MARCH 2025

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 & Membership Meeting: Monday, March 10th

Montana's Mysterious Bats: Guardians of the Night

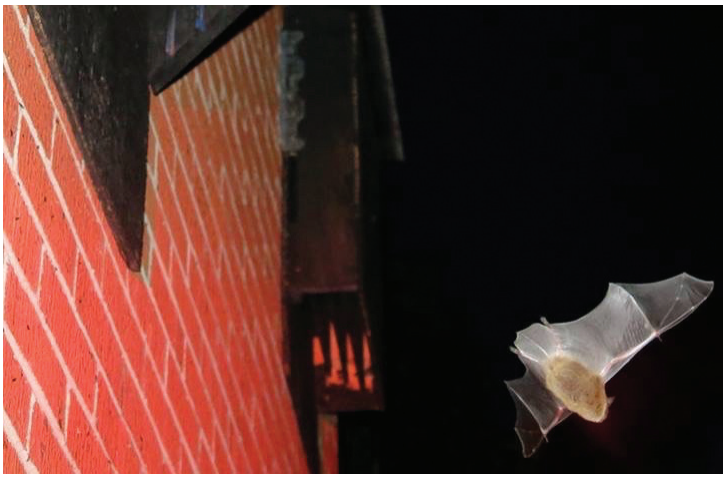
with Wildlife Biologist Matt Bell

Matt Bell leads a Bat Boat Cruise.

Join us for our March Membership Meeting as Matt Bell takes us on an exploration of the fascinating world of bats, with a special focus on the bat species found in Montana. Delve into several key topics, starting with the evolutionary journey of bats as we trace their origins and the development of their unique characteristics over millions of years. The program will highlight the remarkable adaptations that enable bats to thrive in diverse environments, including their specialized wings, nocturnal habits, and echolocation abilities. The crucial roles bats play in ecosystems, such as pest control, pollination, and seed dispersal, are ecosystem services to be discussed which emphasize their significance in maintaining ecological balance around the world and in Montana.

Matt will provide insights into the diversity of bat species globally and in Montana, and help us understand their varied habitats, behaviors, conservation status, and the unique challenges they face in our region. The threats Montana's bats encounter, including wind energy development, White-nose Syndrome, and human activities, will all be discussed. Matt will introduce us to the North American Bat Monitoring Program (NABat) and the efforts to monitor the impacts of White-nose Syndrome on bat populations. Finally, we will explore the science behind echolocation, the sophisticated biological sonar system bats use to navigate and hunt in the dark. By sharing his knowledge and experiences, Matt aims to foster a deeper appreciation for bats and encourage conservation efforts to protect these vital yet often misunderstood creatures.

Matt has a B.S. in Wildlife Biology from the University of Montana. He spent his undergraduate summers on the Montana amphibian and reptile survey crew collecting baseline data on their status and distribution in Montana. He went on to work for the USFS in Ennis and later for the Montana DNRC. Matt is currently the GIS Manager for the Montana Land Reliance, a non-profit conserving over 1.3 million acres of agricultural land and critical wildlife habitat in Montana.



Bat house emergence. Photo: Matt Bell

Matt has been an education volunteer with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks for the past 14 years, specializing in bat, amphibian, and reptile programs. Each summer, Matt leads numerous bat walks at Spring Meadow Lake State Park and for Gates of the Mountains State Park (bat boat tours). Matt also volunteers to collect bat acoustic data for the NAbat study, a nationwide effort to determine where bat populations are being affected by White-nose Syndrome.

The in-person meeting will be held Monday, March 10, 2025 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/2749095074675922014 Attendees—whether in person or virtual—are encouraged to share their bird sightings at this and every monthly program.

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.

