MARCH 2024

Sacajawea Audubon News

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

SAS Monthly Program: Monday, March 11th, Hope Lutheran Church

"The Ins and Outs of Raptor Rehab in Southwest Montana"

with Keaton Thomas, Education Director at Montana Raptor Conservation Center

Ready to step into the world of some majestic raptors? Let's take a wild ride to Montana Raptor Conservation Center and discover how MRCC staff and volunteers care for the injured raptors of Southwest Montana! Not only that, but meet 12 raptor ambassadors virtually and learn how they're trained to spread their wings and travel to schools, libraries, and other events! From the daily care of these birds, to the enrichment of their lives, you'll get a bird's-eye view of all the raptor-tastic fun!

The in-person meeting will be held Monday, March 11th at Hope Lutheran Church, 2152 West 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.

For virtual attendance, please register at https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/5635563778181951581. 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, #sacaudubon, #conservation, and #raptors.

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 Ken Sinay at programs@sacajaweaaudubon.org.

Keaton Thomas with ambassador Swainson's Hawk. Photo: MRCC.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

- ❒ **March 5:** Gallatin Valley Earth Day film *Elemental: Reimagining Wildfire* at MOR
- ❒ **March 7 & 9:** Raptor ID class
- ❒ **March 18:** Trivia night at Lockhorn Cider House
- ❒ **March 20:** SAS Book Club
- ❒ **March 22 or March 24:** Gallatin Valley Earth Day workshop—Limber Pine
- ❒ **March 28:** Gallatin Valley Earth Day program "How Trees Impact the Gallatin Watershed"
- ❒ **April 20:** Gallatin Valley Earth Day Festival at the Gallatin County Fairgrounds
- ❒ **May 13:** SAS annual meeting, potluck & board elections
- ❒ **May 31–June 2:** Wings Across the Big Sky, Helena
- ❒ **July 5,6 & 7:** Natural History Tour of Lightning Creek

A MESSAGE *from* SAS PRESIDENT, CHRIS NIXON

There may have been a lack of snowfall in the area thus far this winter, but there has been a constant blizzard of SAS-related events. If you were unable to catch some that interested you…. all is not lost! See the article on World Wetlands Day events *(page 3)* and use the link to watch the video. The February presentation by Matt Skoglund on "Starting a Bison Ranch from Scratch" was informative and what I consider a very unusual program offered by SAS. I encourage you to check out the video if you missed it: gotostage.com/channel/1c8878c1033747dba0cd82e9b5e6146f/recording/c3d669ff63af45a097ac3deb6a491994/watch

At this month's membership program you will have the chance to catch up on all that is happening locally with the Montana Raptor Conservation Center. And be sure to read about SAS member Robin Wolcott *(page 10)* and her role with eBird as the reviewer for Madison and Gallatin County eBird reports, among all the other important roles she assumes with SAS.

If you are not yet using eBird to submit your bird sightings, I strongly encourage you to do so. It is the largest citizen science project and is greatly helping advance knowledge of bird populations and their movements. I was hesitant to start an eBird account as I don't consider myself a "techy type." I finally gave in and am now addicted. Cornell Lab Bird Academy offers a free course on "eBird Essentials" (academy.allaboutbirds.org/product/ebird-essentials/) and there are good tutorials on YouTube. I just learned how to access photos uploaded to eBird by specific individuals. I have only touched the tip of the iceberg on all eBird has to offer.

Please check out eBird, create an account, and get ready for the next two months of our SAS newsletter, where you'll find out about our spring and summer bird walks and field trips. Sign up for our field trips, meet new friends with whom you share a common passion, and put your new eBird account to great use!

SAVE THE DATE: May 13, 2024, is our **Annual Sweet & Savory Potluck and Membership Meeting**. You won't want to miss out on the great food, the final monthly program of the spring, and our board elections. Consider what you would like to do with SAS and let us know. Please reach out if there are current SAS programs you wish to become involved with, or if there is a program/project you think SAS should be doing. SAS is *your* organization. It is growing! Help make SAS what you wish it to become! You have an open door to SAS in 2024!

SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Officers

President	Chris Nixon pres@sacajaweaaudubon.org
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Activity Leaders

Education Chair	**Looking for Volunteer** education@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Conservation Co-Chairs	Paulette Epple conservation@sacajaweaaudubon.org Lou Ann Harris louann@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Field Trips, Bird Sightings	John Parker birdsightings@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Hospitality	**Looking for Volunteer** hospitality@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Membership	Loreene Reid membership@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Newsletter	Terri Narotzky newsletter@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Programs	Ken Sinay programs@sacajaweaaudubon.org
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IAWP/Busy Beavers Stewardship Coordinator	Emma Narotzky wetlands@sacajaweaaudubon.org
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SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY

INDRELAND AUDUBON WETLAND PRESERVE UPDATE: MARCH 2024

THE WETLAND PRESERVATION PROJECT (WPP) was initiated to accomplish Sacajawea Audubon Society's mission to protect and restore increasingly rare wetland and riparian habitats in our region, and to provide educational opportunities and enjoyment for generations to come. The IAWP is the first of our wetland protection projects.

Many Efforts Advance Watershed Protections in Gallatin Valley

On February 2nd, **over 200 people** came to the Museum of the Rockies to celebrate **World Wetlands Day 2024**. The program was opened by the entertaining barbershop quartet, Colter's Run, followed by *National Geographic* Explorer Ronan Donovan sharing some of his stunning photographs of wetland species around the world and a video on beaver relocation and the benefits of beavers' engineering to riparian restoration. County Commissioner Jennifer Boyer moderated a panel discussion on wetland conservation, management, and restoration. Panelists Mayor Terry Cunningham (City of Bozeman), Torrey Ritter (Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks), and Erik Anderson (U.S. Forest Service/Custer Gallatin Forest) brought their expertise and experience to the table and answered questions from the audience.

All enjoyed the photos and stories shared by Ronan Donovan at the Museum of the Rockies on WWD 2024. Photo: Terri Narotzky.

Before the program, visitors met representatives from our wetland partners and learned about their projects, including:

- **Montana Freshwater Partners**' work on wetland and stream mitigation, wetland restoration projects, and collaboration on beaver conflict resolution, education, and action.
- **Gallatin Valley Land Trust's** safeguarding of the watershed through land conservation and sustainable trail design.
- **Trout Unlimited's** upcoming restoration of the Mandeville Creek floodplain including installing beaver dam analogues and planting woody vegetation.
- **Gallatin Local Water Quality District's** water monitoring and mapping efforts.
- **Gallatin Watershed Council's** restoration and enhancement of the watershed, including current projects to restore floodplain connectivity in the East Gallatin and collaboration with Trout Unlimited to restore vegetation.
- **Montana Outdoor Science School's** classes and camps that teach youth and adults about wetland ecosystems.

Attendees received information on even more local wetland and riparian work from Montana Watershed Coordination Council; Confluence Consulting; Montana Land Reliance; Gallatin River Task Force; Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks; the U.S. Forest Service; Gallatin County; and the City of Bozeman.

You can watch a recording of the event at: www.gotostage.com/channel/1c8878c1033747dba0cd82e9b5e6146f/recording/2e1574519bd44e7bb9c902d88d7aaa61/watch.

THANK YOU to our panelists, wetland partners, and event sponsors: Confluence Consulting, Gallatin Valley Land Trust, Montana Freshwater Partners, and Gallatin Local Water Quality District. We also thank Terri Narotzky for providing hors d'oeuvres, and Emma Narotzky and Ronan Donovan for coordinating the event.

Clockwise from bottom left: MOSS summer camp participants; Trout Unlimited's proposed restoration of Lower Mandeville Creek; Beaver Conflict workshop; Gallatin Watershed Council site that will restore wetlands adjacent to the East Gallatin River; Two U.S. Forest Service examples of groundwater-dependent ecosystems; Montana Freshwater Partners' Teller Wildlife Refuge wetland restoration project.

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WORLD WETLAND DAY TOUR OF THE IAWP

On February 3rd, SAS members and new visitors gathered at the IAWP pavilion for a campfire and hot cocoa before SAS board member Frank Marchak led a tour of the wetland in winter and shared information about the restoration plan, beaver activity, and how our wetland contributes to water quality and biodiversity in our area.

