JANUARY 2022

Sacajawea Audubon News

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

Monday, January 10th, 2022 Monthly Program:
"Bird and Wildlife Conservation in Africa" *with Christopher Moriarty*

The conservation of birds, wildlife, and wild spaces is an ongoing challenge across the continent of Africa. Birds and iconic wildlife face increasing pressure each year from habitat loss (development, deforestation), human-wildlife conflict (livestock and agricultural degradation), and diminished economic opportunities for locals (poaching for meat and money).

In the past two years, COVID has only exacerbated these issues. Often, the fates of birds like vultures and raptors are directly tied to the efforts made to protect and preserve other threatened species like elephants and rhinos. There are numerous examples of successful conservation initiatives that have yielded positive outcomes for birds, wildlife, and communities throughout sub-Saharan Africa. Specifically, we'll delve into some of the most successful and innovative work being done in Zimbabwe, Kenya, and South Africa. We'll also take a look at what the future holds, reasons for hope, ways to help support these initiatives, and allow time for questions from attendees.

About the Presenter

Christopher Moriarty is the owner and founder of Moraway Adventures, an eco-adventure travel company that specializes in custom safaris in Africa that contribute to wildlife conservation and community development. He developed his love of Africa while living in a remote Namibian village for two years while teaching in the U.S. Peace Corps. From the jungles of Uganda to the Kalahari desert, he has traveled to the far corners of the continent on numerous private and self-guided safaris over the last 20 years. He holds a Master's Degree in International Development and is an active volunteer with Search & Rescue and Rotary International here in Bozeman, Montana.

The Mara Raptor Project in the Maasai Mara (Kenya) has seen great success with their programs rehabilitating and releasing raptors back into the wild. Photo by the Mara Raptor Project.

Chris Moriarty in Hwange National Park in Zimbabwe. "Hwange is one of the parks that I have returned to again and again. The wildlife conservation and community development initiatives there are role models for parks throughout Africa." Photo by Mark Butcher.

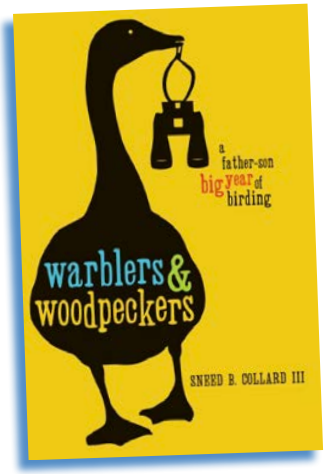
The January 10th in-person meeting will be held at Hope Lutheran Church, 2152 W. Graf (off of S. 19th). A social begins at 6:30 PM and the program begins at 7:00 PM. We are following Gallatin County Health Department COVID-19 Guidelines; **masks are required.**

To join virtually, register at: https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7238892506828923151. You will receive a confirmation email with information about joining the webinar.

SAS programs are free and open to the public, featuring a special guest speaker the 2nd Monday of each month, September through May. For more information, contact Kyle Moon at programs@sacajaweaaudubon.org.

JANUARY 2022 SAS BOOK CLUB

Some twenty or so years ago, my husband, two teenagers, and I returned from what I felt was a very successful trip to New York City—until I overheard my daughter groaning to a friend on the telephone: "They dragged us to every art museum in the city!"



Even if you have not had similar experiences you will enjoy our January book, ***Warblers & Woodpeckers***, by Sneed B. Collard III. Collard and his 13-year-old son embark on a "Big Year" starting near their home base of Missoula, Montana, planning to see all the birds they could in one year—even with the limitation of school and work. Told with humor, a strong basis in natural history, and—of course—the joy of discovering new birds and seeing old favorites, this is a very entertaining read. Will you relate to introducing a family member or friend to one of your passions?

Our virtual discussion on **January 19th** from **6:30 to 7:45 PM** will be led by Lynn Mugaas. Access is easy on your computer, tablet, or smartphone.

Computer or tablet: go to https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/604063133. **Smartphone**: dial **+1 (872) 240-3212** and use Meeting ID # **604-063-133**.

We welcome new participants at every meeting.

P.S. The Bozeman Public Library has purchased ten copies of ***Vesper Flight*** by Helen Macdonald, our Book Club selection for February. Please email Elisabeth (elsswa@gmail.com) to reserve a copy.