A MESSAGE *from* SAS PRESIDENT, CHRIS NIXON

Last month we brought you the timely topic of Condor Courtship for the February/Valentine's program (see the program video at https://www.gotostage.com/channel/1c8878c1033747dba0cd82e9b5e6146f). Interestingly, an article in the *Tucson Sentinel* ("Return of the California Condor") just came across my feed. It is one of the most up-to-date and informative articles I have read on California Condor reintroduction, so I am sharing the link: https://www.tucsonsentinel.com/nationworld/report/020925_condor_comeback/return-california-condor/

This month's program topic is just as timely as last. We usually think about bats during October/Halloween. But, sadly…bats have likely flown from or gone into hibernation in Montana by then. So, we are going to turn the situation around. During our upcoming membership meeting March 10th, Matt Bell is going to inform us all about this group of warm-blooded winged creatures—**Montana's Mysterious Bats: Guardians of the Night.** This way we will all know what to look for and have a better chance of understanding the bats we may see this spring, summer and early Fall. A good place to view bats is the SAS's Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve, where Matt has been assisting the IAWP with monitoring bat activity. If you watch closely, you may even glimpse bats slipping out from under the eaves of your home. (You may prefer to acquire and install your very own bat box).

While you're out looking for bats, keep your eyes and ears open for our local owl species. If you are an owl aficionado, you may wish to take part in Montana Audubon's **Eastern and Western Screech Owl Survey Program** (*see page 9*). By the time Halloween arrives, you could be a bat and owl expert *extraordinaire*. After all, the more we learn and understand about the creatures around us, the more we want to know.

What better way to learn more about the birds of Montana than by attending the annual Montana Audubon **Wings Across the Big Sky Birding Festival**. Though SAS is not organizationally linked to Montana Audubon, we strongly support their work and programs. Check out information for this summer's birding festival on page 12, as registration starts this month. The early bird gets the worm…and in this case… the preferred field trip slots.

We only have two more SAS Newsletters this season before our summer break. If you have items or topics you would like to see covered, please contact me. We look forward to seeing you in person or virtually at the March 10th Membership meeting!

SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

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SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY

INDRELAND AUDUBON WETLAND PRESERVE

UPDATE: MARCH 2025

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.

World Wetlands Day (WWD) is celebrated on February 2nd each year to mark the anniversary of the 1971 adoption of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands as an international treaty. It is the goal of the IAWP to use World Wetland Day to highlight all the wonderful wetland and riparian projects in Montana, especially right here in southwest Montana and the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

This year celebrations kicked off with a special presentation on January 30th: *"Why Wetlands Matter: The Codes That Save Us All."* Thanks to **Ronan Donovan**—a National Geographic Fellow, wildlife biologist, and conservation photographer whose work seeks to mend the rift between modern humans and the more-than-human world—for his beaver & wetlands presentation. Also, a big thank you to the panelists—all of whom are involved with preserving, protecting, and mitigating our wetland impacts as we grow in this community and across the landscape: Gallatin County Commissioner **Jennifer Boyer** (the event moderator) and panelists **Nathan Green** (USACE), **Nick Ross** (City of Bozeman), and **Jeannette Blank** (Montana Freshwater Partners).

You can watch a video featuring our wetland partners and the WWD presentation at https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/recording/2523040981166768557

On February 2nd, nearly 70 people gathered for hot cocoa, a campfire, and a snowshoe tour of the IAWP.

Thank you to our partner exhibitors for their work protecting wetland and riparian areas:

- **Trout Unlimited:** Lower Mandeville Creek Restoration Project restoring 1.2 miles of Mandeville Creek and turning .23 miles of the Farmers Canal into a wetland.
- **World Wildlife Fund:** Numerous prairie stream restoration projects as part of their Sustainable Ranching initiative at WWF supporting ranchers in their efforts to protect and restore critical stream habitats in central and eastern Montana.
- **Confluence Consulting Inc:** Expertise in feasibility assessments, delineations, permitting, and monitoring to promote wise stewardship of our natural environment. Restoring and creating wetlands comprises a large part of what Confluence does day-to-day.
- **City of Bozeman:** The City of Bozeman is focusing efforts on wetland regulation and stormwater management.
- **Montana Freshwater Partners (MFP):** Dedicated to preserving and restoring streams and wetlands throughout the state. Their mission is innovatively met through their Give Back to the Yellowstone River Stewardship Program and their Wetland and Stream Mitigation Program.
- **Gallatin Local Water Quality District:** Working to protect, preserve, and improve groundwater and surface water quality within the District.
- **Gallatin Watershed Council:** Working on creating a wetland to treat the high-nutrient discharge from Manhattan's wastewater treatment plant that currently empties into the Gallatin River.
- **USFS Custer Gallatin National Forest Watershed Program:** Manages over 4,300 miles of streams and rivers, more than 300 high mountain lakes, and several prairie reservoirs supplying three municipal water supplies and numerous recreational activities.
- **Gallatin River Task Force:** A nonprofit based in Big Sky, Montana that focuses on the health and resilience of the Upper Gallatin Watershed.
- **National Wildlife Federation:** Spearheaded and formed the Montana Beaver Working Group, a collaborative with representatives of numerous organizations.
- **Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve Busy Beaver Volunteer Program:** People taking action for the protection, enhancement, and restoration of wetlands and watersheds. Visit https://bozemanwetlands.org/WP/2025/02/05/become-a-busy-beaver/
  Thank you to the Busy Beavers on the **World Wetland Day Committee**: Hillary-Anne Crosby, Jennifer Heiss, Frank Marchak, Emma Narotzky, Loreene Reid, Cathy Stamm, Janet Winnie, and Diane Winters.

