FEBRUARY 2019

Sacajawea Audubon News

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

Calendar *at a* Glance FEBRUARY 2019

7	SAS Board Meeting at the Lehrkind Mansion
11	SAS Monthly Program
15–18	Great Backyard Bird Count

March 6	SAS Book Group Discussion
Nov. 10–Apr. 18	Cornell Project FeederWatch
June 7–9	Wings Across the Big Sky Bird Festival

WILD, CONNECTED, AND DIVERSE:
Building a more resilient system of protected areas

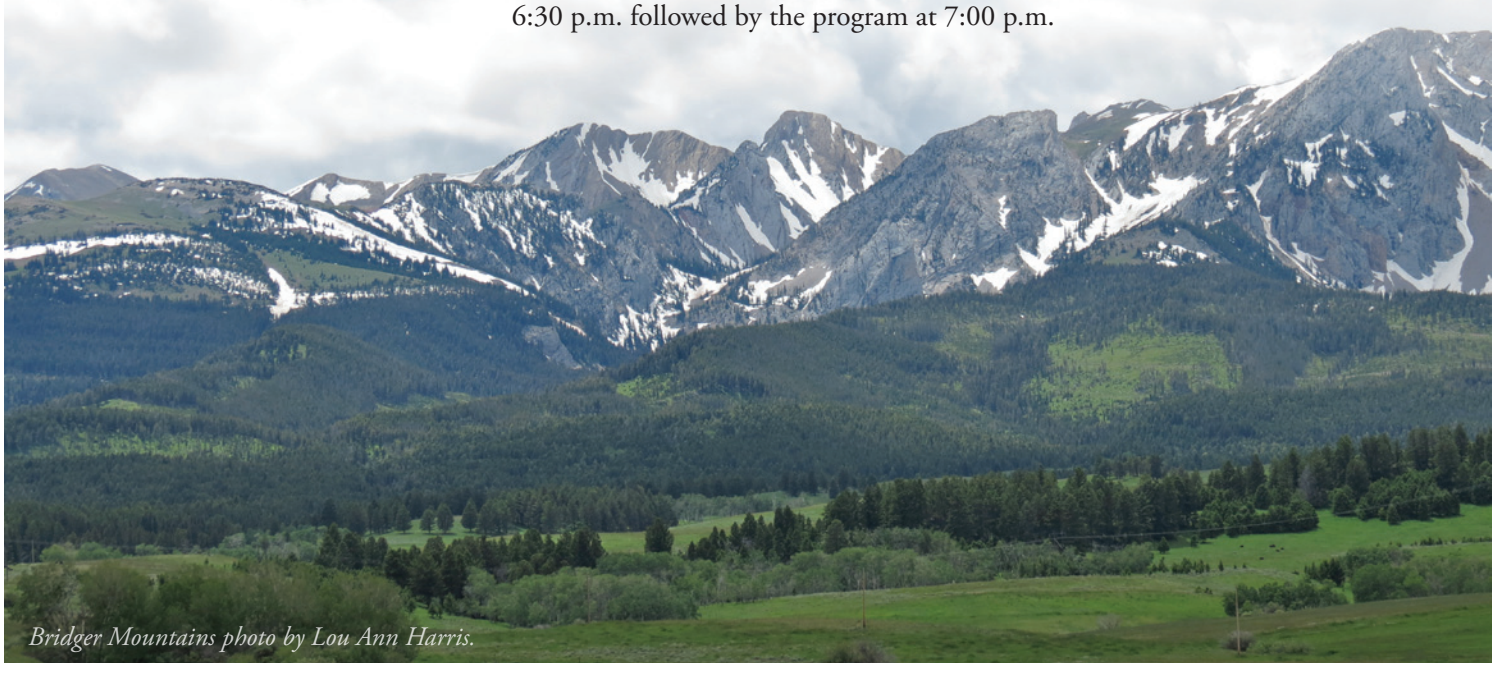
February 11th Program | 7:00 p.m.
Hope Lutheran Church, 2152 W. Graf (off of South 19th)

Recent calls have been made to protect the Earth's remaining wild lands and complete the system of protected areas by establishing an ecologically-connected network that better represents all ecosystems and species.

Join SAS and Travis Belote of the Wilderness Society for an informational presentation about their efforts to create a connected network of protected areas that better represent biodiversity. The Wilderness Society recently conducted a national assessment for expanding U.S. protected areas to include the wildest unprotected lands. This assessment can help guide conservation planning for expanding the system of U.S. protected areas to sustain biodiversity in the face of future threats.

Travis Belote has served as a research ecologist in the Northern Rockies Office of The Wilderness Society in Bozeman, MT since 2009. His research focuses on understanding the basic science of ecosystems to inform conservation and adaptive management under increasing pressures of global change (including land use, climate change, and invasive species). He completed his M.S. at the University of Tennessee, Ph.D. at Virginia Tech, and conducted postdoctoral research with the USGS in Flagstaff, AZ.

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, at Hope Lutheran Church, 2152 W. Graf (off of S. 19th). Join us for a social at 6:30 p.m. followed by the program at 7:00 p.m.



