SacajaweaAudubonNews

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

Sept 3rd	**Kelly Ranch Field Trip**
Sept 10th	**Headwaters Field Trip**
Sept 12th	**SAS Meeting**
Oct 1st	**Ennis Lake Field Trip**
Oct 15th	**Madison Valley Field Trip**

Madison Valley IBA Survey

Join Sacajawea Audubon Society for the next Madison Valley IBA survey **October 15th**. For more information contact Paulette Epple at 580-6186 or conservation@sacajaweaaudubon.org.

Raptors of South America: A Field Guide

Monday Sept 12th, 2016 at 7pm
Hope Lutheran Church
2152 W. Graf Street in Bozeman

For our first guest of the season, Sacajawea Audubon welcomes Sergio Seipke from Raptours, an organization that does guided hawk watching tours. In his powerpoint presentation, Sergio will be showcasing the large and diverse assemblage of raptor species that inhabit the South American continent. Sergio has studied this fascinating group of birds for much of his life; he will describe the natural history and conservation of these birds, with notes about the plumage variation of this peculiar raptor fauna. More information about Sergio and Raptours can be found at http://raptoursllc.com.

Everyone is welcome to join SAS and share their interest in birding and conservation. The Sacajawea Audubon Society meets the second Monday of the month (September through May) at 7:00 p.m., at the Hope Lutheran Church, 2152 W. Graf Street (off of South 19th) in Bozeman. We invite the public to attend our meetings and participate in our field trips and learn how you can get involved in one of our many conservation initiatives to help protect birds and wildlife of southwest Montana.

Good Reads: Join the SAS Book Group for Our Exciting Naturalist Program

The Sacajawea Book Group has an exciting reading list for the coming year. Thanks to all book group members who nominated books, voted, and chose these books. Two of them focus on bird and animal communication (Young and Safina); one records an epic field trip (Peterson and Fisher); and one is a much-acclaimed study of grassland birds. *Adventures in the Anthropocene*, our first reading, is described as "part science journal, part travelogue" and "an upbeat alternative to doom and gloom."

All members of Sacajawea Audubon are welcome to participate. Meetings will be held at Hope Lutheran Church from 5:30-6:45. If you want to attend a book group discussion and are not yet on the book group mailing list, please contact Adele Pittendrigh, so that you receive updates. (adele.pittendrigh@gmail.com).

October 20, 2016: *Adventures in the Anthropocene: A Journey to the Heart of the Planet We Made*, Gaia Vince.
December 8, 2016: *Wild America: The Record of a 30,000 Mile Journey Around the Continent by a Distinguished Naturalist and His British Colleague*, Roger Tory Peterson and James Fisher.
January 19, 2017: *What the Robin Knows: How Birds Reveal the Secrets of the Natural World*, Jon Young.
March 9, 2017: *Grass, Sky, Song: Promise and Peril In World of Grassland Birds*, Trevor Herriot.
April 20, 2017: *Beyond Words: What Animals Think and Feel*, Carl Safina.

Upcoming SAS Field Trips

The Kelly Ranch on the Gallatin River
Saturday, September 3, 2016
Trip Leader: John Parker 406-586-5863
conundrumjp@gmail.com
Meet at 7:45 am at the Museum of the Rockies. Carpool and leave at 8 am.

This trip will explore the Kelly Ranch along the Gallatin River west of Bozeman. The ranch includes wet meadow, cottonwood gallery forest, and dry juniper habitats. We will be looking for early fall migrants and some lingering birds along the Gallatin River corridor. Time permitting the trip may explore the area upstream from the ranch. Kathryn Kelly, ranch owner and Greater Yellowstone Manager for the Montana Land Reliance will join the group to discuss a bit of history of the ranch, and the process and benefits of creating conservation easements, one of the most powerful tools to accomplish habitat protection, for birds and other wildlife. This 4-5 hour trip will require 1-2 miles of easy walking. **Participants limited to 15.**

Photo Courtesy of Beth Johns

Headwaters-Three Forks
Saturday, September 10, 2016
Trip Leader: Robin Wolcott 406-581-5418
pajaros@wewolcotts.com
Meet at 7:45 am at the Museum of the Rockies. Carpool and leave at 8 am.

Early September is the peak of fall migration with an amazing diversity of birds passing through Montana. This field trip will take advantage of the many birding opportunities in the Headwaters State Park and Three Forks area. The trip will last until early afternoon but let's be prepared for anything. Bring a lunch. Bring a scope if you have one. Bring your enthusiasm and your flexibility. **Participants limited to 14.**

Ennis Lake Waterfowl
Saturday, October 1, 2016
Trip Leader: Mike Vivion 406-210-8071
michael.vivion@gmail.com
Meet at 7:45 am at the Museum of the Rockies. Carpool and leave at 8 am.

This date should catch early migrant waterfowl and an assortment of other birds, including migrating raptors and passerines. Ennis Lake is one of the premiere staging areas for waterfowl in southwest Montana. Some birds will still be in alternate plumage, offering some interesting identification challenges. Large numbers of waterfowl should be present. Bring a lunch, since we'll be out till at least mid-afternoon. Weather can be a challenge, so bring warm clothes and rain gear in case. **Participants limited to 16.**

To reserve a spot on these trips or for more information please contact the trip leader.