SAS SPRING WORKSHOPS & COURSES

Bald Eagle Adult. Photo: Scott Heppel

Raptor Identification Workshop & Field Trip

March 6th from 6:30 to 8:30 PM, and March 8th all day

This program will be presented by Steve Hoffman, Founder of HawkWatch International and Coordinator of the annual Bridger Raptor Migration Project. ***For the first time ever, a virtual option is available for this class!***

The Thursday night presentation will start at 6:30 PM (and conclude by 8:30 PM) at **Hope Lutheran Church,** 2152 West Graf (off S. 19th), Bozeman. 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 Power Point-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. Helpful behavioral clues (e.g. 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.

Saturday's field trip on March 8th at 8:00 AM will meet at Museum of the Rockies (NE end of parking lot). 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 to bring, that would be most helpful. **There will be a strict 20-person limit for the field trip.**

Fee: $40 for SAS members ($20 if under age 25) and **$65 for non-members** (this includes a $25 SAS membership).

Advance registration and payment are required. Early registration is strongly advised! https://secure.lglforms.com/form_engine/s/YzMAsse6lRiQORiySz_LLw

Master Naturalist Course with Cedar Mathers-Winn

March 25 – May 17, 2025

Master Naturalists are trained in the ecology and natural history of the local landscape, including geology, plants, animals, fungi, and the connections between them. The Master Naturalist course goes beyond basic identification of organisms to explore the lives and stories that reveal how even the smallest creatures are fascinating and essential to life in our shared ecosystems.

Training includes foundational knowledge, local natural history of the large and small, traditional scientific tools and techniques, and practices utilized by Charles Darwin, Aldo Leopold, and generations of naturalists before them.

Through classroom and outdoor lessons, this 8-week course will deepen your experience and understanding of the fascinating landscape we call home. You will explore the local plants, mammals, birds, geology, and more. You will build a deeper connection with the land, meet other nature-enthusiasts, and join a state-wide community of Master Naturalists!

This course is only offered twice a year.

Register online at:
https://secure.lglforms.com/form_engine/s/R2hewdAX-6zQDhBCsbv7tg

SAS SPRING WORKSHOPS & COURSES

The Sweet Grass Lodge is set atop a hill in the midst of the 8,000-acre J Bar L Ranch north of Big Timber. Photo: Ed Harper

Sweet Grass Prairie Birding

May 16-19, 2025

Join us for a 3-day/3-night prairie birding tour based out of the Sweet Grass Lodge on the J Bar L Ranch, May 16-19, 2025. Participants will enjoy an array of daily field trips in the varied habitats of the ranch and nearby areas, with an emphasis on observing and learning about prairie birds, as well as conservation ranching. The group will engage in a citizen science effort, reporting the results of their bird surveys to the ranch staff for use in guiding land management. Ranch managers will share info about regenerative grazing and their strategic ranching practices, which are aimed at improving ecological resilience on ranch lands.

Participants will drive their own vehicles or carpool to the ranch (20 miles north of Big Timber).

