SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY

SacajaweaAudubonNews

SACAJAWEA AUDUBON BUILDS ON AN INTEREST IN BIRDS TO PROMOTE THE CONSERVATION OF OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT THROUGH ENJOYMENT, EDUCATION AND ACTION.

January 2015

Calendar at a Glance

Jan 12th	SAS Monthly Meeting
Jan 15th	SAS Newsletter Deadline
June 5th-7th	MT Audubon Bird Festival
June 10th-14th	WFO Annual Conference

Wolverine: Chasing The Phantom
Gianna Savoie
Producer, Director, & Writer

Monday January 12th, 2015 at 7:00 p.m.
Hope Lutheran Church
2152 W. Graf Street in Bozeman

Film Brief

Through the heart of the frozen north, roams a creature with a mystique as old as the mountains and a reputation as big as all outdoors: Wolverine.

The name alone conjures an image of a savage, solitary killer who crushes bones to powder with powerful jaws. But peel back the layers of legend and you'll find a remarkable animal -- far more vulnerable than villainous, with a fierce appetite for survival . . . and for surprise.

Join Wildlife Filmmaker and Professor, Gianna Savoie for a glimpse into the secretive world of this mysterious carnivore through a special screening and presentation of her Emmy nominated film, *Wolverine: Chasing the Phantom.*

Rebecca Watters is an artist, writer, and ecologist, currently located in Montana and Mongolia. She directs the Mongolian Wolverine Project, as a research associate at the Northern Rockies Conservation Cooperative. This project constitutes the first research on the species in Mongolia. She has also researched wolverines in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

Gianna Savoie, Filmmaker

Gianna Savoie is an award-winning Natural History filmmaker with a passion for the environment that drives her to sink her teeth into some of the most critical conservation issues on the planet. Trained as a scientist, with a Master's degree in Environmental Biology, she pairs her love of science with the art of filmmaking to craft stories that not only inform, but resonate. Her work has been featured on PBS, National Geographic, Discovery, the BBC, and Animal Planet.

In 2010, Gianna wrote and produced, *Wolverine: Chasing the Phantom* for the PBS series, NATURE which has won several awards and was recently nominated for an Emmy for "Outstanding Nature Program." Her previous film, *Life in Death Valley,* received over a dozen awards, including "Best Film About an Ecosystem" from the International Wildlife Film Festival, "Excellence in Writing" from the U.S. International Film & Video Festival, and the Montana Cine award for "Best Television Program of 2006." She is currently writing and story-producing, *Our Blue Canoe,* a documentary about the plight of the Pacific Ocean.

In addition, her stories and articles have appeared in print publications around the world and on the web. In her quest to "pay it forward" to the next generation of environmental storytellers, Gianna also teaches in the MFA program for Science and Natural History Filmmaking at MSU.

Contact:
giannasavoie@gmail.com
phone: 347.678.4569
website: www.giannasavoie.com

Wings Across the Big Sky Bird Festival
5th - 7th June 2015
Helena, Montana

The Helena-based local chapter, Last Chance Audubon Society, has been busy planning a spectacular event for June 2015! Janice Miller and Jo Lace, the LCAS festival co-chairs, have surprises lined up for all attendees and we certainly hope you're planning to join us.

Our visits to the Red Lion Colonial Inn have resulted in securing wonderful space for our meetings, meals and speaker events. The open space and easy access to major roads will enhance our festival and field trip experiences.

The LCAS Chapter has hinted at fabulous birding tours—possibly river floats, as well as non-birding trips such as a historical tour of Helena and a trip to a local arts center.

Each month we will continue to feature developing news on the 2015 Bird Festival. Stay tuned as next month we'll tantalize you with a glimpse of some birding field trip destinations!

For more information contact Montana Audubon's Bird Festival Coordinator, Cathie Erickson: cerickson@mtaudubon.org.