Tour of the IAWP on World Wetland Day 2024. Photo: Terri Narotzky.

WETLAND NATURALIST CLASS OFFERED

This wetland-focused naturalist class will cover various aspects of wetland ecology and environmental science, tailored to Montana's unique landscapes and ecological characteristics. The course will include ten classes and three full-day field trips. Each class will be structured to last 2–3 hours, combining theoretical knowledge with practical, hands-on activities or field observations. Each topic will have a subject matter expert drawn from Montana State University, Society of Wetland Scientists, and local specialists.

The approach is a curriculum that focuses on the natural science aspects of wetlands, with a concentration on the understanding of wetland ecology, hydrology, soils, plants, and wildlife. It covers topics that can provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex ecological interactions that occur within these ecosystems, with an emphasis on scientific observation, analysis, and interpretation, and integrates field trips and hands-on activities.

A study in progress at the Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve. Photo: Loreene Reid.

There will be 15 spots for this 40-hour course that will run from **June 24 through July 21, 2024**.

Cost: $175 for Busy Beavers; $275 for SAS members; $375 for non-members.

For more information and to register: https://secure.lglforms.com/form_engine/s/jfzPnCTj-YIvvtxw0hkllA

SAVE THE DATE!

Ben Goldfarb

On January 30, 2025 (the Thursday before World Wetlands Day 2025), SAS is partnering with Gallatin Valley Earth Day for an event at The Emerson with **Ben Goldfarb**, the author of *Eager: The Surprising Secret Life of Beavers and Why They Matter (2019)* and *Crossings: How Road Ecology is Shaping the Future of Our Planet (2023)*

BIRD NOTES

by John Parker

Late winter has been full of large and small surprises from around the Gallatin Valley and beyond. Most of these birds were seen after the severe cold spell mid-January, so they somehow found a way to survive -40° F temperatures. You have to be impressed by these birds' fortitude and adaptability.

Greater Yellowlegs. Photo: Andrew Guttenberg.

The most unlikely bird of the period, and a Montana first for January or February, was a **Greater Yellowlegs** spotted by Andrew Guttenberg on January 28th. Andrew saw this yellowlegs on the East Gallatin River where it passes under Hamilton Road east of Belgrade.

On February 3rd, Dave Benes saw three **Sandhill Cranes** in a field off of Cottonwood Road near Gallatin Gateway. Last month I mentioned the three Sandhill Cranes that were taking advantage of the light snow cover and exposed grain fields west of Bozeman during the middle of December. These two locations are only about seven miles apart, making you wonder if they could be the same birds. Over the years, there have been a fair number of Sandhill Cranes seen in this area during the winter. Most tend to be in late February, which points to those past sightings being early arrivals rather than over-wintering birds.

Turkey Vultures are even more unusual winter visitors to this area than Sandhill Cranes, with only a handful of winter records for southwestern Montana. Max Reynold's January 25th sighting of three Turkey Vultures on a carcass by Norris Road was even more noteworthy in that there were multiple birds.

During an evening walk up Sourdough Canyon on January 23rd, Kathryn Hiestand and Neal Miller heard a **Northern Pygmy Owl**. Then, on February 1st, Vic Fesolowitz and Kim Obbink heard another Northern Pygmy Owl just a couple drainages away near the mouth of Limestone Canyon.

On January 8th, Ashley Martens watched as a **Pacific Wren** flitted in and out of the snow and grass mounds on the side of the creek near Riley's Bridge along the Sourdough Nature Trail in south Bozeman. How many more of these small and secretive birds could there be hidden along the miles of local stream courses that aren't accessible?

A trio of uncommon winter sparrows have found refuge in Gallatin Valley this year. Lou Ann Harris has had an adult **White-crowned Sparrow** around her house northwest of Bozeman most of this winter. Last winter, Lou Ann had a long-staying immature White-crowned Sparrow at her house, which she observed molting into adult plumage later in the winter. Coincidentally, in both years, she first noticed these White-crowned Sparrows on December 1st. From mid-December until mid-February, John and Tamie Parker have had both a **White-throated Sparrow** and a **Fox Sparrow** frequenting their yard south of Bozeman. If these sparrows linger in the area into March, we might be treated to their first spring songs.