- 3+ days, 3 nights: Depart Bozeman Friday, May 16. Return to Bozeman Monday, May 19
- $395/person (double occupancy only)
- Includes 3 nights lodging in the Sweet Grass Lodge and 9 catered meals
- Small group: limit of 9 participants
- Guides: Beth Madden, John Parker, Ed Harper

Register now and make a payment by contacting meg@jbarl.com. For tour information or questions, email Beth Madden at bethmadden64@gmail.com.

IAWP Wetland Master Naturalist Course

Tuesday, June 24—Saturday, August 2, 2025

This wetland-focused master naturalist course will cover various aspects of wetland ecology and environmental science, tailored to Montana's unique landscapes and ecological characteristics. The course will include 10 classes and 3 full-day field trips. Each class will be structured to last 2 hours, combining theoretical knowledge with practical, hands-on activities or field observations. Each topic will be taught by a subject matter expert drawn from local specialists, the Montana University System, and the Society of Wetland Scientists.

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 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. For more information, contact Frank Marchak at frankm@bozemanwetlands.org

- 5 consecutive weeks Tuesday/Thursday
- Classes: 5:30-7:30 PM
- 3 Full Day Saturday field trips

Certification Requirements

- Attendance for 40 class hours
- Journaling and interpretative presentation on wetland topic of choice
- 6 hours volunteer service

Register online at: https://secure.lglforms.com/form_engine/s/7JksRxA9K4GJdlbLGoQ8WQ

Studies at the Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve. Photo: Loreene Reid

SAS SPRING WILDLIFE TOURS

Freezeout Lake Snow Geese. Photo: Bob Martinka

WILD WINGS CHOTEAU

March 21–23, 2025 (F, Sa, Su)

Visit Freezout Waterfowl Management Area during the last two weeks of March for a majestic experience. Hundreds of thousands of white geese (Snow Geese and Ross's Geese) and tens of thousands of swans migrate through the area.

Wild Wings Choteau is a free community event coinciding with the peak of the migration that includes educational, conservation, and entertaining activities.

Affordable accommodations and campgrounds are available in Choteau, but they do get full. So plan in advance: https://visitchoteau.com/where-to-stay/

More information is available at www.wildwingschoteau.org or contact Sacajawea Audubon Society Board Member Ken Sinay at kensinay@gmail.com.

March Mystery IAWP Trivia Night

JOIN US on Tuesday, March 18th
5:30 PM- Social Hour | 6:30 PM Trivia begins
Lockhorn Cider House—21 S Wallace, Bozeman

Trivia will be generated by Ecologist, Conservationist, Writer and Photographer John Winnie. But the twist.... the trivia will be presented by a guest host. Even the guest host will be in for a surprise as to the trivia questions and answers. What animals and plants will we be learning about? Only John knows!

Trivia is **FREE**, followed by a raffle. Enter to win a prize basket and benefit the Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve. **Raffle tickets are $5 each or 5 for $20.**

RED ROCK LAKES NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE TOUR

May 24–26, 2025 (Sa, Su,M)—Memorial Day Weekend

Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge is located in the scenic, isolated Centennial Valley of southwestern Montana, about 60 miles west of Yellowstone National Park. This 3-day, 2-night tour will take you into a diversity of habitats, ranging from high elevation wetland, sagebrush, and prairie to the forests of the Centennial Mountains. This diverse, wetland-prairie-sagebrush-montane environment gives Red Rock Lakes its unique character. Nesting birds are abundant throughout the National Wildlife Refuge at this time of year, with 120+ species possible. This refuge is best known as the primary location for the heroic efforts to save the Trumpeter Swan from extinction in the 1930s.

In addition to the majestic swan, another 230 bird species have been identified within the refuge, including: Long-billed Curlew, Marbled Godwit, Sandhill Crane, Red-necked Grebe, Black-crowned Night-Heron, American White Pelican, Sora, White-faced Ibis, American Avocet, Willet, Wilson's Phalarope, Northern Harrier, Bald & Golden Eagles, Swainson's & Ferruginous Hawks, Prairie & Peregrine Falcons, Short-eared Owl, Sage Thrasher, Brewer's Sparrow, Western Tanager and various ducks, flycatchers, kinglets, warblers, vireos, thrushes, woodpeckers and, if we're lucky, Greater Sage-Grouse!