Mark Your Calendar:
The 40th Annual Western Field Ornithologists Conference
10th - 14th June 2015
Billing, Montana

Be it Black Rosy Finches in the high mountains or Sprague's Pipits on the rolling plains, these birds and much more await you in Montana as the **Western Field Ornithologists** prepare for their first Montana meeting. Open to all interested birders, the event is scheduled to highlight the peak of bird activity. This much heralded event is scheduled for June 10 – 14, 2015 in Billings. This location has been selected owing to the great abundance of habitat diversity and the superb accommodations available to host a large gathering. An active slate of fieldtrips led by expert birders is scheduled to explore the region. Some fieldtrips will see courting McCown's and Chestnut-collared Longspurs in their finest plumage, along with Upland Sandpipers and Lark Buntings. Other field trips will take you to the scenic mountains for montane specialties or along the riparian corridors of the Yellowstone River alive with exciting birds. History buffs will delight in viewing the Little Bighorn Battlefield where Custer saw his last Sharp-tailed Grouse.

In addition to the active slate of field trips, a variety of workshops will be offered. Jon Dunn will address sparrows, Dan Casey will cover flycatchers, Denver Holt will present owls, and Steve Hoffman is covering his passion, birds of prey. Other workshops are planned and there will be the very popular bird identification panel conducted by Ed Harper and the masterful bird sound identification challenge presented by Nathan Pieplow, both events always conference highlights. The scientific papers, a main attraction, are always cutting edged, immensely informative, and a universally popular venue for both amateur and professionals alike. The featured Saturday evening keynote will address **Mountain Plovers**. Speaking is Stephen J. Dinsmore, Ph. D. whose extensive research in Montana with this imperiled species is supported by 22 years of extensive fieldwork.

Registration for the conference will open in February 2015 with the exact date to be announced via a future WFO News email. If you are NOT currently on our electronic mailing list, please send an email to erpfromca@aol.com, include your full name along with city and state of residence, and we'll put you on. WFO members are able to register for our conferences at a reduced rate and have early access to registration. If you are not currently a WFO member, you can join at (https://www.westernfieldornithologists.org/

-Ed Harper
Board member of WFO
calidris@surewest.net
Bozeman/Sacramento
(916) 704-7954

Bird of the Month

Photo by Lou Ann Harris

Common Redpoll
Acanthis flammea
Length: 5 inches Wingspan: 8 inches Weight: 0.5 oz.

The Common Redpoll is a small finch that breeds in the arctic tundra and boreal forests of the far north. In winter, redpolls move south irregularly, following patterns of their favored food sources. This behavior earns them the name "irruptive migrant". Some winters you won't see any redpolls in Montana, but in other years, such as the winter of 2012-2013, you'll see them everywhere. Their preferred food is the catkins of birch, willow and alder and this is often where you will find them feeding in large flocks. Their feeding strategy is to shake the seeds out of the catkins and then drop to the ground to pick them up.

Common Redpolls are small brown, heavily streaked birds with small, pointed, seed-eating yellow bills. Their tail is short and notched. Both sexes have a small red forehead patch and males have a pale red vest on the chest and upper flanks.

Cold weather doesn't seem to bother Common Redpolls. They can survive temperatures of -65 degrees Farenheit, often tunneling into the snow at night to keep warm. Redpolls also add 31% more plumage by weight in November than they do in July.

Redpolls travel in flocks of several hundred individuals and are seemingly in constant motion. They land to feed one minute and then swirl away in a mass of chattering birds the next. Listen for their distinctive *zap* and rising *dreeee* calls. Common Redpolls are attracted to bird feeders, especially those with thistle or nyjer.

Source: Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Bird Notes

Any open water during the winter in Montana has great potential for attracting birds that might otherwise not be able to survive the weather extremes we experience this far north. While birding in the Ruby River Valley near Sheridan, December 12th, Tom Forwood found a **Western Grebe** that was on a pond that was clear of ice. This is a new late date for Western Grebe in southwestern Montana. On a quick trip to the Cherry River fishing access site in north Bozeman December 5th, Paulette Epple discovered two unusual winter birds. Along the streams between the frozen ponds Paulette saw a **Virginia Rail** and a **Rusty Blackbird**.

