SacajaweaAudubonNews

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

December 2015

Calendar at a Glance

Dec 3	SAS Book Club
Dec 11	MT Audubon Wildlife Grant Due
Dec 14	SAS Monthly Meeting
Dec 16 - 28	Christmas Bird Count

"Eyes on the Skies: Results of the 25th Consecutive Bridger Count"

Presented by Steve Hoffman, Executive Director of Montana Audubon

Monday Dec 14th, 2015 at 7pm
Hope Lutheran Church
2152 W. Graf Street in Bozeman

The Bridger Ridge provides viewing of one of the largest Golden Eagle migration known in the lower 48 states. Recent Golden Eagle count totals have varied from 1,000 to 1,400 eagles per season, with up to 200 individuals tallied on peak migration days (usually during the first two weeks of October). Data obtained over the last 25 years has provided scientists with valuable information about trends in Golden Eagles and other raptor populations.

Thanks to the generous support of Sacajawea Audubon Society and others, September 1st marked the start of the 25th consecutive season of raptor migration research along the crest of the Bridger Mountains. Montana Audubon, in partnership with HawkWatch International (HWI), has coordinated this scientific project for the past 7 seasons. HWI initiated these annual counts in 1991.

These majestic birds use the energy-saving updrafts created by strong winds along the crest of the Bridgers to migrate south. The long-term data collected at the Bridger site helps scientists learn about regional and continental raptor population trends. Most importantly, the Bridger project is designed to monitor widespread environmental changes, using these apex predators as valuable barometers of ecological health.

Steve Hoffman, Executive Director of Montana Audubon, emphasizes: "The Bridger Project is the most important migration site in the western United States for monitoring the health and trends of Golden Eagle populations. The Bridger data are especially important now because there is scientific evidence for long-term declines in Golden Eagle numbers across much of western North America. As a result, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and other wildlife conservation agencies are intensifying research efforts to learn more about Golden Eagles and what might be causing this downward trend."

Sacajawea Audubon programs and free and open to the public. Come early at 6:30 for our social. Meeting begins at 7 p.m.

Bird Notes

This past month has seen a flurry of bird activity. Some of our breeding birds are making their last appearance, some arctic breeders are passing through the area, and others are settling in for the winter.

The last large groups of Sandhill Cranes were seen flying over this area during the fourth week of October. Loreene Reid saw a flock of over **100 Sandhill Cranes** winging over Bozeman on October 22nd. Also on the 22nd, Victoria Wallop still had a pair of **Mountain Bluebirds** around her house west of Ennis. On the road into Harrison Reservoir, a **Clay-colored Sparrow** was spotted among several White-crowned Sparrows, by Robin Wolcott and Giff Beaton. Though not an especially uncommon bird during breeding season, this Clay-colored Sparrow was seen on October 19th, which is a new state late record for the species. During October, a **Northern Mockingbird** caught Noreen Breeding's attention, as it was chattering away in a hawthorn thicket north of Mount Ellis. Over the past fifty years there have been only about five other records for Northern Mockingbird in the Gallatin Valley, and another five or so in the surrounding valleys.

As was mentioned in last months bird sightings, an **Anna's Hummingbird** had arrived at Paulette Epple's yard in Bozeman. This young male Anna's ended up staying around for ten days, October 12-21. Amazingly, another presumed **Anna's Hummingbird** turned up near Cameron, south of Ennis on November 2nd. This hummingbird arrived preceding a snow storm, and was still coming to the heated feeder as of November 10th.

It's been a banner autumn for loons migrating through Montana. Observers across Montana found **4 Red-throated Loons** this fall, to add to the cumulative total of 15 for the state. A **Pacific Loon** was discovered October 19th, at Harrison Reservoir by John Parker, Giff Beaton, Ed Harper, and Robin Wolcott. That same day there was a single **White-winged Scoter** on the lake. While not as rare as Red-throated Loons, Pacific Loons are still an uncommon and exciting visitor to the state, with greater than average numbers seen this year. An uncommon spectacle of over **100 Common Loons** were staging at Harrison during the last of days of October and the first couple of days of November. The number of crawfish in the lake is hard to imagine, to feed so many hungry loons and diving ducks. On November 5th, when Tom Forwood went to Harrison Reservoir, he found either the same or another **Pacific Loon**. His other surprise of the day were the 3 **Surf Scoters** on the lake. Four days later, Bob Martinka and Stephen Turner saw two different **Surf Scoters** at Harrison.

During the early part of November Paul Gore, who lives south of Bozeman, has had as many as 12 **Gray Partridge** cleaning up underneath his feeders.

Up to 30 **Gray-crowned Rosy Finches** have been coming to Roxanna McLaughlin's feeders near Bozeman Pass. She has also had similar numbers of **Evening Grosbeaks**, plus a single **Red Crossbill** in mid October.

The early winter flight of Horned Larks, Lapland Longspurs, Snow Buntings, and Common Redpolls has been impressive and wide spread across Montana. In the open country of our local valleys, mixed flocks of these bird have numbered into the hundreds. It will be interesting to see if they continue through the winter in this area, or spread out across the region and other areas further to the south.

-John Parker

Thank you to all our sharp-eyed birders for reporting your great sightings. Please report your Bird Sightings by the 9th of the month to John Parker at 586-5863 or birdsightings@sacajaweaaudubon.org

Christmas Bird Counts Are Here!