Guides:

Steve Hoffman, founder of HawkWatch International and owner of Merlin Birding & Nature Tours, LLC.
Cedar Mathers-Winn, naturalist, biologist, and Master Naturalist instructor based in Bozeman, MT.

More information and registration at https://secure.lglforms.com/form_engine/s/5Ug0qmBzMMlnTa39T9Mekg

Photo by Ronan Donovan

BIRD NOTES

by John Parker

As I'm writing this, we're still locked into deep winter, with abundant snowfall and sub-zero temperatures. Most of the former lingering birds are long gone, with a few exceptions, like the five **Snow Geese** Mel McCarver found along Cameron Bridge Road February 4th. It's the time of year for more simple pleasures, like the hardy birds and the occasional surprises at your feeders or the few birds to be found in the mountains.

The most unusual bird recently was a **Western Bluebird** seen by Dave Benes along Camp Creek Road, west of Bozeman. This bluebird seemed to be in association with several robins and solitaires in thickets near the creek. Western Bluebirds are always a rare sighting in southwestern Montana, typically only seen during migration.

Very unusual and unexpected leucistic Evening Grosbeak visits the Bozeman area. Photo: John Parker

It's been a slow year for **Blue Jays** in this area, though three were seen on the Bozeman and Three Forks Christmas Bird Counts in December. Two more were reported in mid-February. The first Blue Jay was seen February 10th, by Theresa Hruska in Forest Park west of Four Corners. The second Blue Jay report came from west of Glen Lake in north Bozeman, when Josiah Kiehl caught sight of one on his way to work on February 12th.

A **Rusty Blackbird** has been very cooperatively coming to the Story Mill feeding station from mid-January to mid-February, giving many birders the opportunity to see this visitor from the north. Thank you to all of the SAS chapter members that help to maintain the feeders in this community park.

We are fortunate to have the flashy **Evening Grosbeak** as a common breeder in this area, with peak numbers occurring in May and June before they disperse into the mountains for nesting, and then again, a post-breeding peak in late summer and early fall before they migrate. During winter this irruptive species is more erratically seen, as they wander widely across the coniferous forests of North America in search of abundant seed crops.

The Evening Grosbeak bill—the largest of any North American finch—is very impressive, so much so that both the species Latin and common names refer to the bill. The genus name *Coccothraustes* derives from the Greek words for "kernal" and "shatter." The species name *verpertinus* is Latin for "evening" or "evening song." The common name Evening Grosbeak comes from the French for "gros" and "bec": large beak.

This winter, Evening Grosbeak numbers have been relatively low, but we've been fortunate to have varying numbers visiting our feeders near Hyalite Canyon. On November 25th, I looked out the window into the backyard, and had a "What the...!" moment. There was what at first glance appeared to be a pure white bird in the chokecherry tree. After the initial shock of "what is that," I zeroed onto the bill, and that massive bill gave away the identification. On closer examination, the Evening Grosbeak had a swath of lemon-yellow wrapping around its neck and shoulders.

This leucistic Evening Grosbeak came to our feeders for the next three days. A few days later the same bird was seen at feeders near Leverich Canyon, then later in December it showed up briefly at some feeders in Bear Canyon. Finally, this stunning bird was spotted by Oliver Palmer up Kelly Canyon on January 7th.

Not only do Evening Grosbeaks wander on a grand scale, but as proven by this distinctive bird, they also wander on a more local level. Hopefully, someone else will get a visit from this amazing bird.

SPONSOR A KESTREL NEST BOX IN 2025!

96 Kestrel chicks plus 2 Northern Saw-whet Owls fledged from our boxes in 2024!

Here is your chance to sponsor a kestrel nest box and learn more about our smallest falcon—the American Kestrel. This is a fun way to support Sacajawea Audubon Society's Kestrel Nest Box Project as well as our other many conservation projects.

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 and 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 and summary of all the boxes, including the box sponsor's names and information on nesting activity, hatching, and nestling success.