From December 23rd to January 5th, Jim and Jeanne Waldo had a **Yellow-rumped Warbler** occasionally visiting their suet feeder in Willow Creek. Though Yellow-rumped Warblers are considered semi-hardy, there are only a handful of mid-winter records for the species in southwestern Montana.

Gallatin Valley Earth Day 2024 Events Calendar

TUESDAY, MARCH 5TH, 7 PM

at the Museum of the Rockies, Hager Auditorium, **FREE**

How Can We Better Protect our Community from Future Wildfires?

Presented by Gallatin Valley Earth Day

A film screening of *"Elemental: Reimagine Wildfire"* and panel discussion with Dave McWethy (MSU), Jessica Haas (USFS), and Jessica Braun (Firebreak Management)

Large wildfires and the negative impacts are increasing as the climate warms. To learn how we can better protect our community from the worst impacts, join us to watch the critically-acclaimed, award-winning documentary *"Elemental: Reimagine Wildfire,"* followed by a panel discussion with local experts about what steps we can take to be more prepared.

Dr. David McWethy is an Associate Professor at Montana State University. He received his Ph.D. in Ecology and Environmental Studies from Montana State University in 2007 (A. Hansen, advisor), an M.S. in Land Resources from the University of Wisconsin–Madison in 1998 (D. Waller, advisor), and a B.A. in Political Science and African Studies from St. Lawrence University in 1992.

McWethy's research focuses on how past and present human and natural disturbances shape vegetation and influence the structure and function of ecosystems, and it is inherently interdisciplinary, spanning the disciplines of geography, biogeography, and paleoecology. Specifically, his research examines the natural resiliency of different ecosystems to natural and anthropogenic fire and how climate change and land-use will alter fire and vegetation in the future.

Jessica Haas has worked with the U.S. Forest Service as a fire ecologist for 15 years. Her career focuses on applied research and delivery of wildfire risk assessments, natural hazard modeling, and community planning for wildfires. Her work has been used nationally to support wildfire mitigation by major land managers such as the U.S. Forest Service, the BLM, Department of Defense, the Nature Conservancy, and various state forestry departments throughout the United States. She holds a Master of Science in Resource Conservation from the University of Montana, and she resides in Livingston, Montana.

Jessica Braun is a former Forest Service Wildland Firefighter who has put her life on the line to protect others. With years of experience in fighting fire, she has dedicated herself to keeping people and their property safe from wildfires. Jessica has worked as an EMT on multiple ambulances and Ski Patrolled with Big Sky Resort. Currently, she operates Firebreak Management, a company that aims to save wildland firefighters, homeowners, and their properties.

THURSDAY, MARCH 28TH, 6:30 PM

at the Bozeman Public Library, Community Room, **FREE**

Trout, Drought, and Floods: How Trees Impact the Gallatin Watershed with Lilly McLane, Gallatin Watershed Council

Presented by Gallatin Valley Earth Day, live-streamed and in person

How can we manage our stream sides to ensure a sustainable future in the Gallatin Valley? Join Lilly McLane from the Gallatin Watershed Council to learn how trees along our rivers and streams help prevent floods, buffer drought, provide critical habitat, and reduce pollution.

Lilly McLane is the Restoration Director for the Gallatin Watershed Council and earned her Master's degree in Bioresource Engineering from Montana State University. She believes that our efforts to protect natural resources in the Gallatin Valley are strongest together.

REGISTER for the live stream at https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_kfKtRGt-RTGpbY684UmXKw#/registration. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

Upper East Gallatin River channel.

SPONSOR A KESTREL NEST BOX IN 2024!

American Kestrel. Photo: David Zieg/ Audubon Photography Awards.

