# SacajaweaAudubonNews

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

November 2016

## Calendar at a Glance

| | |
|---|---|
| **Nov 9th** | **Bird Sightings to John Parker** |
| **Nov 14th** | **SAS Meeting** |
| **Jan 2nd** | **MT Legislature Convenes** |

# Nonnative species: Changing the rules for native animals

**Monday Nov 14th, 2016 at 7pm**
**Hope Lutheran Church**
**2152 W. Graf Street in Bozeman**

This month the Sacajawea Audubon Society welcomes Andrea Litt from the Department of Ecology at Montana State University to talk about her work with nonnative species.

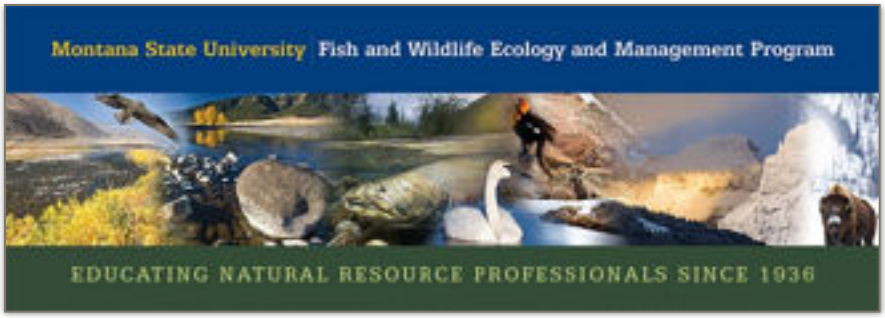
Nonnative plants have established in nearly all ecosystems. Although many studies have documented major changes in the plant community when a nonnative plant invades, we know less about the effects on animals. Further, sometimes these changes are not predictable, as nonnative plants change the rules we have come to understand. Andrea will share some of the research that she and her students have pursued in Arizona, Texas, and Montana to better understand these complex responses.

Andrea is originally from southeastern Wisconsin and received a Bachelor's degree in Zoology from the University of Wisconsin - Madison. She completed a Master's degree at the University of Florida, Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation. She worked for The Nature Conservancy in northwest Florida for two years before beginning a Ph.D. program in the School of Natural Resources at the University of Arizona.

Andrea also earned a minor in Statistics. She was a faculty member with the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute at Texas A&M University - Kingsville before joining the Ecology department at MSU in January 2011.

Andrea and her students examine changes to wildlife resulting from various human activities including invasive plants, altered disturbance regimes, and changes in land use. They work on a diversity of taxa, based on the ecological question of interest.

When not working, Andrea enjoys road biking, hiking, and otherwise enjoying the natural beauty of Montana and beyond.



# Bird Notes

This fall has been rich with unexpected and interesting birds, from shorebirds to lingering songbirds. During mid October, there was a wealth of migrants from the Arctic that normally travel over the open ocean. The rarest and most oceanic was the **Red Phalarope** that Vic Fesolowitz discovered October 13th at Harrison Reservoir. This is only the 17th time that a Red Phalarope has been documented in Montana. That same day Robin Wolcott, Ed Harper, Bruce Hallett, and John Parker were able to find **4 Surf Scoters** and **2 Pacific Loons** scattered across Ennis Lake. The following day Tom Forwood and Andrew Guttenberg saw a **Pacific Loon** at Harrison Reservoir, and the day after that Tom found yet another **Surf Scoter** on the Three Forks Ponds. All of these trips to local lakes and reservoirs have certainly paid off for Andrew, who also found **Sabine's Gulls** at Ennis Lake and Central Park Pond on September 24th and October 7th, respectively.

Helping with Sacajawea Audubon's various bird counts and surveys guarantees an opportunity to enjoy many of this area's expected birds and sometimes there's a surprise waiting to be discovered. While participating on the October 15th Ennis Important Bird Area survey south of Ennis, Lou Ann Harris, Nora Miller, Raymond Burket and Suzanne Stevenson found **2 Rock Wrens** and a **Swainson's Thrush**. The Rock Wrens are a new late date record for the species in Montana. The Swainson's Thrush is one of the three latest fall sightings for the state.