Come join the fun on one of our area's Christmas Bird Counts. The Christmas counts, started in 1900, are an opportunity for beginning and expert birders to get together and enjoy this holiday tradition.

Ennis Wednesday, December 16th
Compiler: Robin Wolcott (406) 581-5418
pajaros@wewocotts.com
Meet at Yesterday's Café in the Ennis Pharmacy by 7:30 AM or sooner for breakfast

Bozeman Saturday, December 19th
Compiler: John Parker (406) 586-5863
conundrumjp@gmail.com
Meet at Perkins Restaurant, 2505 West Main, in Bozeman, between 7-7:30 AM

West Yellowstone Sunday, December 20th
Compiler: Brad Barth (406) 640-2628
barth.brad@gmail.com
Meet at the Grizzly and Wolf Discovery Center West Yellowstone at 8:30 AM

Livingston Sunday, December 20th
Compiler: Sally MacDonald (406) 223-9167
smacbirder@msn.com
Meet at the Northern Pacific Beanery, in Livingston between 7:00-7:30 AM

Yellowstone Sunday, December 20th
Compiler: Woody Martyn (406) 224-1476
woodymartyn@hotmail.com
Meet at the Yellowstone Grill, in Gardiner, at 7:00 AM

Three Forks Monday, December 28th
Compiler: Tom Forwood (406) 570-6432
tjfishing75@gmail.com
Meet at Wheat Montana at exit 274 at 8:30 AM or by 8:00 for breakfast

For more information, contact the area count compilers. **Please Contact the area compiler before the count, as this will give them the opportunity to plan and organize the count before the count day**. Participation in all counts is free.

Update from the Conservation Chair

The end of the calendar year is always good time to take a moment to reflect on the past year's events, and feel gratitude towards the many dedicated conservation project leaders Sacajawea Audubon has and our many volunteers. In terms of big projects, finally after four years we were able to make headway on the trail project out be Missouri Headwaters State Park. The ownership issue has been resolved and we are waiting to hear whether funds for the construction of the Trident-Peregrine Trail and trailside amenities will granted by the Missouri-Madison River Fund. Thanks goes out to all those who participated in the planning workshop and provided comments on the trail designs presented by the Montana State University Landscape Design Studio students at last December's monthly meeting.

Next, I like to give thanks to all the leaders and volunteers of our long standing conservation projects: Burdock Eradication, Bluebird Trail Monitoring and American Kestrel Nest Box Monitoring. The Burdock Eradication project gained recognition in *Montana Outdoor Magazine* this summer. Thanks also needs to be extended to the leaders of the Important Bird Area (IBA) surveys and the many volunteers to that help with the surveys. Sacajawea Audubon is one of the few chapters in the Montana that monitors the IBAs within their jurisdiction so intensely.

Looking ahead to 2016, we will continue work jointly with Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks and CRH-Trident to complete the Trident-Peregrine Trial. In addition, we will continue with our ongoing conservation projects and IBA monitoring efforts. New in 2016 will be an effort to strengthen our conservation impact. One area of particular interest will be to increase the number of conservation –related projects we support and the number of volunteers engaged. The first step in this process will be asking for you input. Look for a survey in our January Newsletter and our webpage after the New Year.

Vickie Backus
Conservation Committee Chair

Sacajawea Audubon Society
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Bozeman, MT 59771-1711

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Mailing Address

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

Sacajawea Audubon News is sent to all Sacajawea Audubon Society members monthly September through May. Deadline is the 15th of the month preceding the month articles will appear. Please send to: **Mary Cloud Ammons, 503 Bozeman, Bozeman MT 59715** or **newsletter@sacajaweaaudubon.org**.

Change of Address: Please notify Karin Jennings at **587-2279** or **membership@sacajaweaaudubon.org** if your address changes**.** When you move or are away, newsletters are returned to us for an extra fee.

Find more at the **Sacajawea Audubon Society Website** at: **http://www.sacajaweaaudubon.org/**

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Field trips, Bird Count andBird Sightings	John Parker	586-5863	birdsightings@sacajaweaaudubon.org
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Membership Application

- National, State and Chapter Audubon membership
- 6 issues of ***Audubon*** magazine
- Monthly SAS newsletter September through May
- Support of National & local Audubon conservation efforts

____ $20 Introductory membership
____ Additional donation $ _____*

***All additional donations go directly to your Sacajawea Audubon Chapter.**

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
State: _____ **Zip:**_____
Email: _____

____ I will go green: Please send me the Sacajawea Audubon newsletter by E-mail only. (Add email address above.)

Mail your check and application to:
Sacajawea Audubon Society
Attn: Membership
P.O Box 1711, Bozeman, MT
59771-1711 (C5ZN510Z)

I am interested in volunteering for:
____ Bird Surveys
____ Assist with educational activities
____ Invasive plant removal
____ Newsletter or website articles
____ Help with refreshments at meetings
____ Participate in chapter Birdathon

Montana Audubon: 406-443-3949; PO Box 595, Helena, MT 59624;
mtaudubon@mtaudubon.org; www.mtaudubon.org For direct contact: shoffman@mtaudubon.org
Montana Bird Hotline: 406-721-9799 to report unusual or out-of-season birds

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