Here is your chance to sponsor a kestrel nest box and learn more about our smallest falcon. Sponsorship costs $50 per year per box and you can sponsor as many boxes as you like. Once you have signed up, we will assign you a box number. As the kestrel nesting season begins, you will periodically receive emailed updates, photos, and stories from the field. At the end of the season, we will send out a complete list of all the boxes with information on nesting activity, hatching, and nestling success.

Female American Kestrel delivering grasshoppers to chicks. Photo: Steve Jorgenson.

Newly hatched kestrel chicks. Photo: Lou Ann Harris.

A kestrel box sponsorship makes a great gift! Or you can sponsor a box in memory of a loved one. Proceeds will fund the expenses of maintaining the 70+ nest boxes in the Kestrel Nest Box Program, as well as continuing Sacajawea Audubon Society's other conservation projects.

You can sign up for a kestrel box sponsorship by donating online at: https://sacajaweaaudubon.org/sponsor-a-kestrel-nest-box.

Or you can fill out the form below and send a check to: **Sacajawea Audubon Society, PO Box 1711, Bozeman, MT 59771.** Please write "Kestrel Box Program" on the check. Be sure to include your email so we can send you reports!

I'd like to sponsor a Kestrel Nest Box in 2024!

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

EMAIL _____

OF SPONSORED BOXES _____ x $50/BOX = $_____ ENCLOSED

IS THIS SPONSORSHIP A MEMORIAL? ____ IN WHOSE NAME(S)? _____

Complete the form and send with your check to: Sacajawea Audubon Society, PO Box 1711, Bozeman, MT 59771. Please write "Kestrel Box Program" on the check. Be sure to include your email so we can send you reports!

Sacajawea Audubon Society 2024 Winter Classes

GOOD COMPANY: EXPLORING TREES & FORESTS

with Gallatin Valley Earth Day and SAS

In each class we'll examine the ecology and lifestyle of these trees, learn how to identify them and tell them apart from other trees, understand their edible and medicinal values, and understand their roles in ecosystems.

Limber Pine w/ Cedar Mathers-Winn:

Friday, March 22nd or Sunday, March 24th, 2–4 PM at Drinking Horse Mountain. Cost: $30/class

Riparian Forests w/ Ashley Martens

Friday, April 12th or Sunday, April 14th, 2-4 PM at Gardner Park. Cost: $30/class

To register: https://secure.lglforms.com/form_engine/s/CjCoLUqFrALR8BpXd1DzIA

Limber Pine. Photo: National Park Service.

CANADA JAYS & CLIMATE CHANGE

Sunday, March 17th, 12:30-3:30 PM at Crosscut Mountain Sports Center on snowshoes.

Rentals available for $20 for the whole day or reach out to borrow from Ashley.

Explore the ecology of this special bird and how climate change is affecting it. Learn identification, discover unique lifestyles, and engage in mindful activities for deeper connection.

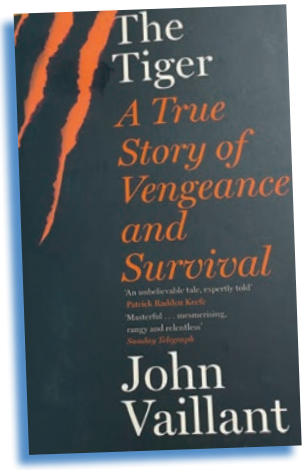
To register: https://secure.lglforms.com/form_engine/s/jTA48pNAg1ryvQ5Eh_IoAA.

For a complete course calendar and registration, visit: https://www.truenatureed.com/event-calendar

Canada Jays. Photo: Rejean Turgeon/Audubon Great Backyard Bird Count

SAS BOOK CLUB for MARCH 2024

This month the Sacajawea Audubon Society Book Club meeting will be held on **March 20th** at **Hope Lutheran Church, Room 129,** from **6:30 to 7:45 PM**. We hope you can join us in person or virtually for a discussion of *The Tiger: A True Tale of Vengeance and Survival* by John Vaillant (2010). Dessert will be provided. Please bring your own hot drink.