Sometimes you don't have to leave your yard to find great birds. For two days in mid September Jeff Pentel had an exceedingly rare **Eastern Towhee** visiting his yard north of Bozeman. There has only been one previous record of an Eastern Towhee to be documented in Montana. Nearly annual in this area, the beautiful **Chestnut-sided Warbler** Tom Forwood found in his Willow Creek yard was a great find. A bird's behavior is often a clue that a bird deserves a second look. While working in our yard October 10th, a fairly plain warbler flew past me and landed in a nearby bush. I was going to write the bird off as one of the numerous Yellow-rumped Warblers passing through the area, when I noticed the bird's constant tail bobbing. On closer examination I confirmed that this warbler was an entirely unexpected **Palm Warbler**, which is known for its habit of bobbing the tail.

***-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 Legislature migrates back to Helena.

Here we are again! The 2017 Montana Legislature will convene January 2nd in Helena. As we have since 1981, Montana Audubon will lobby on the front line at the Capitol in our efforts to protect birds, other wildlife, and their habitats. This year, as in 2015, Amy Seaman, our Associate Director of Bird Conservation, will step up as the lead lobbyist with the help of a new legislative intern.

During the last (2015) Legislative session Montana Audubon testified on 68 bills, opposing 24 and supporting 44. Our efforts helped defeat 10 anti-environmental/anti-wildlife bills, and helped pass 20 bills aimed at strengthening our environmental and wildlife laws. We anticipate 2017 to be just as much work, and with so much on the table, we are going to need your help.

You can support our legislative work!

- **Donate** to Montana Audubon to support face-to-face contact with legislators and our action alert network.
- **Sign up for our action alert network** by visiting www.mtaudubon.org*
- **Join us** for a Montana Audubon Lobby Day –free of charge, for any and all Audubon members. Come to the Capitol and participate directly in democracy. Learn about the legislative process, important Audubon issues, and help influence those making critical decisions about wildlife and the environment. Dates are set in early January.

Please assist us with our efforts this year! Find out more at <www.mtaudubon.org>, or by emailing Amy (aseaman@mtaudubon.org) where you can sign up to be an Armchair Activist and find out how your legislators voted last session!

***-Amy Seaman***
***MT Audubon***

## Sacajawea Audubon 2016 Bluebird Trail Summary

Overall, 2016 was a productive year for Mountain Bluebirds. A total of 676 bluebirds fledged from nest boxes on our 6 monitored trails. 181 boxes were used out of 272 available. The remainder were used by tree swallows and house wrens.

Because of a relatively mild spring, the bluebirds began laying eggs over a week earlier than usual. Even a mid-May snowstorm didn't slow them down. The Rocky Mountain Road trail had it's earliest-ever nestling, found on May 4th.

On the Pass Creek Rd./Rocky Mountain Rd. trails, we banded a total of 310 birds, 268 nestlings and 42 adult females. We also recaptured 8 females, a couple of which had been banded as nestlings the previous year. It's nice to know they are coming back to nest in their natal area.

Predation of nests was up from previous years. The Rocky Mountain Rd. trail had a total of 24 predated nests (up from 18 last year). The Pass Creek trail had 34 nests predated (up from 32 last year). The causes were varied: snakes, raccoons, weasels, kestrels & house sparrows. In fact one box was found to have a complete house sparrow nest built *on top* of a dead female bluebird.

One of the most interesting events of the nesting season was an epic battle between a resident male bluebird (whose mate and nestlings had died), and another bluebird pair for the occupancy of Box 70 on Rocky Mountain Road. The three birds were so engrossed in their fight that they were oblivious to our presence and even slammed into my car on two occasions. In the end, the new pair won out and successfully raised six fledglings. And we thought bluebirds were such gentle creatures!