P.P.S. We need leaders for the March and April books.

The March selection is ***A Most Remarkable Creature: The Hidden Life and Epic Journey of the World's Smartest Birds of Prey*** by Jonathan Meiburg. 2021. Alfred A. Knopf.

For April the selection is ***The Bird Friendly City: Creating Safe Urban Habitats*** by Timothy Beatley. 2020. Island Press.

You can sign up by emailing Elisabeth or Hilary (ralphhilary@gmail.com). ***Thank you!***

SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

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What a wonderful year…

From SAS President Chris Nixon

We set the bars high, and you helped us jump over every hurdle. As a result, Sacajawea Audubon Society (SAS) purchased the last seven-acre parcel of property, bringing the Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve (IAWP) to almost 40 acres. The KENDEDA Fund gave a challenge grant, which required SAS to raise $4.5 million by the end of 2021. We came close enough—the $1 million award was issued to SAS in December. In addition, a $2.5 million planned gift from Ileana Indreland and Mike Delaney means the future of the wetlands is secure. The IAWP Busy Beavers program took off and is now in full swing, getting us well over the bar of establishing a team of volunteers to care for the preserve.

So, after decades of wishful thinking and dreams that SAS would not let die, those dreams are being realized. What was known as the East Main wetland, an area always under threat of destruction, will now be preserved/restored/rehabilitated/enhanced. Call it what you may, the area will remain a wetland. Now designated as the **Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve**, it will be there for future generations to enjoy. It will serve as an environmental study area, an educational resource, and a place to experience the intricate beauty of a wetland—all within the city limits of Bozeman.

Beavers are already back, doing what beavers do by creating dams. Several duck species (in addition to Mallards) returned for the first time in many years this past fall to grace the wetland. Those attending weekly bird walks witnessed interesting interactions such as when a Northern Harrier plucked a Red-winged Blackbird out of the air.

Next fall or winter we will begin construction on ponds and berms. We'll also take the final steps toward establishing a mitigation bank at the IAWP site. You'll be called on for your opinion on what signage we should have and what educational opportunities you would like to see offered. Ultimately Bozeman will finally have a long dreamed of nature center at the IAWP—once all fundraising goals are met. So there is more to be done and we hope that you choose to be part of it through your gifts, volunteering, and simply showing up to enjoy!

Despite the challenges we all experienced during these past two and a half very difficult years, generosity has been demonstrated, hope has been realized, and numerous other environmental organizations have partnered with SAS to help make this place of wonder the Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve. Thank you!

Photo by Loreene Reid

BUSY BEAVERS
Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve

Become a Busy Beaver!

By Loreene Reid

Looking to learn new things, give back to your community, and have fun? Sacajawea Audubon Society (SAS) has partnered with Gallatin Watershed Council in building a team of volunteers who will enjoy the Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve (IAWP) while restoring this urban wetland and protecting the Gallatin Watershed. You'll make friends, get exercise, and bask in the benefits of being in nature.

SAS is a grassroots non-profit organization that is highly dependent on our incredible crew of dedicated volunteers. Volunteering at the IAWP is a unique opportunity to get involved with your local urban wetlands! We have many different volunteer positions ranging from one-time volunteer events to long-term volunteer positions.

For more information and to sign up to be a IAWP Busy Beaver Volunteer, visit https://bozemanwetlands.org/WP/2021/06/01/become-a-busy-beaver/

BIRD NOTES

by John Parker

Early winter is a quiet time of year here in the interior of the continent, with most of the migratory birds long gone. Most years, all of the ponds and lakes are frozen over by mid to late November. This year's exceptionally warm November—and record-breaking warmth the first week of December—kept the large lakes and even the smaller ponds open an extra two or three weeks. This was an opportunity to enjoy seeing some of the waterfowl that we won't have another chance of seeing until next spring.

While there were a number of the more common ducks taking advantage of the late open water, no rare ducks were found locally during this period. But waterfowl aren't the only large birds attracted to the late season open water. The biggest end-of-the-season discovery was the **Lesser Black-backed Gull** that Andrew Guttenberg found along the north shore of Hebgen Lake on December 4th. The gull was not lacking for a meal, as it would float on the water near diving **Common Goldeneyes** and then, when one of the goldeneyes would return to the surface with a crawfish, the gull would promptly fly over and steal the crawfish. This beautiful adult gull represents the first record for the species in Gallatin County. This Old-World gull was first documented in North America (New Jersey) in 1934. Since the 1980s the numbers of Lesser Black-backed Gulls have dramatically increased along the east coast. With the increased numbers, Lesser Black-backed Gulls have been spreading with increasing frequency across the interior of North America. The first occurrence for Lesser Black-backed Gull in Montana was at Fort Peck Reservoir in 2008.