Left: A 25 day old male getting banded. Photo: Holly Pippel

Chicks waiting for banding. Photo: Paulette Epple

A kestrel box sponsorship makes a great eco-friendly gift or you can sponsor a box in memory of a loved one. The money raised will fund the expenses of maintaining the kestrel program as well as Sacajawea Audubon Society's numerous other conservation projects: Bird-friendly Landscaping, Bird Safe Windows, support of Golden Eagle research, and conducting various bird surveys.

We hope you will consider sponsoring one or more boxes at **$50 each.** You can sign up for a kestrel box sponsorship by donating online at:

sacajaweaaudubon.org/sponsor-a-kestrel-nest-box

Or simply fill out the form below and send with a check to:

Sacajawea Audubon Society
PO Box 1711
Bozeman, MT 59771

Thank you!

I'D LIKE TO SPONSOR A KESTREL NEST BOX IN 2025!

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

EMAIL _____

 # BOXES SPONSORED _____ **x $50** **AMOUNT ENCLOSED $**_____

IS THIS SPONSORSHIP A MEMORIAL? Y / N IN MEMORY OF: _____

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR UPCOMING TOURS, CLASSES & EVENTS!

- ❒ **March 6–9:** Raptor ID Workshop & Field Trip
- ❒ **March 10:** SAS Monthly Program Meeting
- ❒ **March 11:** Gallatin Valley Earth Day presentation: Growing Food as Medicine
- ❒ **March 18:** Trivia Night, Lockhorn Cider
- ❒ **March 21–23:** Wild Wings Choteau
- ❒ **March 25–May 17:** Master Naturalist Class
- ❒ **April 9:** Gallatin Valley Earth Day presentation, "Bozeman's Wild Back Yard"
- ❒ **April 19:** Gallatin Valley Earth Day Festival
- ❒ **May 10:** World Migratory Bird Day
- ❒ **May 16–19:** Sweetgrass Prairie Birding Tour
- ❒ **May 18–June 29:** SAS Birdathon
- ❒ **May 20–June 10:** OLLI course "Wonders of Spring: Bird Migration, Song and Breeding"
- ❒ **May 24–26:** Red Rock Lakes NWR tour
- ❒ **May 30–June 1:** Wings Across the Big Sky, Missoula
- ❒ **June 24:** Wetland Master Naturalist Class begins

(Wild) Hope for Eagles!

PBS's WILD HOPE Episode 26: *Unleaded*

The PBS series WILD HOPE highlights conservation heroes and actions that inspire optimism. *Episode 26: Unleaded*, highlights the work of Sporting Lead-Free, a non-profit organization promoting the switch to lead-free ammunition and tackle. Watch the inspiring 13-minute episode, filmed in Montana, and featuring golden eagle captures and efforts to build grassroots awareness of the importance of lead-free alternatives for hunting and fishing.

https://www.wildhope.tv/episode/unleaded/

ATTENTION ALL CITIZEN SCIENTISTS: SCREECH-OWL SURVEYS ARE BACK!

Western Screech Owl. Photo: U.S.D.O.I., Bureau of Reclamation

March 1st marks the start of Montana Audubon's second-annual **citizen science survey** targeting Western and Eastern Screech-Owls. They are looking for dedicated volunteers anywhere in Montana to collect much needed data on these Potential Species of Concern.

Interested in participating?

Email Gwynne at gwynne@mtaudubon.org or visit https://mtaudubon.org/2025-screech-owl-surveys-begin-march-1/

Sponsor a Bluebird Nest Box in 2025!
sacajaweaaudubon.org/sponsor-a-bluebird-box-in-2025/

Bozeman Fish Technology Center Steps Up to Save Birds!

By Paulette Epple

If you stop by the Bozeman Fish Technology Center while birding or hiking on the Drinking Horse Mountain Trail you may be surprised to see that the Center has treated their windows with dots, LOTS OF DOTS, to save birds.

The grounds around the Tech Center are a renowned birding hot spot, with a rich mixture of habitat at the mouth of Bridger Canyon. Sadly, all too often, employees would hear a thud as another bird would crash into their windows. Birds as diverse as warblers to belted kingfishers have died when they were fooled by images of habitat reflected in the glass. Though the Fish Technology Center is focused on fish-related research, it is part of the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), a leader in the conservation of wildlife. An initiative by USFWS to protect migratory birds from window strikes was prompted by the estimate that up to a billion birds die each year in window collisions in the United States.

