S A C A J A W E A A U D U B O N S O C I E T Y

SacajaweaAudubonNews

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

March 2015

Calendar at a Glance

March 9th	SAS Monthly Meeting
March 15th	Madison Valley IBA Bird Survey
March 21st	Owl Prowl
March 28th	Ennis Lake Spring Birding
May 1st - 3rd	MT Audubon Lek Tour
June 5th - 7th	Wing Across the Big Sky Bird Festival
June 10th - 14th	Western Field Ornithologists Conference

Mark you calendars now for the Madison Valley IBA Bird Survey on March 15th. For more information, please contact Paulette Epple at: bigskyepples@msn.com or (406) 580-6186.

Unimak Volcanos

Alaska's Never Never Land: Izembek National Wildlife Refuge

Izembek Brant

Monday March 9th, 2015 at 7:00 p.m.
Hope Lutheran Church
2152 W. Graf Street in Bozeman

Please join the Sacajawea Audubon Society for an exciting program this month about the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge presented by Mike Vivion, retired US Fish & Wildlife Service Wildlife Biologist and Pilot.

At 320,000 acres, the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge is one of the smallest of Alaska's National Wildlife Refuges. But, the refuge's most prominent feature; Izembek Lagoon, offers critical habitat for virtually the entire population of several waterfowl species, as well as numerous shorebird species.

Located approximately 700 miles southwest of Anchorage at the distal tip of the Alaska Peninsula, Izembek offers unique habitats and a remarkable array of avian species found almost nowhere else.

Here, the North Pacific Ocean is separated by only a few miles of the Alaska peninsula from the Bering Sea. This geography brings about some of the most violent weather on the planet. Two of the most active volcanoes in North America are visible from here on a rare clear day. The Izembek Refuge staff also manages the nearby first and largest of the Aleutian Islands, Unimak Island, a volcanic wonderland in its own right.

Retired US Fish & Wildlife Service Wildlife Biologist/Pilot Mike Vivion will discuss the remarkable migration of the Pacific Black Brant, the Emperor Goose, Steller's Eider and other unique species that depend entirely on this unique component of our National Wildlife Refuge System for their survival.

Mike Vivion is a retired Wildlife Biologist/Airplane Pilot who worked on several National Wildlife Refuges over the course of his 34 year career. Twenty nine years of that career were spent in Alaska, where he was stationed on the Izembek, Kodiak and Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuges. Aerial census and research projects took him to all the other refuges in Alaska. He retired from the FWS in 2005 and taught at the University of Minnesota, Crookston for seven years. He and his wife Gina, a retired elementary school teacher, moved to Bozeman in 2013 and are happily retired.

Spring Birding at Ennis Lake

A sure cure for spring fever is lots of early spring birds! The primary focus of this trip will be the migrating waterfowl at Ennis Lake. At this time of year the ducks will be at their dazzling best in full breeding plumage, and usually in great abundance. This is also near the peak of migration for some of the larger waterfowl, such as Tundra Swans and Snow Geese. Along with the waterfowl, this trip will provide a good opportunity for finding other early migrants such as Sandhill Cranes, Tree Swallows, and Mountain Bluebirds. It is spring in Montana so be sure to be prepared for the weather, with plenty of warm layers of clothing for a day out in the elements. We will return to the museum mid afternoon, so bring a lunch and snacks. This trip will meet at the Museum of the Rockies parking lot at **8AM Saturday March, 28th**. After arranging for carpooling, we will head for Ennis Lake at 8:15. There is a **15 person limit** for the trip, so sign up early. Contact Vic Fesolowitz at 587-0221 or 539-8251 to reserve a spot.

Announcing the Annual SAS Owl Prowl!

Join Sacajawea Audubon for our annual Owl Prowl on Saturday, March 21st. MT State Park Naturalist and birder extraordinaire Tom Forwood, Jr. will lead the field trip. Some of the owl species we hope to hear, and possibly see, include Western Screech-Owl, Northern Pygmy-Owl, Northern Saw-Whet Owl and Great Horned Owl. This is an evening field trip, so please dress for cold weather, including warm boots. Snowshoes are not necessary, but grippers might be helpful if conditions are icy. The location of the Owl Prowl is TBD.