The **Brown Creeper,** that Dorrie Green saw on December 8th, was a first for her yard in west Bozeman. As the trees mature in the newer parts of town, we should expect to see more chickadees, nuthatches, and creepers exploring the cracks and crevices in the bark of older trees.

During the first week of December, Alice Siebecker watched a huge flock of thousands of **Bohemian**

Waxwings move through her neighborhood south of Bozeman. There are numerous crabapple trees in the neighborhood, which attracted the waxwings. The waxwings stripped the crabapple tree in her yard in minutes, and the neighborhood trees were cleaned out in a day.

Last winter was notable for how few rosy finches were seen anywhere in this region. Most winters, Lori Micken who lives ten miles west of Livingston, typically has 3-500 Gray-crowned Rosy Finches coming to her feeding station, but last year she saw only two all winter. So, it was a bit of a relief when 50-75 **Gray-crowned Rosy Finches** once again visited her yard during the cold spell the first week of December.

-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

THE NATURE LIBRARY
"Pilgram at Tinker Creek"

I'm not sure Montanans will enjoy this fine nature book at first. We are used to large natural canvases. Instead, from a tiny cabin near a Virginia creek, in a Blue Ridge woodlot, Annie Dillard explores a Lilliputian world, one of voracious insects, legions of plants, and the smallest birds and animals. If we can accept her diminished scope, we will have begun one of the most interesting popular nature books of modern times, certainly one of the most beautifully written. Here we share Dillard's startled, personal account of a kind of pilgrimage to see and hear, in a Einstein's phrase, nature's "holy curiosities," a buzzing and often horrific music of the spheres. We quickly enter her sharply divided, half-mystical vision that puzzles over nature's blend of cruelty and loveliness, over a creator who would weave great terror and beauty together. She asks if the world was made in jest, if the creator is some kind of "derelict clockmaker" who with "almost manic exuberance turns out creature after creature and sets them buzzing and lurking and flying and swimming pointlessly about," or, if he is simply Malevolence itself, who has especially cursed the human part of creation with the capacity for thinking. Whether to "wail or praise" is the argument of her book. She concludes that we accept and finally praise because of our unique human capacity to perceive beauty —what she calls "the extravagance of the score." Yet, it is the detailed terrors of death in nature that linger at the end for this reader.

In order to lift the burden of the mystery, Dillard, like Thoreau quotes, attempts to "front only the essential facts of life". Unlike him, she has more up-to-date facts: We can actively see only 30% of the light from the sun; the rest is infrared and some little ultraviolet, perfectly apparent to many animals but invisible to us. Since one-celled creatures see a full 100%, it seems only the simplest perceive the universe as it is. Our perceptive limitations as humans are her major theme. Indeed, few sights, however small, and nature facts, escape her: She peers into a jar of creek water, brings home insect egg cases, contemplates the power of big trees to stir memory, studies the top inch of soil, which contains exactly 1356 living creatures-- "the world," she says "appears to be a wild wrestle under the grass." As she says of the maker of all this swarming life: "the Creator loves pizzazz!"