This non-fiction best seller has been described as a "conservation thriller." Although the volume lacks a focus on birdlife, it builds upon SAS Book Club members' immersion with the wild and the remote Primorye region of eastern Russia. The Primorye triggered our fascination as we read *Owls of the Eastern Ice* in Spring 2023. In one sense, *The Tiger* is a side trip for SAS Book Club as the main subjects are not birds. Yet the book's focus on understanding remote bioregions and the wildlife and birds present there is an excellent fit with our core themes.

A review of *The Tiger* in the *New York Times* sets the stage:

It's the late 1990s in the Primorye region, on Russia's far eastern border. An area about the size of Washington State, a "meeting place of four distinct bioregions" that include a subtropical forest and the Siberian taiga, the Primorye is home to a human population devastated by the fallout from perestroika [practice or restructuring the economic and political system]*, and a few hundred Amur tigers.*

The largest tiger subspecies, the Amur can survive in virtually any climate, think strategically, rip bears to shreds and eat almost anything. What these tigers don't do, in the Primorye, is eat people.

That is, until one very big, very smart animal breaks the Primorye's long standing people-tiger truce, acquiring a taste for humans…Enter Yuri Trush, the commander of a tiger-preservation team, who must now destroy this tiger. While Trush tries to solve the mystery of where the tiger is, Vaillant tries to solve the mystery of why the tiger went rogue. To do this, he takes the reader deep into the tiger's world, creating an intimate portrait of its inner life. (Edward Lewine, *New York Times*, October 8, 2010)

Like the elusive Blakiston's Fishing Owl—the protagonist in *Owls of the Eastern Ice*—the author writes about the difficulty of tracking a tiger that doesn't want to be found: *"This was not an animal they followed, but a contradiction, a silence that was at once incarnate and invisible."*

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.

ONLY A FEW REMAINING SPOTS OPEN!

RAPTOR IDENTIFICATION WORKSHOP & FIELD TRIP: MARCH 7TH *from* 6:30 *to* 8:30 PM *and* ALL DAY *on* MARCH 9TH

Have you ever wanted to sharpen your raptor identification skills? If so, this is the workshop for you! This program will be presented by Steve Hoffman, Founder of HawkWatch International and Coordinator of the annual Bridger Raptor Migration Project.

On Thursday evening, March 7, Steve will provide a detailed discussion of the identification and natural history of all relatively common and widespread diurnal raptor species (e.g., hawks, eagles, falcons, etc.) found in Gallatin Valley. Steve's PowerPoint-illustrated talk will include descriptions of the many plumage variations—including color morphs as well as age and sex variations—of the most common and observable species to be seen in the area. Helpful behavioral clues (i.e., manner of flight, preferred habitat, etc.) will also be incorporated. Golden and Bald eagles and the "buteo" hawks, such as Red-tailed and Rough-legged hawks will be emphasized.

This presentation will be especially valuable for "intermediate" and "advanced" birding enthusiasts, although beginners will also find this workshop quite helpful. Participants will then go into the field on Saturday, March 9th, to practice their newly-developed identification skills. The Thursday night presentation will start at 6:30 PM and conclude by 8:30 PM; it will be convened at Hope Lutheran Church, 2152 Graf Street, just off S. 19th Ave. in Bozeman.

Saturday's (March 9th) field trip will meet at the Museum of the Rockies (NE end of Parking Lot) at 8:00 AM. Be sure to dress for the weather and bring any necessary drinks or snacks for this 5-6 hour field excursion. If you have a spotting scope you wish to bring, that would be most helpful.

Top left: Dark Red-tailed Hawk (2nd-year). Right: Adult Bald Eagle. Photos: Scott Heppel.

There is a $35 fee for Sacajawea Audubon Society members (only $20 for participants under age 25), or $60 for non-members (this includes a $25 Sacajawea Audubon Society membership).

There will be a strict 20-person limit for the field trip. **Advance reservation and payment are required.** Early registration is strongly advised! For more information, or to make reservations, please email Emma Narotzky at sec@sacajaweaaudubon.org or call her at (307) 258-9954.

To register: https://secure.lglforms.com/form_engine/s/gd1V6DGzq3un4ANKrkXpYA

SAS MEMBER PROFILE—Robin Wolcott

by Lou Ann Harris

Photo: Ed Harper.