Bridger Mountains photo by Lou Ann Harris.

Sacajawea Audubon 2018 Bluebird Trail Summary

By Lou Ann Harris and Janne Hayward, SAS Bluebird Trail Project Coordinators

Photos by Lou Ann Harris

It was a successful Mountain Bluebird nesting season in 2018. A total of 334 bluebirds fledged from boxes on our 6 monitored trails. 165 boxes were used (by bluebirds) out of 272 available. The remainder were used by tree swallows, house wrens and unfortunately, house sparrows.

On the Pass Creek Rd./Rocky Mountain Rd. trails, we banded a total of 271 birds, 238 nestlings and 33 adult females. We also recaptured 12 adult birds, including the first adult male mountain bluebird ever caught in one of our boxes! We had originally banded this male in 2016 as a nestling.

Predation of nests was up from last year. The Rocky Mountain Rd. trail had a total of 29 predated nests (up from 18 last year), including an adult female and nestlings that were killed by a male House Sparrow. We hope this is not a new trend. The Pass Creek trail had 28 nests predated (up from 24 last year). The causes were again varied: snakes, raccoons, weasels, kestrels and house sparrows.

Janne Hayward, Sherry Staub and Loreene Reid arranged to have residents of Hyalite Country Care Assisted Living come out on a bluebird trail field trip in June. They thoroughly enjoyed seeing bluebird nestlings, and who doesn't? Our annual bluebird field trip had to be canceled this year, due to unforeseen circumstances for yours truly. One of the highlights of the season was taking the entire Pass Creek School out on a field trip. The students & teacher really enjoyed learning about bluebirds and also getting to look at the nesting bald eagles across the road from their school.

We would like to thank all our bluebird box sponsors this year:

Gina Carolan, Judy Tsiang, Erna Smeets, Star Reierson, Julie Catanese, Susan Kendrick, Anne Ready, BJ Plum, Peggy Osbourn & David Cole, Leo Freeman, Audrey & Joel Evers, Stephanie Nelson, Eric Newton, Scott Radford, Ronna Leon, Patty Fraser, Shiela Skinner, John Edwards, Kathryn Kelly, Mel McCarver, Margaret Perryman, Suzan Strobel, Emily Robinson, Bob Swinth, Glenda Barnes, Ned Bixler, Bob Schleicher, Pam Poulsen, Debi Naccarto, Joyce Seipel, Caleb Cunningham, Paul Gore, Kathy Williams, Belgrade Bloomers Garden Club, Eva Patten, Janice Hand & Rick Sanders, Faye Ellis, Mary Lee Reese, Virginia Jakobe, Nancy Rivera, Marilyn Klocksiem, Adele & Sandy Pittendrigh, Mary Lou Wild, Donna Alexander, Chris Raaum, John & Lynn Mugaas, Ondrej Ball, John & Tamie Parker, Beth Kaeding

JANUARY BIRD NOTES

Most of this past winter's Christmas Bird Counts had better weather conditions than in recent years. That and high participant turnout and better coverage helped birders find many exciting birds and establish new high counts for many other birds.

Bozeman tied the all-time high species count at 70. Most amazingly, after 80 years of counts, four new species were added to the cumulative count; **Trumpeter Swan**, **Hooded Merganser**, **Pileated Woodpecker**, and **Nashville Warbler**. The Nashville Warbler was the first winter record for Montana. New high counts were established for 18 species. Several of the increases were astounding: **Clark's Nutcracker** from 40 to 139; **Black-capped Chickadee** from 601 to 971; **Mountain Chickadee** from 191 to 319; and **Red-breasted Nuthatch** from 99 to 176. These large jumps can be attributed to several factors which include: extensive coverage of the south foothills, surveying the Valley View Golf Course spruce trees for the first time, excellent overall coverage, and in the case of the Red-breasted Nuthatches a very successful breeding year. Bozeman also had a new high count for **Black-billed Magpie** with 1,374 tallied, which likely will be tops for all of North America.

The Three Forks count was another record breaker, tying the highest species count ever at 69 species. Birds new to the thirty-seventh Three Forks count were **Tundra Swan**, **Lesser Goldfinch**, **Lincoln's Sparrow**, and **Swamp Sparrow**.

Participants in the Three Forks CBC glass the cliffs at Headwaters State Park. Photo by Lou Ann Harris.

Lesser Goldfinch have been increasing their range in Montana in recent years, but are still rarely found outside of a few locations in the state. The Swamp Sparrow was another huge surprise for a winter count in southwest Montana. Besides, the Lincoln's and Swamp Sparrows, **Harris** and **White-crowned Sparrows** were seen for only the fourth and fifth times, respectively. The number (58) of **Dark-eyed Juncos** seen nearly tripled the previous record. So, it was a very good year for sparrows in the Headwaters area. A single **Sandhill Crane** seen in the Madison River Valley, was only the third time one has been seen on the Three Forks count.