Science Corner

As birders and naturalists, we can end up doing a lot of staring: waiting for the flicker of wings in trees, watching a nest for signs of movement, and gazing for hours through a terrestrial scope while captivated by the intimate dance of two yellow warblers competing for territory. Have you ever blinked, just once, and missed the flash you were waiting for? Like all animals, birds must actively monitor their environment and any little blink can cost them valuable visual information. Strategic blinking to minimize loss of this visual information and to improve visual function has been poorly understood; however, a recent paper published in *Scientific Reports* (1) by Jessica Yorzinski of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries at Texas A&M takes us one step closer to understanding how this process works in birds. In this study, free roaming peacocks were fitted with telemetric eye-trackers and exposed to a taxidermy red fox predator. Blinks and gaze shifts were recorded and strategic blinking patterns indicated a link, especially in the presence of a predatory threat. This is the first study to utilize a quantitative measure examining the link between blinking, gaze shifts, and context in birds. Turns out, blinking during gaze shifts potentially minimizes the loss of visual information, so next time you feel your eyes stinging at the scope, channel the peacock and start timing your blinks with your shifts in gaze!

-Mary Cloud Ammons

(1) Yorzinski J.L. "Eye blinking in an avian species is associated with gaze shifts" *Scientific Reports* **6**. 2016

American Kestrel Project Update

In 2013, Sacajawea Audubon began installing kestrel nest boxes on private land around Gallatin Valley with the help of the American Kestrel Partnership (AKP). This international project was in response to long-term population declines of kestrels in North America. The kestrel population in the United States has declined 50-60% since the 1960s, and the reason(s) are unknown.

Photo Courtesy of Lou Ann Harris

No boxes were used by kestrels in the first two years of the project. Then in 2014, SAS Project Leader Paulette Epple found 3 active boxes. Success! In 2015, there were 2 active nests. This year there were 8 active nests.

This spring, the AKP asked if we would also band the nestlings& adults and collect body feather samples as part of the American Kestrel Genoscape Project. The genetic data from the feathers will be analyzed to understand the migratory connectivity of kestrel populations and how the connectivity changes with climate.

SAS board member Lou Ann Harris, who is a licensed bander, received the necessary permit modifications to band kestrels and collect feathers. On June 27th, Paulette and Lou Ann checked 6 boxes with the hope of catching an incubating female. They did indeed catch 3 females on eggs and banded them. Then over the three weeks following, Lou Ann banded 26 kestrel nestlings, ranging in age from 13 to 22 days of age. One nestling from each box also donated 2-3 body feathers. These feathers will be shipped to a lab at UCLA for genetic testing. The banding data is sent to the Bird Banding Lab in Maryland. They hope next year to band even more adult females, and possibly a few adult males to increase the chance of recapturing returning birds the following year. Of the 8 nests that were monitored, there were two failures, both of which the eggs never hatched.

Photo Courtesy of Hobart Collins

The kestrel project has gained some media attention, both here in Bozeman and nationally as well, with articles in the Bozeman Chronicle and on the National Audubon website.

This has become a very exciting conservation project for Sacajawea Audubon! It is a collaboration between the AKP, chapter members, landowners, a local Boy Scout Troop and other kestrel enthusiasts. It's so rewarding to know that our efforts are making a difference.

-Lou Ann Harris

2016 Birdathon Report

The 2016 SAS Birdathon raised over $7,000 this year, despite only 5 teams participating. Think what we could have done with more participants! This money will go into our general operating fund to help pay for Audubon Adventure kits in local classrooms, educational classes & monthly programs, as well as help us support worthy conservation projects such as the Bridger Raptor Count and the Trumpeter Swan Release program in Madison County. Teams with the names of: *The Wingnuts*, *The Executives*, *The Wrenegades*, *The Oblivious Sage Hens* and *The Love Birds*, went out to spot as many species as possible in a day, raising money for our chapter. **Eighty-one** donors supported this effort with pledges of up to $4 per species. Following up the Birdathon, a gathering was held at MAP Brewing in late June to toast our success and announce the award winners.

<u>Birdathon Awards were as follows:</u>

- Most Species: The Wing Nuts, 134 species
- Most Species in an IBA: The Oblivious Sage Hens, 101 species
- Most Raptors: The Executives, 79 raptors
- Most Magpies: The Executives, 158 magpies
- Most Pledges: Evelyn Acton, 22 pledges
- Most $$ Raised: Evelyn Acton, $1,434.00 (Individual), The Executives, $2,579.00 (Team)
- Rookie Award: Stephanie Nelson, The Wrenegades
- Best Bird: Broad-tailed Hummingbird (The Wing Nuts), seen at John Parker's feeders

Thanks to all who participated and supported this great effort!