Interested participants need to contact Tom Forwood to sign up at tjfishing75@gmail.com or phone 406-570-6432. Field trip limit is 10 people. Registered participants will meet at the Museum of the Rockies parking lot at 7:30 p.m. for carpooling.

Tom Forwood, Jr. has a Masters in Environmental History from MSU and has been with MT State Parks for 17 years, having spent about half of that time as a Park Ranger at Lewis & Clark Caverns State Park.

Photo Curtesy of Lou Ann Harris

Ravishing Raptors: An Owl Lover's Gallery

To wet your whistle for the annual Sacajawea Audubon Society Owl Prowl, visit this stunning gallery of these most entrancing birds. Nature photographer Brad Wilson spent hours at the World Bird Sanctuary in St. Louis and The Wildlife Center near Espanola, New Mexico, with each bird trying to capture its direct gaze.

As part of his series "Affinity", which can be viewed at http://www.bradwilson.com/PROJECTS/AFFINITY-I/1/thumbs-caption, Wilson photographed 65 species for point-blank portraits and found owls to be the most challenging. Wilson wanted his images to accentuate the nobility and independence of each captive bird, including minimizing any the appearance of any injuries and hiding both handlers and human perches.

To see more visit: http://www.audubon.org/magazine/january-february-2015/whos-who

Bird Notes:

This past month's warm weather was off the charts, with numerous record high temperatures across southwest Montana, and the birds seen around our area reflected these weather extremes. Central Park Pond is about the only body of water in this area that consistently has open water most winters. As such it serves as a barometer for what semi-hardy waterfowl may linger throughout the winter. This past February, a new standard was set for high numbers of swans and ducks at the pond. Notably, up to **56 Trumpeter Swans** and even **4 Tundra Swans** showed up at the pond. More **American Wigeon**, **Northern Pintail**, **Redhead**, **Ring-necked Duck**, and **Hooded Mergansers** were documented at Central Park Pond than any previous winter.

The two birds that best exemplify how extreme this weather was were the single Tree Swallow and Barn Swallow seen at Ennis Lake. While driving along the north shore road at Ennis Lake, February 7th, Vic Fesolowitz and Kim Obbink spotted and then watched a single **Tree Swallow** for close to one minute before it disappeared. Two days later Sam Koenen and his son Tjabe watched as a single **Barn Swallow** flew around the Meadow Lake fishing access, at the northwest corner of Ennis Lake. Amazingly, these swallow sightings preceded the previous early arrival records for our area by 38 and 67 days, respectively. On top of that, both of these swallow sightings represent the first winter period (Dec. 15 to Feb. 15) records for Montana!

The unseasonable ice-off of Ennis Lake lured a large number of waterfowl to the lake. Along with the waterfowl, came the predators like the numerous Bald Eagles that could be seen hunting and feeding on this unusual mid-winter bounty. And not far behind were the scavengers. When Sam Koenen was at Ennis Lake on February 9th, he spotted **2 Ring-billed Gulls** and a Herring Gull. When I went to Ennis Lake four days later **15 Herring Gulls** were at the lake, cleaning up after the eagles made their kills.

On January 27th, Dorrie Green saw **2 Blue Jays** at the Bozeman Ponds, west of the Gallatin Valley Mall. This was a bit unexpected as most sightings of Blue Jays in Bozeman have been closer to the east side of town.

Finally, it's nice to be able to report that the rosy finches have returned. After last winter's unexplained nearly complete absence of rosy finches, they are once again swarming to winter feeding stations from Gardiner to Wilsall. Some people who are feeding at favored locations are seeing hundreds of **Gray-crowned Rosy Finches** and a handful of **Black Rosy Finches**, like in years past.

-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

Download John J. Audubon Prints for Free!