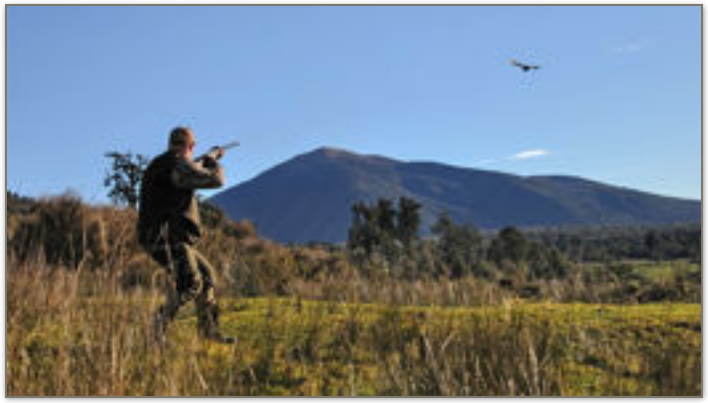
We took a total of 22 people out on the bluebird trails this summer, including 10 on the June 12th field trip. Everyone loves to see those little bluebird nestlings and hold one in their hands.

The bluebird nest box sponsorship program was a great success, and we plan to do it again for 2017. For a complete report of the success (or failure) of each box, along with its sponsor, please visit our website at www.sacajaweaaudubon.org

***-Lou Ann Harris***

## Science Corner

It's hunting season in Montana, and though most hunters are out right now looking for four legged game, hunting of the feathered type turns out to be influencing bird evolution. A recent study of bird populations in Denmark suggests that human hunters may be making birds smarter by inadvertently shooting those with smaller brains.



Lakeview_Images/iStockphoto

This work contributes to an emerging view in evolutionary ecology that intelligence is a selected trait in an increasingly human-dominated world. This research is not the first to indicate that smarts are evolving in birds due to environmental pressures: a recent study showed that common eiders select for chicks with the largest heads, resulting in populations better at forming protective neighborhood alliances than ducks with small heads, and presumably smaller brains.

In the current study, scientist found that nearly 10% of the birds they studied, harvested by hunters, had a smaller brain to body size ratio. This finding held try regardless of bird health, body mass index, sex, and species. The scientists concluded that hunters were unwittingly turning their prey into large-brained birds by eliminating small brained birds from the population. Also compared were the birds' other organs - heart, liver, lungs - and found that only brain size was effected. While more direct correlative studies are needed, the study does further support findings that human pressures could significantly effect evolutionary forces in game birds.

***-Mary Cloud B. Ammons***

Citation: Anders Pape Moller and Johannes Erritzoe. 2016. "Brain size and the risk of getting shot". *Biology Letters*: DOI: 10.1098/rsbl.2016.0647

**Sacajawea Audubon Society**
**P.O. Box 1711**
**Bozeman, MT 59771-1711**

***Change Service Requested***

**Non-Profit Organization**
U.S. Postage Paid Bozeman. MT 59771
Permit No. 106

***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 | Janne Hayward | 587-6124 | treas@sacajawea audubon.org |
| Secretary | John Edwards | 581-0877 | sec@sacajaweaaudubon.org |
| Education Chair | **OPEN** | | |
| Field trips, Bird Count andBird Sightings | John Parker | 586-5863 | birdsightings@sacajaweaaudubon.org |
| Conservation Chair | Lou Ann Harris | 600-3585 | conservation@sacajaweaaudubon.org |
| Hospitality/Coffee | **OPEN** | | |
| Membership Records | Mary Cloud Ammons | 600-0301 | newsletter@sacajaweaaudubon.org |
| Newsletter Ed./Design | Carl Roth | | programs@sacajaweaaudubon.org |
| Program Chair | **OPEN** | | |
| Publicity Chair | Mike Vivion | | mikevivion@sacajaweaaudubon.org |
| Chapter Rep. to State | Lou Ann Harris | 600-3585 | louann@sacajaweaaudubon.org |
| Webmaster | Stephanie Nelson | 587-3052 | s.n.mayfly@gmail.com |
| Website Updates | Hillary Johnson | | ralphhilary@gmail.com |
| Audubon Adventures | Chris Nixon | | christopherfnixon@yahoo.com |
| Board members | Sharon Hanton | | sharonhanton@sacajaweaaudubon.org |
| | Rick Sanders | | ricksanders@sacajaweaaudubon.org |
| | Mike Vivion | | mikevivion@sacajaweaaudubon.org |
| | Adele Pittendrigh | | adelepittendrigh@sacajaweaaudubon.org |
| | Paulette Epple | 580-6186 | johnedwards@sacajaweaaudubon.org |
| Honorary Board Member | Peter Norlander | | norlander@q.com |

## 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**

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