For every bird lovers' story, there is a beginning. For Robin Wolcott, a slow day of fishing with her husband Richard on the Madison River started her on the road to becoming a serious birder. Since then she has studied birds both at home and abroad, discovering rare birds in six states. The biggest find was a very rare Crescent-chestnut Warbler (a Mexican species), while birding in Arizona's Madera Canyon. It turned out to be only the sixth sighting ever in North America. Quite the feather in her birding cap.

Robin and Richard moved from Sacramento to Montana in the early 1990s. Too many people in CA and better fishing were the reasons. After making their way to Bozeman in 1997, Robin began attending monthly Sacajawea Audubon Society meetings at the Emerson, back when John Carlson and Eric Lichtwardt were involved in the chapter. Soon, Robin was leading field trips. She noted that she has led the Mission Creek trip for 20 years. The first time was during the State Audubon Bird Festival in Livingston (2004).

Photo: Richard Wolcott.

But that was just the tip of the avian iceberg for Robin. In 2009, she took over as compiler for the Ennis Christmas Bird Count. To help bolster participation, she added a dinner gathering the night before, as well as a post-count gathering at the Sportsman's. As a result, the Ennis count is always well-attended and known for seeing some rare species, such as the Barn Owl that Ed Harper found in 2011.

Robin was one of the earliest users of eBird in Montana. She remembers sending a complaint to eBird about Common Grackle being flagged as a rare bird in Bozeman. As a result, she landed the job as the eBird editor for the entire state. When she took over, there were 1,000 sightings to review. She quickly realized that she was in over her head, not knowing anything about the birds in places like Plentywood or Ekalaka. Eventually, the job of editing (now called reviewing) was divided up by counties and is now administered primarily by members of the MT Bird Records committee. Robin is still the reviewer for Madison and Gallatin counties, thus her handle: "MadGal." The job of being a regional eBird reviewer is to act upon records flagged by eBird filters (i.e. a rare or unusual sighting; large numbers of a species; early or late date; etc.). This usually includes communicating with observers and using eBird data to determine if it's a correct observation. When Robin responds to a flagged sighting, she often has to deal with birders who describe their rare bird with statements like "perched on the fence" or "soaring above the canyon." Robin says bird status and distribution are key elements to consider when a sighting is flagged. Is this the right area or the right season for this bird? A good rule of thumb is to consider the common species currently present before considering the rare bird. Another major task Robin faces as an eBird reviewer is setting and updating the filters for each species in both counties. She says she needs more "snow days" to get this accomplished.

Robin is particularly interested in helping beginning and less-experienced birders become more proficient at hearing, locating, and identifying the many exciting birds of our area. She is capably assisted in her birding and all other efforts by her personal assistant, driver, and husband—Richard.

Thank you Robin and Richard for your long service to Sacajawea Audubon Society and helping add to our knowledge of the birds that make their homes in southwest Montana.

March IAWP Trivia Night

March 18th at Lockhorn Cider House (21 S. Wallace, Bozeman)

The next Wetland Trivia Night is about Predators, with Ben Goodheart. Sign-in begins at 5:30 PM. Grab a drink, mingle with other trivia-goers, and find your seat. Wetland Trivia begins at 6:30 PM and runs approximately one hour.

Mountain lion. Photo: Bill Garden.

YELLOWSTONE'S BIRDS: *Diversity and Abundance in the World's First National Park*

Co-authored by Douglas W. Smith, retired Senior Wildlife Biologist with Yellowstone National Park, this recently released book is the first on the science and conservation of the Park's birds.

To view the recording of Doug's presentation at our January 2024 SAS meeting:

gotostage.com/channel/1c8878c1033747dba0cd82e9b5e6146f/recording/c300019666ce4ee5a3b8cc609d0db2f9/watch

Purchasing a copy through this link supports Sacajawea Audubon Society:

https://secure.lglforms.com/form_engine/s/ycBsFcuSppoOyjR7vuBXmA

SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP 2024

Individual or Family | January–December 2024

❒ **Basic Membership** **$25**

❒ **Supporting Membership** **$50**
(Supporting local conservation & education projects)

❒ **Student Membership** **$10**
(College & High School Students)

❒ **Additional Donation $**_____

❒ Bridger Raptor Study
❒ Story Mill Park Bird Feeding Station
❒ Wetland Campaign
❒ Wherever is Needed

Name _____

Address _____
(Street or PO Box)

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

Phone (_____) _____

Email _____

Sacajawea Audubon Society Newsletter is sent by email. ❒ I would like a paper newsletter mailed to me.