Visit National Audubon's new website to view a digital library of John James Audubon's *Birds of America*. Printed between 1827 and 1838, this volume contains life-sized watercolors of North American birds made from hand-engraved plates. Now, you can download free high-resolution versions of all 435 prints. Share these beautiful watercolors and help spread the legacy of Audubon's and your love of birds with your friends namesake and inspiration.

For the digital library visit: http://www.audubon.org/birds-of-america
For more on John J. Audubon visit: http://www.audubon.org/content/john-james-audubon

Southwest Montana Lek Tour
May 1-3, 2015

Spring is coming! Now is the time to plan- or complete your plan- for birding in 2015! Montana Audubon is proud to offer one of our most popular tours....the Sage-Grouse lek's of Southwest Montana.

Early May is the best time to comfortably view the spectacular dawn displays of male Greater Sage-Grouse at their breeding leks. We'll get up early to visit a lek known to host 50 or more booming grouse! The Greater Sage Grouse is North American's largest native grouses species, and is also a candidate for federal listing as "threatened". This weekend adventure will also explore the sagebrush hills surrounding Montana's historic Bannack State Park ghost town, plus the wetlands and grasslands adjacent to Clark Canyon Reservoir and in the Beaverhead Valley near Dillon. In this area we will search for Sage Thrashers, Long-billed Curlews, Ferruginous and Swainson's Hawks, Burrowing Owls, Prairie & Peregrine Falcons, and various passerines.

We plan to view, from a distance, several active raptor nest sites, possibly including both Golden and Bald Eagles. Waterbird migration will be in full swing at t his time, and thus we are likely to find good numbers and varieties of diving and dabbling ducks, an array of shorebirds, as well as loons, pelicans, waders and marsh birds.

The cost is $485/person, double occupancy (single supplement is $100), meals, and transportation from Bozeman, Helena or possibly Missoula. A $100 deposit reserves your place.

wings MONTANA AUDUBON across the big sky

Come join us for Montana Audubon's Annual Bird Festival
Co-hosted by the Last Chance Audubon Society
June 5-7, 2015
Red Lion Colonial Inn in Helena

We are very excited about this facility, which will be the center for all festival activities Friday through Sunday, including registration, birding field trip departures, guest speaker presentations, meals, banquet festivities, and much more. The Colonial is located near the Capitol exit off I-15 and provides easy access to all our birding activities and field trips. Currently we have 100 rooms blocked for festival-goers Friday and Saturday nights. Be sure to tell them you're with the Montana Audubon Bird Festival group to get the special rate! We suggest you make your reservations soon at the hotel directly at 1-406-443-2100, or online with the booking code, MONT0604.

Our Festival Registration Brochure is scheduled to be mailed the middle of March, with the online registration system active soon after. Use either the registration brochure or the online system to register. The brochure is full of information on the festival events and all the field trips that will be available.

Here's a Sneak Peak at Some of our Scheduled Events for the Festival:

- Keynote speaker, Scott Weidensaul, will be speaking Friday evening on migration and "Living on the Wind" and then bringing some fascinating information on his work with Snowy and Northern Saw-whet Owls on Saturday afternoon.
- Friday evening - a look at how Montana Audubon is addressing conservation and some fun projects brewing in the area;
- What do you do when 180-pound moose calf invites himself into your kitchen? How do you settle a bet over the exact size of a ferret? What do you do when you find an injured animal? For many Montanans the answer is simple. Call Vince Yannone! Vince is one of the most recognized and popular personalities in the state. His native wit and sense of humor have made him a local legend. Many Montana children have grown up watching Vince on TV and listening to his classroom presentations. Although he has retired from Montana's Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks he remains a favorite speaker across Montana.
- What about Merlins? Another local favorite, Dan Ellison will bring some fun facts and information on his work in and around Helena with this fascinating species.

Stay tuned for more information on speakers and surprises for Friday and Saturday evenings and the Saturday afternoon sessions.