The total number of species seen on the Ennis count was 59 which was down a bit from recent years, though still very respectable for a mid-winter bird count in Montana. The Ennis count is arguably the best local count for waterfowl, and again this year there were some good birds to be found. A **Snow Goose** seen for only the third time on the count, and both a **Northern Shoveler** and 2 **Redheads** were seen for only the fourth time. Another nice find was the singing **Canyon Wren**, in Beartrap Canyon, of course. There are six birds you can count on at Ennis; **Mallard**, **Common Goldeneye**, **Bald Eagle**, **Black-billed Magpie**, **Black-capped Chickadee**, and **House Sparrow**, all of which have been seen on all 58 Ennis counts.

On a very warm day in Livingston, 61 different bird species were found during the count. New to the Livingston count was the **Hermit Thrush** found in Paradise Valley, also in Paradise Valley a **Spotted Towhee** was found for the second time on the count. The Livingston count had two species not seen on any of the other local counts, **Wood Duck** and **Pinyon Jay**.

West Yellowstone got the short straw this year with the weather, when a substantial snow storm started the night before the count and continued into the day. There were no new birds on the West Yellowstone count, but they did have notable numbers of **Trumpeter Swan** (114) and **Pine Grosbeak** (28).

Having only been done for four years, the Ruby Valley Count should be expected to add a few new birds. Four new species—**Northern Pintail**, **Pied-billed Grebe**, **Northern Saw-Whet Owl**, and **Pacific Wren**—were exciting additions to the cumulative list. The Ruby Valley Count has a number of marshes and open water ponds, which accounts for the new high counts of 8 individuals for both **Virginia Rail** and **Marsh Wren**. The skiers who ventured into the canyons east of Sheridan made strong contributions to the count picking up both the **Pacific Wren** and the **Pine Grosbeaks**. A **Northern Pygmy Owl** was a nice bonus for one of the mountain teams.

Source: National Audubon Society

Great Backyard Bird Count: *February 15-18, 2019*

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is a free, fun, and easy event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of bird populations. Participants are asked to count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the four-day event and report their sightings online at **birdcount.org**. Anyone can take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, from beginning bird watchers to experts, and you can participate from your backyard, or anywhere in the world.

Each checklist submitted during the GBBC helps researchers at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society learn more about how birds are doing, and how to protect them and the environment we share. Last year, more than 190,000 participants submitted their bird observations online, creating the largest instantaneous snapshot of global bird populations ever recorded.

On the program website participants can explore real-time maps and charts that show what others are reporting during and after the count. Be sure to check out the Explore a Region tool to get an idea of what you can expect to see in your area during the next GBBC.

For more information, go to **birdcount.org**.

Sacajawea Audubon Society Membership 2019

Individual or Family
(January to December 2019)

☐ Basic Membership $25

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

☐ Additional Donation .....$_____
- ☐ *Bridger Raptor Study*
- ☐ *Education*
- ☐ *Wetland Campaign*
- ☐ *Wherever is Needed*

Name _____

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

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

Newsletter 2/19

CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Sacajawea Audubon has been incredibly busy in the last year as we expanded our impact for the benefit of birds in Southwest Montana. We launched a campaign to promote Bird-Friendly Landscaping, removed invasive Burdock from bird habitats, continued nest box programs for bluebirds and kestrels, managed the Bridger Mountains Raptor Survey, protected cavity nesting birds from vault toilets, and so much more.

Volunteer opportunities abound for involvement with conservation projects, from hands on tasks like weed management and garbage clean up on our new wetlands, to organizational and leadership work. Opportunities also exist to help with letter writing for public advocacy issues, data entry, bird surveys, and working to expand the bird friendly landscaping campaign.

Anyone who is interested in helping with conservation projects is encouraged to attend this meeting. Bring your enthusiasm and learn how you can contribute to our efforts. We are a hard working group that has a lot of fun as we work to make an impact for the conservation of birds and the places they live. Our next Conservation Committee meeting will be February 19th, Tuesday night, 7 p.m., at Hope Lutheran Church. If you can't come but want to be involved please contact Paulette Epple, Conservation Chair at bigskyepples@msn.com or call 406-580-6186.

March 6th SAS Book Group Reading

It's time to think about the March reading: **The Homing Instinct: Meaning and Mystery in Animal Migration**, by Bernd Heinrich. Heinrich asks: *"We have learned much about thousands of animal species that twice annually risk their lives to migrate to an exact pinpoint, such as an oceanic island in the case of the albatross or a pond in the vastness of a continent in a loon's. . . . How does one tie the vastness that includes other animals, and so much that affects us personally and socially, together into a story?"* We can look forward to finding out how this wonderful writer answers the question.

The book group will meet Wednesdays March 6, 2019, at Hope Lutheran Church from 4:00–5:15 p.m. to discuss the book. All SAS members are welcome to join the group. The schedule for books and meetings is available on the SAS website. If you want to be on the book group mailing list, email Adele Pittendrigh at adele.pittendrigh@gmail.com.

SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Board of Directors:

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Vice President	John Edwards johnedwards@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Secretary	Adele Pittendrigh sec@sacajaweaaudubon.org
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Committee Chairs & Project Leaders:

Conservation Chair	Paulette Epple conservation@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Education Chair	Travis Kidd traviskidd@sacajaweaaudubon.org
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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