OCTOBER 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, October 10th, 2022, at 6:30 pm, Hope Lutheran Church:

Exploring Ecuador's Andean Cloud Forest and the Upper Amazon Basin: A Birding and Ecological Adventure in One of the Most Biodiverse Places on Earth

with ecologist and photographer John Winnie Jr.

John Winnie Jr., an ecologist and photographer, will present exotic birds, other wildlife, and tropical ecology in Ecuador's Andean Highlands and the upper Amazon Basin. Ecuador is ranked in the top ten nations worldwide for overall biodiversity, and is in the top five for bird diversity—this despite it being only about 3/4 the size of Montana.

Unlike most nations, Ecuador invests heavily in conservation and the promotion of ecotourism. The country has eleven national parks, nine ecological reserves, five biological reserves, and ten wildlife refuges, protecting an area over three times larger than Yellowstone National Park. Focusing primarily on birds, we'll take a virtual natural history tour of regions in Ecuador known for their exceptional diversity. We'll see some of the country's 130 species of hummingbirds and 140 species of tanagers, as well as trogons, barbets, and toucanettes. Even the world's smallest monkey will make an appearance.

John Winnie Jr. is an Associate Teaching Professor in the Ecology Department at Montana State University in Bozeman, where he teaches a variety of subjects, from introductory biology to upper-division ecology and physiology, including Tropical Ecology and intensive field biology classes. John's conservation work and research have taken him from the remote Wakhan Corridor in Afghanistan (working for USAID and the Wildlife Conservation Society) to Tajikistan (working for Panthera) to the wilds of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. He is also an award-winning wildlife and landscape photographer whose work has been published in books, calendars, posters, postcards, and magazines including in *Smithsonian, Canadian Geographic, National Wildlife, Discover, Montana Outdoors, Wildlife Conservation,* and *American Birds*. Nature photography allows John to merge his two passions—photography and gaining understanding of the natural world—and to share these passions with you.

The in-person meeting will be held Monday, October 10th at Hope Lutheran Church, 2152 W. Graf (off S. 19th). A social begins at 6:30 pm; the program begins at 7:00 pm. Attendees are encouraged to bring their own reusable cups.

Photo by John Winnie Jr.

For virtual attendance, please register for the October 10th 2022 program meeting at https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7494134241761740812. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

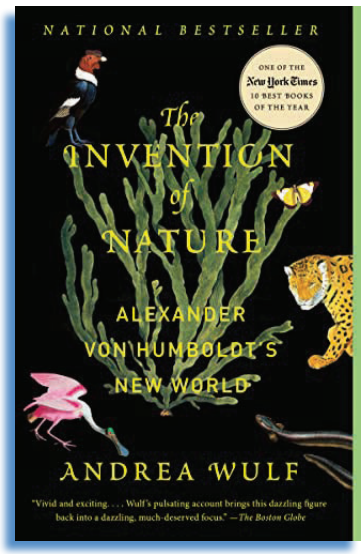
Attendees—whether in person or virtual—are encouraged to share their bird sightings at this and every monthly program. Share the program on social media using the hashtags #sasbirds #sacaaudubon #ecuador.

SAS monthly 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.

SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY BOOK CLUB NEWS

Our next book club meeting will be held **October 19th** at **Hope Lutheran Church** from **6:30 to 7:45 pm**. We hope you can join us in person or virtually for a discussion of *The Invention of Nature: Alexander von Humboldt's New World* by Andrea Wulf (2015).

Colin Thubron, in his *The New York Times* book review, wrote: "Alexander von Humboldt was the pre-eminent scientist of his time …" All over the Americas there are towns, rivers, and mountain ranges named for him, as well as 300 plants and 100 animals. "There is a Humboldt glacier, a Humboldt asteroid, a Humboldt hog nosed skunk." Darwin called him "the greatest scientific traveler who ever lived."



Despite these accolades, he is not well known today.

This biography focuses mainly on Humboldt's nine-month, 1,300 mile journey through South America in 1799. He later wrote a 34-volume account of his findings. Humboldt, Wulf writes, "…was the first to explain the fundamental function of the forest for the ecosystem and climate: the trees' ability to store water and to enrich the atmosphere with moisture, their protection of the soil, and their cooling effect. He was alert to the changes man had already made such as the falling level of a lake caused by irrigation and the felling of trees."

His trip lasted five years as he traveled through parts of Central and North America, where he "hobnobbed with a delighted Thomas Jefferson." In his later life, he invented isotherms and "inaugurated a chain of stations across the globe to measure geomagnetism."

Book Awards:

Winner of *The Los Angeles Times*' Book Prize 2016 (Science and Technology) and winner of the *New York Times*' Ten Best Books of 2015.