Abstract of minutes to Feb 2, 2015 SAS Board Meeting

Report of President Loreene Reid

SAS still needs volunteers to serve as Publicity Chair, Alternate to Montana Audubon, and as a Nominating Committee. Those Board members whose terms expire in May are Evelyn Acton, Paulette Epple, Jeff Safford, Richard Keigley, and Leo Freeman. How Do We Measure Our Success? Ad hoc committee. After examining our Mission Statement the board expressed satisfaction in its wording. The committee recommended that our Annual Statement should include an End-of-Year Report that answers the question of what we have accomplished in our Annual Plan, including an accounting of volunteer hours served. Paulette and Lou Ann have taken this in tow.

Reports of Chairs:

Membership: The February *Newsletter* was the first to go out using SalesForce software. Karin Jennings asks the board if there are further uses of Sales Force.

Conservation: Vicki Backus. Missouri Headwaters State Park Extension Trail. In order to fund some of the proposed trail's amenities, Vicki wishes to apply for a MAP-21 Act grant of $20,000 as administered through Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks. The board, however, felt that more information about the project was desirable before a grant proposal should be made at this time.

Education: Eight persons attended the eBird Class given by Paulette and Robin Wolcott. The Belgrade school shop is interested in making our bird box kits for this year's Raptor Festival. Paulette will contact Ashley Martens regarding Spring classes at the beginning, intermediate, and youth birding levels.

Field Trips: The Raptor ID Workshop and Field Trip will take place on March 5th and 7th respectively.

Newsletter: Loreene will send the board a proposed policy on newsletter advertising. It was desired that the ads relate to our mission statement.

New Business: Jeff Safford reported that the local Boy Scout District currently has one Bird Studies Merit Badge counselor, but would prefer two.

Highlights of MT Audubon's Jan 30th (2015) Board Meeting

(Prepared By: Steve Hoffman)

1) MT Audubon is facing its most challenging fiscal year since Steve Hoffman was hired as the Executive Director. The expense budget for the current fiscal year (October 1 – September 30) was increased by $200,000 (to $1.1 million) to accommodate: a) a new, much-needed Operations Manager position in Helena, b) additional staffing and programmatic/facilities expansion at the Montana Audubon Center in Billings, and c) the strengthening of our bird conservation and policy work (including lobbying efforts during the 2015 state legislative session). Hence, a substantial budget deficit appears likely this fiscal year.

2) The independent audit of MT Audubon's financial records (for the 15-month period July 1, 2013 to September 30, 2014) was completed, with no issues or concerns expressed by the auditor. In addition, two Form 990s have been completed (and approved by the Board); these will be filed promptly with the Internal Revenue Service.

3) Don Roberts, an active and long-time member of the Montana Audubon Center Advisory Council in Billings, was elected to the Board as the official Council Representative to the MT Audubon Board.

4) The concept of term limits for At-Large Board members was discussed, and the Board Nominating-Governance Committee was asked to prepare (for Board review & discussion at the April meeting) a specific proposal for implementing term limits.

5) Donald Seibert provided a 45-minute training session on Board engagement in fundraising.

6)Darcie Howard provided an overview of imminent plans to develop a Nature Play Area at the Center. She requested a Board commitment of $2,500 to help reach the $60,000 needed to complete the project.

7) Planning for the 2015 Bird Festival in Helena is progressing well; Last Chance Audubon's Festival Planning Committee is doing a fantastic job! The location for the 2016 Bird Festival was discussed, and Missoula was selected (by a unanimous vote) as the preferred location. Five Valleys Audubon (and most likely Bitterroot Audubon) has agreed to partner with MT Audubon to plan and carry out the event.

8)Four Wildlife Fund grants were recommended and approved, for a total disbursement of $1,740.

Sacajawea Audubon Society
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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

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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: _____

City: _____

State: _____ **Zip:**_____

Email: _____

_____ **$20 First Time Member**

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

Mail your check and application to:

Sacajawea Audubon Society
Attn: Membership
P.O Box 1711, Bozeman, MT 597711711
(N51)

Abstract of minutes to Feb 2, 2015 SAS Board Meeting