Then during one summer twilight she looks too closely into the pond. Kneeling almost symbolically by the bankside, she sees a frog in the blackened water suddenly collapse and sink lifelessly to the bottom, reduced to a "waving frog skinbag" by the injected poison of a water insect. Traumatized, unable to catch her breath, she can only sit: "I sucked at my own dry knuckles. His mouth was a gash of terror. It was the way that frog's eyes crumbled...they crinkled, the comprehension poured out of them as if sense and life had been mere incidental addition to the idea of eyes; they flattened, lightless, opaque, and sank." No, it's not Thoreau who comes to mind here. Tinker Creek is not Walden Pond. The memory of this encounter haunts the remainder of the book, a nightmare vision to be either exorcised or reconciled. It becomes, of course, an emblem of the evolutionary way of the world: "Death is the monster evolution loves—more than it loves you or me. This is easy to write, easy to read, hard to believe. The words are simple, the concept clear—but you don't believe it, do you? Nor do I. How could I, when we're both so lovable?" So it is nature's terror that she chiefly fixes upon, death she is nearly transfixed by. The book is full, almost too full, of mini-terrors, dying falls, chambers of horror, tales of moulting moths who in their terrible hunger shed frantically to smaller, infinitesimal sizes; of mating praying mantises, of Eskimo women who thread the bills of small birds and fly them like living kites to attract larger game, of Eskimo children sledding down snowbanks on frozen seal embryos.

Yet the book's great strength is Dillard's conviction that the aesthetic side of her pilgrimage is not a hoax, that terror is not the whole story. She succeeds in this without formal argument, perhaps by the suggestive solemn cadences and elegance of her prose, which is often close to poetry in its fine rhythms and figures. Beauty and order are her true muses, terror a fact that must be assimilated into life.

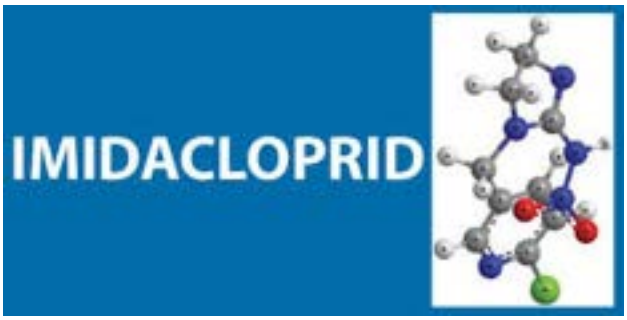
In a stunning final chapter she is at her best:

You see the creatures die and you know you will die. And one day it occurs to you that you must not need life....I think that the dying pray at the last not 'please,' but 'thank you,' as a guest thanks his host at the door. Falling from airplanes the people are crying thank you, thank you, all down the air; and the cold carriages draw up for them on the rocks. Divinity is not playful. The universe was not made in jest but in solemn incomprehensible earnest—by a power that is unfathomably secret, and holy and fleet. There is nothing to be done about it, but ignore it, or see. And then you walk fearlessly, like the monk on the road who knows how vulnerable he is, who takes no comfort among death-forgetting men, and who carries his vision of vastness and might around in his tunic like a live coal, which neither burns nor warms him but with which he will not part.

-Mike Becker

The New "F" Word

With a 1000 day life span, imidacloprid, water soluble and the most widely used insecticide in the world, kills sucking insects by stimulation of the nervous system causing death. Research shows it may also kill non-target pests.



The Netherlands, using imidacloprid for 20 years, has seen a 3.5 percent annual decrease in 9 of 15 farmland bird species. The 9 species most seriously affected exclusively eat insects, and all feed insects to their young.

Why are the birds declining? Possible causes include starvation due to wipe out of food source, ingesting contaminated insects, and ingestion of sublethal or lethal effects of coated seeds with imidacloprid. Other possible long-term factors causing bird decline were ruled out. Some birds eat bees. Bees are negatively affected by imidacloprid, a neonicotinoid. Therefore, in 2015 Bayer is replacing imidacloprid with flupyradifurone, a neonic toxic to mammals, bees, worms and birds.

-Jocelyn Allen

Abstract of SAS Board Meeting Minutes, Dec. 1, 2014.

Present: Loreene Reid, Lou Ann Harris, Evelyn Acton, Paulette Epple, Richard Keigley, Jeff Safford, Leo Freeman. Also present was Karin Jennings.

