventures with the Most Misunderstood Mammals*** by Merlin D. Tuttle
- **January (20th):** ***Erosion*** by Terry Tempest Williams
- **February (17th):** ***Eager: The Surprising Secret Life of Beavers and Why They Matter*** by Ben Goldfarb
- **March (17th):** ***The Eight Master Lessons of Nature: What Nature Teaches Us About Living Well in the World*** by Gary Ferguson
- **April (21st):** ***Beaks, Bones, and Bird Songs*** by Roger J. Lederer

Questions or concerns? Please e-mail Sherry Staub at mayawindsong@gmail.com or call 563-370-0757. If you want to receive Book Club e-mail updates, please send Sherry your e-mail. It's a thoughtful and curious group of folks who would love for you to join us . . . whenever you are able.

SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Officers

President	Chris Nixon pres@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Vice President	John Edwards vicepres@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Treasurer	Mary Schlosser treas@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Secretary	Emma Narotzky sec@sacajaweaaudubon.org

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Loreene Reid	loreener@sacajaweaaudubon.org
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Activity Leaders

Education Chair	Travis Kidd education@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Conservation Chair	Paulette Epple conservation@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Field Trips, Bird Sightings	John Parker birdsightings@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Hospitality	Sherry Staub hospitality@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Membership	Loreene Reid membership@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Newsletter	OPEN newsletter@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Programs	OPEN programs@sacajaweaaudubon.org
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Wetlands Preservation	Karin Jennings wetlands@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Book Club	Sherry Staub hospitality@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Newsletter Design	Amy Kelley Hoitsma aok@mcn.net

WANTED:
SAS Program Committee Chair

Sacajawea Audubon Society (SAS) is seeking a volunteer to serve as Chair of the Program Committee. This committee works as a team to develop ideas and recruit speakers for the SAS's monthly program meetings. Programs are scheduled nine times per year, on the second Monday of each month from September–May. The Program Committee is responsible for engaging speakers and organizing publicity and other logistics well in advance of each meeting. The Board will assist with ideas for Program speakers and other Program tasks as needed.

PROGRAM CHAIR JOB DESCRIPTION

The program chair is responsible for planning the SAS program meeting schedule for the year and organizing the programs at each scheduled membership meeting. The program chair must be able to organize well in advance of each meeting, making sure speakers and all other logistics are taken care of.

DUTIES

- Organize the featured program for each membership meeting.
- Maintain a file of recent programs and speakers including addresses, phone numbers and comments on their success.
- Develop a schedule of future programs, for the entire year if possible in accordance with the annual budget, and present the schedule at the annual planning meeting (the board & committee members are available to assist you and recommend speakers).
- Develop a check-list for each program that includes items such as: confirming dates with speakers, arranging for meeting space, obtaining audiovisual equipment as needed, refreshments, publicity, thank-you's, etc. Work with hospitality chair & membership chair to delegate some of these responsibilities or other committees whenever necessary.
- Prepare an article with images for each program and submit to the Newsletter Editor, Website Master, Social Media Editor and Membership Chair to promote programs to our members, the community and in the press (see media list & due dates).
- Periodically survey members for program interests and ideas.
- Prepare an annual report including budget, presenters, people reached, etc

If you are interested in volunteering for this position, please contact the Membership Chair at membership@sacajaweaaudubon.org.

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 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

BECOME A MEMBER OR RENEW YOUR ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP TODAY!

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*

Name _____

Address _____
(Street or PO Box)

_____ ____ _____
(City) *(State)* *(Zip)*

Phone ( )_____

Email _____

❖ Sacajawea Audubon News is sent by email. There is a $10 annual fee for a paper copy mailed to you.
☐ *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 9/20