If you would like to be included in monthly email reminders or to attend the meeting virtually, please email Elisabeth Swanson at elsswa@gmail.com or call her at (406) 570-8325. For other questions, you can \email our other leader, Hilary Johnson, at ralphhilary@gmail.com, or call her at (406) 599-1446.

SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

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SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY

INDRELAND AUDUBON WETLAND PRESERVE UPDATE: OCT. 2022

Progress in Action!

Nick Howard completed installation of the concrete footings for the IAWP pavilion as part of his Eagle Scout project. This effort is greatly appreciated; it turned out to be more difficult than initially expected. After beginning with a two-person hand-held gas auger, he was unsuccessful in digging holes. He next moved on to a tow-behind auger, which alsfo proved ineffective. Finally, he rented a skid steer with an auger, which broke down after the first hole. Workers from Dick Anderson Construction allowed him and his dad to use one of their skid steers and the holes were drilled and concrete footers poured. Thank you to Nick, his dad and Dick Anderson Construction! *Photo courtesy of Frank Marchak.*

A BIG THANK YOU to Kevin Cox, John Edwards, Travis Kidd, Frank Marchak, Lynn Mugaas, and Loreene Reid, who helped with construction of a storage shed for IAWP tools and equipment. *Photo of Kevin Cox by Loreene Reid.*

IAWP BUSY BEAVERS UPDATE

By Heather Priest

Busy Beavers and other community members gathered on Saturday, September 10th at 14 different sites within the Lower Gallatin Watershed, including the Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve (IAWP), to clean up our local wetlands and waterways. During **Gallatin Watershed Council's Annual River Cleanup**, over 150 volunteers collected 2,138 pounds of trash. Busy Beavers stepped in to be team leaders for various sites. Watershed-wide cleanups such as these will continue twice a year, and Busy Beavers will continue to clean the IAWP on a more frequent basis. The weirdest thing found this year was a vintage Moon Boot covered in moss.

An IAWP Busy Beaver removes a piece of sheet metal from the preserve on Saturday, September 10th. Photo by Oakley Strausser.

Successful efforts such as this cleanup were celebrated at the IAWP Busy Beavers appreciation party, where volunteers were presented with awards and learned about results from the season's data collections and overall project updates. Groundwater monitoring, avian point counts, and tree watering opportunities will continue through the end of October.

SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY BLUEBIRD TRAIL HISTORY

This is the first installment in a series by Lou Ann Harris on the rich history of the Sacajawea Audubon Society Bluebird Trail Project.

The **Sacajawea Audubon Society (SAS) Bluebird Trail Project** was started by member Louis Moos in early 1969. While we don't know the exact reason behind the idea of the bluebird trail, we can assume that SAS members had noticed a decrease in bluebird numbers around the Gallatin Valley by the 1960s. Because bluebirds are cavity nesters, they will readily adapt to using nest boxes. In this way humans can help offset the loss of natural cavities like those found in tree snags.

The first mention of a bluebird trail was at the Oct. 7, 1968, Sacajawea Audubon Society (SAS) monthly meeting at the Darigold Building in Bozeman, MT. Installation of one hundred bluebird boxes was discussed as a possible project.

At the Dec. 28, 1968, meeting, it was reported by George Gable that he had secured a truckload of scrap lumber for the construction of birdhouses. It was decided that the February meeting would be held at the home of Cliff Davis, and would be a work program assembling the birdhouses. Mr. Gable would have the pieces all cut to proper size before the meeting.

At the Feb. 3, 1969, meeting, SAS President Cliff Davis suggested Trail Creek Road as a fine place to put up the bluebird houses that SAS was to build. The meeting was adjourned to begin the Bluebird Building Project. The houses were pre-cut by George Gable and the pieces fit perfectly. The holes were drilled and the covers fixed for easy removal for checking the nest and banding the baby birds. There were 20 carpenters in attendance.

Two-quart milk containers were colored and painted by part of the group for use as experimental houses. Over 60 houses were constructed. The house construction was finished on March 7th and the date of March 15th was set for installation.

The Bluebird Housing Project Report—1969

(excerpt from a report by Louis M. Moos)

Photo by Lou Ann Harris

SAS erected 50 birdhouses for Mountain bluebirds during the spring of 1969. The wooden boxes were made to recommended bluebird specifications. The houses were constructed by SAS members during the winter. The material for the houses was secured as scrap lumber from the sawmill at Belgrade. Forty boxes were erected on March 15th in the Trail Creek area southeast of Bozeman. The general area in which the birdhouses were placed is 1/2 mile south of the 16-mile sign on the Trail Creek Road, northward to 1/2 mile south of the old coke ovens. All but one of the boxes were on the northeast side of the road.

Louis Moos was a biologist with the U.S. Soil Conservation Service for many years. He was a bird enthusiast and bander who banded thousands of gulls in the Freezeout Lake area in the 1950s to the 1970s, raptors in the Gallatin Valley, and cavity nesting birds from the 1960s until his death in 1990. Photo: Louis Moos and Ranie Fogelsong circa 1980.