-Lou Ann Harris

Bird Notes

This past summer and late spring produced a number of interesting bird sightings in our area. Most of these birds are fairly uncommon in southwestern Montana, but can be expected to be found occasionally. That being said, there were two notable exceptions. The first was a **Mourning Warbler** discovered along the Lewis and Clark Caverns Road, by Tom Forwood on the morning of May 16. This elusive warbler continued to be seen or heard by patient observers until May 30th. On June 6th Paulette Epple first noted an unusual hummingbird coming to their feeder in northeast Bozeman. After numerous observations and photos, this hummingbird was identified as a **Ruby-throated Hummingbird**, though there is some speculation that it could be a Ruby-throated X Broad-tailed Hummingbird hybrid. This beautiful eastern hummingbird continued to come to the Epple's feeders until July 19th. Both the Ruby-throated Hummingbird and the Mourning Warbler were the first of their kind to be documented in the southwestern part of Montana.

Mourning Warbler

Ruby-throated Hummingbird

Several uncommon shorebirds were seen over this past summer during both the north and southward migration periods. With some adult shorebirds spending as little as 3-4 weeks on their northern breeding grounds, there isn't much of a pause between the spring and fall migration. Earlier in the spring on May 7th Andrew Guttenberg and Neil Gilbert spotted **4 Whimbrels** at Cottonwood Reservoir, north of Wilsall. This was only the third record for Whimbrel in our area, but it was the second year in a row that they have been found at Cottonwood. An **American Golden-Plover** that Vic Fesolowitz saw June 9th at Cottonwood Reservoir was a nice find, especially during the spring migration period. Sanderling is another shorebird that is uncommonly seen here during spring, so the single **Sanderling** Ed Harper discovered at Cottonwood Reservoir June 2nd was notable. Stilt Sandpipers are sometimes numerous migrants in eastern Montana and not unexpected here, but a flock of **8 Stilt Sandpipers** observed by Tom Forwood, Robin Wolcott, and John Parker August 12th at Canyon Ferry Reservoir was a high number for southwest Montana. Short-billed Dowitchers are uncommon anywhere in Montana, so it was exciting to see that Andrew Guttenberg was able to identify and photograph a single juvenile **Short-billed Dowitcher** at Harrison Reservoir on August 14th.

Whimbrel

During June, Ned Bixler came across two birds that are seldom found locally. On June 17th, Ned saw a **Western Bluebird** next to the Kelly Canyon Road, close to where one was seen the previous year. Even more unusual was the **Northern Mockingbird** that he discovered along the Old Town Road, northwest of Three Forks on June 26th.

-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

Western Bluebird

Northern Mockingbird

SACAJAWEA AUDUBON LONG-RANGE PLAN 2016-2019

Sacajawea Audubon has a Long-Range Plan for 2016-19, developed during 2015 and spring 2016. The aims of the Long-Range Plan (LRP) are to expand the efforts of SAS to protect birds and their habitats and engage more members in conservation, education, and leadership. The LRP planning group and the SAS Board of Directors hope the plan will help SAS accomplish its core goals in conservation, education, networking, and communication.

CONSERVATION

Preserve and Protect Bird Species and their Habitats

- Existing Programs: Monitor five Important Bird Areas in Southwest Montana, Bridger Raptor Survey, reintroduce trumpeter swans, support Story Mill Park, Kestrel next boxes, Bluebird trails, and Christmas bird counts.
- Future: Involve more members in conservation work, evaluate existing programs, and develop new conservation programs.

Bird-friendly Communities

- Existing Programs: Burdock Eradication.
- Future: Cap vault toilets, create safe disposal of fishing line, reduce bailing twine hazard, increase landscaping for birds.

Working Lands for Birds and Other Wildlife

- Existing Programs: Ruby River Restoration bird survey and habitat restoration.
- Future: Work with landowners and organizations to support a sustainable future for birds and other wildlife.

EDUCATION

- Existing Programs: Field Trips, Classes, Bridger Raptor Festival education programs, Audubon Adventures, guided walks at Story Mill Park, SAS Book Group.
- Future: Create a speakers' bureau, recruit a chair or coordinator for the education programs, incre ase the number of birding classes.

NETWORK

- Existing Collaborations: Trust for Public Lands, Montana Land Reliance, Gallatin Valley Land Trust, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks.
- Future: Expand connections with conservation groups in South West Montana to pursue common goals.

COMMUNICATION

- Existing Programs: Newsletter, monthly membership programs, SAS public positions on conservation policy.
- Future: Showcase SAS initiatives, increase membership diversity, research and track additional public policy issues, increase the percentage of members receiving the newsletter electronically to 80%.

Long-range Planning Group: *John Edwards, Leo Freeman, Karin Jennings, Adele Pittendrigh (chair).*

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
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Treasurer	Janne Hayward	587-6124	treas@sacajawea audubon.org
Secretary	John Edwards	581-0877	sec@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Education Chair			
Field trips, Bird Count andBird Sightings	John Parker	586-5863	birdsightings@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Conservation Chair	Paulette Epple	580-6186	conservation@sacajaweaaudubon.org
	Lou Ann Harris	600-3585	louann@sacajaweaaudubon.org
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	John Edwards		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