Reports of Officers

President: Loreene Reid introduced Karin Jennings, our new Membership Chair. Hilary Johnson has agreed to chair the Education Committee. Publicity Chair remains open. An Alternate Montana Audubon Chapter Representative is needed to cover Sharon Hanton from January through June, 2015. Loreene called for a committee to look into the question of "How do We Measure our Success?" Richard Keigley, Jeff Safford, and Leo Freeman volunteered to work on this. Loreene also asked for a committee to continue a study of liability waiver forms. Leo and Paulette agreed to serve.

Reports of Chairs

Conservation: Vickie Backus sent regrets that the Miller family did not receive the Audubon-Toyota Together Green Grant for their Ruby River Restoration Project. Story Mill Community Park: Paulette will organize a committee to develop bird-related interpretive signage for the park and will begin to contact design consultants. Lou Ann, Leo, and Vickie have agreed to help.

Education: The Bozeman Chapter of the Montana Association for the Blind has asked SAS to attend their February 12th meeting to discuss local resources for birding for the blind. Lou Ann is interested in leading a "birding by ear" field trip for them this spring.

eBird Workshop. Lou Ann and Paulette will organize an eBird workshop in January.

Birding Field Trips: Christmas Bird Counts. Five December area counts are scheduled: Dec. 14th - West Yellowstone & Livingston; Dec. 17th - Ennis; Dec. 20th - Bozeman; Dec. 26th - Three Forks.

Newsletter: Discussion took place regarding the acceptance of business advertising in our Newsletter. A policy regarding this issue will be developed.

Membership: Karin uses Salesforce to manage our membership data. As a non-profit organization SAS has been approved for a Salesforce grant to use this cloud-based management software free of charge. Karin and Lou Ann will be the Salesforce administrators. Karin recommended that we develop a welcome letter and packet for new members.

Sacajawea Audubon Society
P.O. Box 1711
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/**

Sacajawea Audubon Society Officers and Committee Chairs

President	Loreene Reid	600-6666	pres@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Vice President	Lou Ann Harris	600-3585	louann@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Treasurer	Evelyn Acton	586-2258	treas@sacajawea audubon.org
Secretary	Paulette Epple	586-0932	sec@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Board members	Jackie Wilson	599-0942	jackiewilson@sacajaweaaudubon.org
	Chris Nixon	544-4901	christopherfnixon@yahoo.com
	Leo Freeman	414-403-7943	leofreeman@sacajaweaaudubon.org
	Peter Norlander	222-4646	norlander@q.com
	Richard Keigley	582-5833	richardkeigley@sacajaweaaudubon.org
	Jeff Safford	586-2258	jeffsafford@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Education Chair	**OPEN**		
Field trips, Bird Count and Bird Sightings	John Parker	586-5863	birdsightings@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Conservation Chair	Vickie Backus	600-2280	conservation@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Hospitality / Coffee	Diane Gresham	219-3543	dgresham@bresnan.net
Membership Records	Karin Jennings	587-2279	membership@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Newsletter Ed. / Design	Mary Cloud Ammons	600-0301	newsletter@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Program Chair	Jackie Wilson		programs@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Publicity Chair	**OPEN**		kehlert44@gmail.com
Chapter Rep. to State	Sharon Hanton	586-9500	
Webmaster	Lou Ann Harris	600-3585	louann@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Audubon Adventures	Hillary Johnson		ralphhilary@gmail.com

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

The Sacajawea Audubon Society Newsletter is Printed on 100% Recycled Paper

Membership Application

National Audubon Society
(Includes chapter membership)

- National, State and Chapter Audubon Membership
- National Audubon Magazine
- Monthly Sacajawea Audubon newsletter September through May by surface mail or E-mail
- Admission to National Audubon sanctuaries
- Support of National Audubon conservation efforts

Name: _____
Address: _____

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State: _____ **Zip:**_____

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_____ **$20 First Time Member**

_____ **I would like to receive the chapter newsletter by E-mail only.**

Mail your check and application to:

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