Lesser Black-backed Gull photo by John Parker.

Double-crested Cormorant photo by John Parker.

A lone **Double-crested Cormorant** that was first spotted at Hyalite Reservoir on October 23rd remained at the lake until the first of December. Like the Lesser Black-backed Gull, this cormorant was well fed, subsisting on a plentiful diet of trout. I saw several small fish literally jump out of the water onto the rocks to evade the cormorant as it swam underwater along the edge of the lake.

Much more diminutive—but no less exciting for early winter—was the **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** frequenting Katy Duffy's yard in Gardiner. Howard Weinberg first spotted this bird on December 1st, and it stayed around for another two days. Ruby-crowned Kinglets are one of the most common birds of the conifer forests in the Northern Rockies during breeding season, but are exceedingly rare here during the winter months, with only a handful of winter records in southwest Montana.

With many birders participating in the various **Christmas Bird Counts** during the next three weeks, there should be a few more surprises to report next month.

2021 SAS Bluebird Trail Report

Photos & article by Lou Ann Harris

There are always lots of up and downs on the bluebird trail, and 2021 was no exception. It was overall a low year for Mountain Bluebirds on our six monitored trails. Only 466 bluebirds fledged this year, compared to an eight-year average of 524. We noticed fewer bluebirds nesting this year and suspect it was probably due to the extreme cold snap in the southern states last February. Many bluebirds perished during the cold snap and didn't make the trip north. Those that did make it were hit with a late May snowstorm, causing a number of nest failures. However, bluebirds are a notably resilient species, and some pairs made it through the storm, hatching eggs and brooding young. The pairs whose first nest failed, quickly built a second nest and laid new eggs. It's unknown if the hot temperatures in June and July affected nest success. A total of 256 bluebirds were banded: 238 nestlings and 18 adult females, all on the Dry Creek/Pass Creek & Rocky Mountain Rd. (RMR) trails. Thirteen previously banded adult females were recaptured.

Tree Swallow numbers were down as well, except on the Trail Creek bluebird trail in Gallatin Co. Swallows fledged 58 young out of the 15 boxes used. An additional 35 swallows fledged out of nine boxes used on the Park Co. side of the trail. It's interesting to note the differences in Mountain Bluebird nest box usage on the two sections of Trail Creek Rd. The Gallatin Co. sections favors Tree Swallows, with very few bluebirds. On the Park Co. section, this flip-flops with bluebirds being the dominant user. The main reasons are habitat preference and food availability by each species. Bluebirds like open, short-grass habitat with lots of grasshoppers. Tree Swallows catch their insect prey on the wing, and normally nest in areas with water, and thus, more flying insects.

There were two trail "firsts" this season on RMR—one happy and one sad. For the first time that anyone can remember, we got to witness a tree swallow fledge. We watched as it popped out of the box and flew awkwardly down to the ground, a concerned parent nearby. Then all of a sudden, the little fledgling took off and flew beautifully across the field, its parent flying in tandem, both chattering. The sad "first" was finding two fully feathered bluebird nestlings, dead, hopelessly tangled in baling twine which the female had used as nesting material.

The amount of twine in the nest was noted during earlier visits and we tried to remove as much as we could without completely destroying the nest. The nestlings were still alive on one check, but we didn't realize that the reason they had not fledged yet was because they were caught in the twine. It was upsetting knowing that we could have saved their lives. Baling twine is generally thought of as an osprey problem, but now it's apparent that it affects other nesting species as well.

In an effort to reduce nest predation, a number of "Noel Guards" were installed on some of the hardest-hit boxes. A Noel Guard is a rectangular-shaped wire cage that fits over the hole and is supposed to help keep predators from reaching the nest inside. Unfortunately, they were not effective. Of the 20 guards installed, there were 11 nests predated, including 7 of 12 boxes on RMR. The plan is to leave the guards up on those boxes but not add any more.