There was a lot of snow on the ground and it was very difficult to reach the site where the houses were to be erected. Some of the snow was still 4 feet deep. A few people used snowshoes, but most of the members waddled through the snow to reach the sites for the houses. Several Boy Scouts assisted with the job.

Nine boxes made of plastic milk cartons were erected in this same area. The group left town at 1 pm and were back at 5:30 pm.

On April 23rd, ten boxes were placed at the U.S. Fishery Research Center east of Bozeman. On May 4th one box was put up near the oiled road at the north end of Hyalite Canyon. Two plastic cartons were erected north of Belgrade along the gravel road and three in the fishing access near the Gallatin River bridge along the oiled road leading to Manhattan. Two Prestone cans and two plastic cartons were erected south of Sunset Hills Cemetery east of Bozeman.

First observations of the nests were made on May 22nd by Mae Gable and Mr. & Mrs. Cliff Davis.

In general, use by bluebirds was very limited. Only two of the 50 boxes were used by bluebirds. Eight were used by House Wrens, eight by Tree Swallows, and one by a Mountain Chickadees.

None of the plastic cartons were used. One Prestone can placed near the cemetery was used by Tree Swallows. Only one box was used more than once—a bluebird in which the first nesting failed, and the second nesting was successful.

Some of the houses will be moved this fall to new locations. Some need repair and the project will be continued another year.

To be continued in a future newsletter...

"KNOCK OUT BURDOCK" 2022

Another Successful Campaign!

By Paulette Epple

August 2022 was a busy month as 38 determined volunteers cut and removed over 4,400 pounds of burdock from our trails, parks, and neighborhoods. WOW! That is a lot of burdock plants now safely buried in our landfill; plants that won't be entangling and killing birds and bats. Equally impressive is the number of seeds (6,000–15,000 seeds per large plant) removed from the environment as a result of this year's efforts. Burdock is only able to reproduce by seed, so this is how we prevent its spread and protect our wildlife habitat.

Our burdock-cutting work parties this year were held at the Drinking Horse Mountain Trailhead, the Gallagator Trail and the Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve. Our reach is extending far beyond those few locations. During August, volunteers adopted patches all over the city and county and worked to eradicate burdock. Members removed burdock from Bogert Park, Bozeman Ponds, the BMX park, Triple Tree Trail, Missouri Headwaters State Park, and Four Corners Fishing Access Site. Beyond that other members cut burdock from alleys, trails, roadsides, and parking lots all over Bozeman: behind Longfellow School, behind Costco, along Baxter Lane, along Kagy, along South Church, along Tschache Lane, and near Annie School—just to name a few locations. Incredibly NO dead birds were found in the burdock this year…a first!

A big haul on the Gallagator Trail thanks to (left to right) Leo Freeman, Jennifer Magic, Peggy Kimmet and Evette Allison. Photo by Paulette Epple.

Proud "Burdock Busters" and their gigantic pile on the Gallagator Trail. (Left to right): Jennifer Madgic, Jennifer Abbott, Bill Klenn, and Vicki Saab. Photo by Paulette Epple.

We patted ourselves on the back as we searched for and found very few burdock plants where we have concentrated our efforts in past years: Glen Lake Rotary Park, Story Mill Park, Sourdough Nature Trail, Sypes Canyon, Story Hills, and the M Trail.

Sacajawea Audubon Society's "Knock Out Burdock" initiative is proving successful due to the hard work of our dedicated volunteers. **THANKS to each and every one of you:**

Jennifer Abbott, Evette Allison, John Ansley of the Gallatin Co. Weed District, Meredith Bartley, Susan Bilo, Gina Carolan, Lass Dudley, John Edwards, Andy Epple, Paulette Epple, Carla Grier, David Grier, Leo Freeman, Pamela Hainsworth, Carl Hellyer, Robin Hellyer, Deborah Hines, Peggy Kimmet, Ron Kimmet, Bill Klenn, Anthony Licata, City Commissioner Jennifer Madgic, Adam Makhluf, Frank Marchak, Ashley Martens, Betty Martyn, Woody Martyn, Doug Mavor, Sunny Mavor, Jean McInnes, Lynn Mugaas, Peggy Osborne, John Parker, Anne Ready, Vicki Saab, Kathy Stamm, Becky Ward, and Janet Winnie.

And thanks to all the others who are working independently to stop the spread of burdock. **THE BIRDS AND OTHER WILDLIFE THANK YOU!**

Bridger Raptor Count Update

By Chris Nixon

At the time of this writing on September 15th, at least one or more of all the raptor species that are typically observed during the Bridger Raptor Count have been seen this season except for two: Rough-legged Hawk and Merlin. You can follow along to see what has been observed by going to www.sacajaweaaudubon.org. The daily and seasonal totals are on the right side of the homepage.