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!

MAR '24 newsletter

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 10th of the month preceding the month the articles will appear. Send articles electronically to newsletter@sacajaweaaudubon.org.

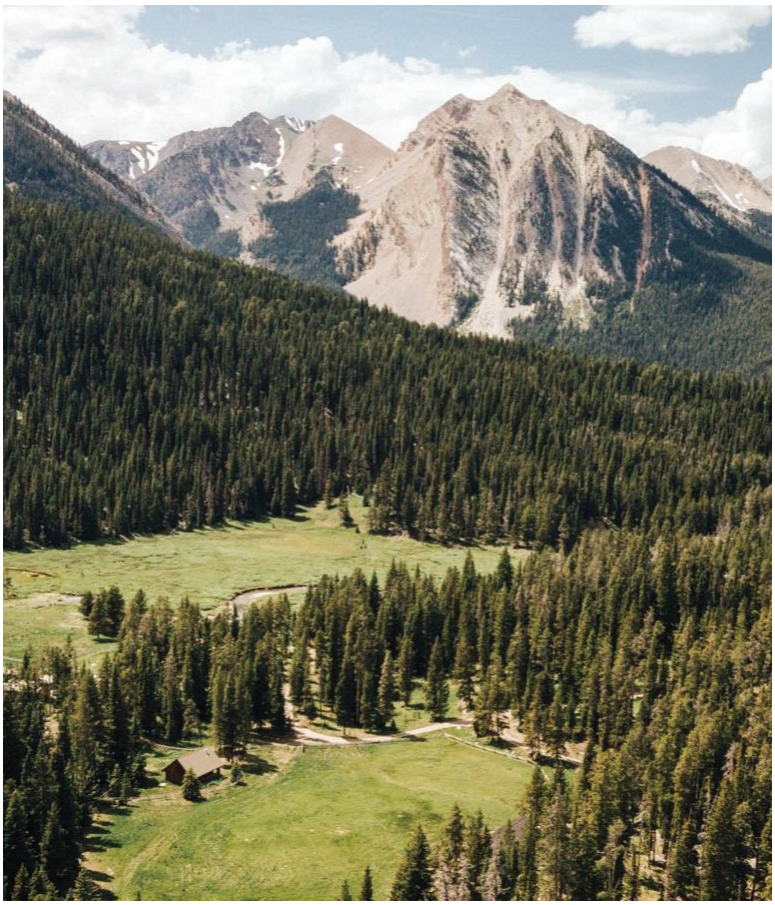
Change of Address: If you have a change of address or are away, please notify membership@sacajaweaaudubon.org. Undeliverable mailed newsletters are returned to us for an extra fee.

Find more at the **Sacajawea Audubon Society** website at sacajaweaaudubon.org

Exploring *the* **Natural History of Lightning Creek** *in the* **Taylor Fork Drainage** *of the* **Madison Range** l*ed by* **Vicki Saab** *and other expert instructors*

Friday, Saturday, & Sunday, July 5, 6, & 7, 2024

Explore the geology, avian ecology, wildflowers, pollinator ecology,and indigenous perspectives at Crosscut's Lightning Creek property and surrounding areas on the doorstep to Yellowstone National Park. The property is located in the heart of the Madison Range, surrounded by National Forest and Wilderness areas.

This remote space is only accessible to the public through a trail easement that allows public hiking through the property to reach high alpine areas. The 640-acre section of land provides a variety of wildlife habitat, including wetlands, meadows, riparian, sagebrush, and high-elevation coniferous forest. Additionally the property includes a diversity of wildflowers and valuable habitat for species of westslope cutthroat trout, elk, and grizzly bearsFor more information and to register:

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