Several visitors joined us on the RMR trail this year, including Kelsi Tjernagel and her two delightful children, Nora & August. They checked all 53 boxes with us, and August insisted on looking in each one! The annual bluebird trail field trip was well attended with six participants and everyone enjoyed holding a bluebird nestling.

For those of you who might have missed it, here is a link to a recent Cornell Lab of Ornithology article about Mary Geis. Mary coordinated Sacajawea Audubon Society's bluebird trails for about 30 years until Lou Ann took over in 2009. It's a wonderful article about her life and her contributions of bluebird nesting data. https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/meet-mary-geis-the-montana-biologist-who-spent-30-years-studying-mountain-bluebirds/

We'd like to thank all our trail monitors for their tireless dedication to this project, including: Roger & Noreene Breeding (Trail Creek, Eagle Rock Reserve), Markie Nathan & Jinny Goodman (Sedan), Janne Hayward, Stephanie Nelson & Lou Ann Harris (Pass Creek & RMR). We'd also like to note the passing last year of Tove Hunter, who monitored the Sedan Trail for many years. She will be missed.

Eagle Rock Reserve: 24 Mountain Bluebirds fledged

Dry Creek/Pass Creek: 144 Mountain Bluebirds, 32 Tree Swallows, 13 House Wrens fledged

Rocky Mountain Road: 142 Mountain Bluebirds, 8 Tree Swallows fledged

Sedan: 81 Mountain Bluebirds fledged

Trail Creek (Gallatin Co.): 3 Mountain Bluebirds, 58 Tree Swallows fledged

Trail Creek (Park Co.): 72 Mountain Bluebirds, 35 Tree Swallows fledged

THE BENEFITS OF SAS MEMBERSHIP

For more than 54 years, Sacajawea Audubon Society (SAS) members have embraced the mission of protecting birds and the places they need right here in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem of Montana.

When you join or renew your SAS local chapter membership at a basic or supporting level, 100% of your local membership and additional donations go ***directly*** to support local SAS education and conservation programs.

SAS MEMBERS:

- Protect working lands for birds and other wildlife across Southwestern Montana
- Preserve and protect wild birds and their habitats
- Support bird-friendly communities in Montana
- Contribute to important environmental education programs for people of all ages and abilities, on birds, wildlife, and habitat
- Support vital partnerships between other nonprofit environmental groups, citizens, and local government to shape the health of our community
- Advocate for important environmental issues locally, regionally, and globally

SAS MEMBERS ENJOY:

- Free monthly keynote speaker programs
- Free guided birding field trips
- Free *"Birding Hotspots of Gallatin Valley,"* a guide to birding around the Gallatin Valley & beyond
- Free monthly e-newsletter, so you'll always know what's going on
- Member-only discounts on educational courses, programs, special events, and birding tours
- Opportunities to meet new people and become part of a friendly group that shares an interest in birds, wildlife, the environment, and conservation

Sacajawea Audubon Society is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with its own board of directors, membership, budget, and programs. SAS membership does not include membership in the National Audubon Society, although we are a NAS chapter and fully value and support their work and advocacy. Why not become a member of both, and join today! Visit https://sacajaweaaudubon.org/join-sas

Membership Questions? Contact membership@sacajaweaaudubon.org

Sacajawea Audubon Society Membership 2022

Individual or Family

January -December 2022

☐ ***YES!*** I have included $25 for my **2022 SACAJAWEA AUDUBON CALENDAR**

☐ Basic Membership $25

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

☐ Thank You for Considering an Additional Donation .....$_____

- ☐ *Bridger Raptor Study*
- ☐ *Education Projects*
- ☐ *Story Mill Park Bird Feeding Station*
- ☐ *Wetland Campaign*
- ☐ *Conservation Projects*
- ☐ *Wherever Needed*

Name _____

Address _____
(Street or PO Box)

_____ _____ _____
(City) *(State)* *(Zip)*

Phone ( )

Email _____

❖ Sacajawea Audubon Newsletter is sent by email. ☐ *I would like a paper newsletter mailed to me.*

❖ We do not share your information except with National Audubon, so your contact information is safe with us. Please check this box ☐ if you do not want your information shared with the National Audubon Society.

☐ ***YES!*** I have included another $20 to join National Audubon Society

Mail this form and your check to: *Sacajawea Audubon Society*
Attn: Membership
PO Box 1711
Bozeman, MT 59771-1711

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

1/22 Newsletter

Membership, Membership, Membership!