This is the 31st year of the official count of migrating raptors at this site, and the longest running count of migrating raptors in the western United States. The count will be going on daily, weather and fire season permitting, through October 31st. And—of course—you are always invited to hike up and join the hawk watchers at the observation platform (the helicopter pad at the top of Bridger Ridge). Remember to dress accordingly, bring multiple layers of clothing for unpredictable weather conditions, and plenty of water and snacks for yourself and friends. I'm sure the hawk watchers wouldn't mind a few cookies ;-). You, too, can be part of and contribute to this important raptor study.

Merlin soaring over the Bridgers. Photo by Kyle Dudgeon.

The annual **Bridger Raptor Festival** is coming up this **October 8th and 9th** from **10 am to 3 pm,** and we sincerely hope to see you there! As always, Sacajawea Audubon Society is an integral part of this festival with our Great Migration Game, Binocular Blitz, Nifty Nest Box building, and Childrens' Passport.

We are reaching out asking our members to volunteer at the festival. Several of you have already signed up—**THANK YOU!** Many of you have participated in the past, which we hope you will do again! Volunteer shifts are 9:30 am to 12:30 pm and 12:00 pm to 3:00 pm on both Saturday October 8th and Sunday October 9th.

Available volunteer opportunities:

- Assisting participants with building Nifty Nest Boxes
- Serving as a greeter to help direct participants to the activities
- Stamping Children's Activity Passports and handing out prizes
- Assisting in the Binocular Blitz game

We also need a few hiker-birders—raptor ID skills appreciated—to help the Migration Count Station at the top of Bridger Ridge, between 11:30 am and 3 pm, on both Saturday and Sunday. We have approximately 70 time slots to fill; please consider volunteering for a shift or two and don't hesitate to reach out with any questions! Drinks and snacks will be available for volunteers.

Volunteer Sign-up Link: bit.ly/BRaptorFest

Event Schedule and Information: https://bridgerraptorfest.com/current-events

Whether or not you feel comfortable volunteering, we hope to see you there for this fun annual event!

GARDEN BUZZ: FALL IS FOR PLANTING!

By Adele Pittendrigh

Autumn is a great time to plant, especially if you are putting in plants that require less water. The City of Bozeman has a long list of drought tolerant plants and offers a rebate to City residents who buy them for their yards or remove turf to plant foliage that does well with less water.

The City of Bozeman implemented permanent outdoor watering restrictions this spring. The City website says Bozeman averages 16" of precipitation annually and is considered semi-arid and drought prone. 80% of its water comes from snow run-off in the Gallatin Range and the other 20% from a developed spring at the headwaters of Lyman Creek in the Bridger Range. The City says that without conservation of water, Bozeman could be facing water shortages within 15 years.

Bozeman offers a rebate program for turf removal, upgrading sprinkler systems, and using drought tolerant plants. For more information, go online to **Bozeman Landscape Rebates**. Eligibility is based on whether you use City water on your landscaping.

Although only people who reside in the City are eligible for the rebates, those who aren't eligible can still benefit from planting drought tolerant plants and replacing turf. The City plant list makes it easy to find native and other water-smart plants. Best of all, replacing turf and planting native plants that require less water is a good way to conserve water and attract birds and pollinators to your garden.

***Correction**: The author of September's "Garden Buzz" article was misidentified. Our thanks to Adele Pittendrigh for writing this column!*

These water-wise plants—catmint, yarrow, fleabane, dotted gayfeather, sedum, and pineleaf penstemon—can transform your yard, making it bird friendly, pollinator friendly, and beautiful! Photo by Paulette Epple.

SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP 2022

Individual or Family | January–December 2022

❒ **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 is Needed

Name _____

Address _____
(Street or PO Box)

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

Phone (_____) _____

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*We do not share your information except with National Audubon Society, 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!

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

Trumpeter Swan
photo by Don Profota.

October Field Trip
ENNIS LAKE WATERFOWL

Saturday, October 15th, 2022

Leader: Woody Martyn
(406) 224-1476 | woodymartyn@hotmail.com

Meet at 7:45 am at the Museum of the Rockies; Carpool and depart at 8:00 am

This should be near the peak time for migrating waterfowl, grebes, and loons. Ennis Lake is one of the premiere staging areas for migrating waterfowl in southwestern Montana. Thousands of ducks can be spread across the lake on any given day. As is typical with high concentrations of birds, there should be a wide variety of waterfowl and the possibility of a rarity being found. Bring a lunch and other essentials as we'll be out until mid to late afternoon. Also, remember to bring plenty of warm clothes as it could be cold and windy. Limit 12 people or 5 vehicles. For more information and to make reservations, contact Woody at the above e-mail address. Previous COVID vaccination strongly preferred.