HAVE YOU RENEWED *YOUR* MEMBERSHIP?

Sacajawea Audubon Society (SAS) remains a true grassroots membership organization with voting privileges. If you haven't yet renewed your membership, we encourage you to do so. SAS exists because each of you share a love of birds and a love of the environments that we and the birds depend upon. Your SAS Board of Directors wants to know your desires and interests, in order to get direction on what matters most to you. If you haven't yet renewed your membership for 2022, please take a few moments to do so. This is the best time for you to renew in order to make certain that you do not miss out on upcoming events and activities and to make certain that we do not miss getting to know you!

GET YOUR 2022 SAS CALENDAR TODAY!

Be reminded of important SAS dates and events, enjoy the "Bird of the Month ID" and cool facts, and decorate your home or office with 12 months of stunning images of birds of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem by SAS's own Kyle Moon. You can order the calendar for $25 either online at sacajaweaaudubon.org or when joining or renewing your SAS membership. Online orders can be picked up at **Wild Birds Unlimited** in Bozeman; it saves SAS considerable postage expenses. **Get—or gift—yours today!**

Fun and educational book set available:

GRANDPA'S BIG BACKYARD FEATURING THE ALPHABET BIRDS *and* SEARCHING FOR THE ALPHABET BIRDS IN GRANDPA'S BIG BACKYARD COLORING BOOK

By John N. Mugaas, author and artist

While they walk through the big backyard, Hayes asks Grandpa to name a North American bird for each letter of the alphabet. By the time they finish their walk the big backyard is full of Alphabet Birds, and Grandpa asks Hayes to match each bird's name with its image.

In the coloring book, Hayes leads Grandpa through the big backyard to find and identify the Alphabet Birds. There are bird portraits, letters of the alphabet, bird names, and pictures of Hayes and Grandpa to color, and two matching games to play. The author's bird portraits serve as a color guide.

John N. Mugaas, a native of Dillon, Montana, is Professor Emeritus of physiology, West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine. He and his wife now reside in Bozeman, Montana, where they are close to their grandchildren and active in the Sacajawea Audubon Society (SAS).

SAS is selling the sets at only $35.00. Order online at sacajaweaaudubon.org or by sending your check with memo *THE ALPHABET BIRDS* to **SAS, PO Box 1711, Bozeman, MT 59771**. All proceeds go to SAS.

Sacajawea Audubon Society
P.O. Box 1711
Bozeman, MT 59771-1771

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's Monthly Newsletter is available electronically to all Sacajawea Audubon Society members, September through May.

Deadline for article submission is the 15th of the month preceding the month the articles will appear. Send articles electronically to 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

RED ROCK LAKES NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE TOUR

Friday, Saturday, Sunday & Monday, May 27, 28, 29 & 30, 2022

Photo by Ronan Donovan

Exploring a vast array of habitat, ranging from high elevation wetland and prairie habitat at 6,600 feet to the forests of the Centennial Mountains

Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge is located in the incredibly scenic and isolated Centennial Valley of southwestern Montana, about 50 miles west of Yellowstone National Park. This four-day, three-night tour will take you into a vast array of habitat, ranging from high elevation wetland and prairie habitat at 6,600 feet to the forests of the Centennial Mountains (which ascend to over 10,000 ft. above sea level). It is this diverse, wetland-prairie-sagebrush-montane environment that gives Red Rock Lakes its unique character.

Nesting birds are abundant throughout Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge at this time of year, with 120+ species possible. Red Rock Lakes is best known as the primary location for heroic efforts in the 1930s to save the Trumpeter Swan from extinction. In addition to the majestic swan, another 230 bird species have been identified within the refuge, including: Long-billed Curlew, Sandhill Crane, Red-necked Grebe, Black-crowned Night-Heron, American White Pelican, Sora, White-faced Ibis, American Avocet, Willet, Northern Harrier, Bald & Golden Eagles, Swainson's & Ferruginous Hawks, Prairie Falcon, Short-eared Owl, Sage Thrasher, and various ducks, flycatchers, kinglets, warblers, vireos, tanagers, thrushes, woodpeckers, and—if we're lucky—Greater Sage-Grouse!

For more information email:
membership@sacajaweaaudubon.org