This past September, Fish Technology Center employees installed CollidEscape dots in a 2-inch by 2-inch pattern on all the windows of the main Robert Piper Building, plus a few more windows on surrounding buildings. CollidEscape can be purchased in 2-foot-wide bulk rolls and cut to fit each window, making installation easy and practical. Employees in the office building reported finding the dot pattern a bit dizzying to look through at first, but soon they hardly noticed them.

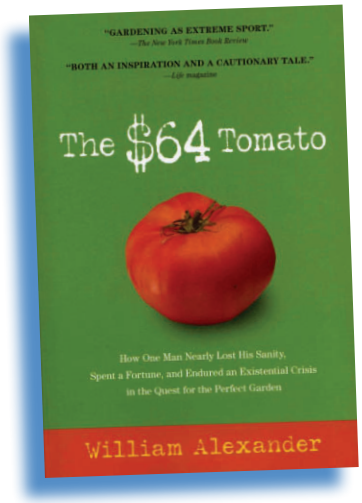
The many windows of the Robert Piper Building are now treated with bird safe CollidEscape dots. The 2" by 2" pattern of dots breaks up the reflection and makes the glass visible to birds. Photos: Paulette Epple

Most importantly, there has not been a single bird/glass strike reported since installation!

We should all be so inspired to protect birds by treating our windows to avoid deadly bird collisions. Sacajawea Audubon Society encourages all homeowners and business owners to treat their windows to make them safe for birds, especially those windows close to feeders or especially prone to bird strikes. You can discover several products and do-it-yourself techniques to use on our website at: https://sacajaweaaudubon.org/project/bird-safe-windows/

DREAM OF SPRING WITH THE SAS BOOK CLUB ON MARCH 19th

Each spring, idle thoughts of Audubon members begin to focus on spring migration and restarting gardens. With these dual passions in mind, the SAS Book Club will be discussing *The $64 Tomato* by William Alexander (2006) on March 19th.



This memoir is an entertaining and enlightening story. When William Alexander and his wife purchase an old home set on 3 acres, they have a vision of creating productive vegetable gardens, beautiful flower gardens, and a diverse orchard. Alexander dreams of living in a historical home while being a gentleman farmer who feeds his family with home-grown organic produce.

Alexander's wry sense of humor makes the reader laugh out loud as he describes the trials and tribulations of building the gardens while restoring the 100-year-old home. His story includes encounters with critters in the garden, such as a groundhog who defies his electric fence, a squirrel who raids his apple trees, and deer who demolish the flower gardens.

At the same time, the book takes on a more philosophical tone as Alexander identifies such issues as drought, lack of bees, wildfires, climate change, and use of pesticides.

An IT director by day and a prolific writer the rest of the time, William Alexander's other nonfiction books include *52 Loaves: One Man's Relentless Pursuit of Truth, Meaning and a Perfect Crust* (2011), *Flirting with French* (2014), and *Ten Tomatoes that Changed the World* (2022).

Our discussion of *The $64 Tomato* was purposely selected to occur in March, when readers are tired of winter and are vicariously perusing seed catalogues and looking forward to spring.

This spirited discussion of the SAS Book Club will be held on March 19th from 6:30 to 7:45 PM at Hope Lutheran Church, Room 123. A decadent dessert will be provided. If you would like to join this month's meeting remotely, please contact Elisabeth Swanson (406-570-8325; elsswa@gmail.com) to request a link.

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March '25 Newsletter

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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.

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

Join fellow bird lovers this summer in Missoula for Montana Audubon's annual birding festival, hosted this year with Five Valleys Audubon Society.

This year's keynote speaker will be Dr. Erick Greene, Professor Emeritus in the Division of Biological Sciences and in the Wildlife Biology Program at The University of Montana.

During his presentation, "Ospreys As Environmental Sentinels," he will share an overview of the species, along with details from long-term studies on heavy metals in Ospreys and what this research can tell us about the environmental clean-up of the Upper Clark Fork River, the largest EPA Superfund site in the U.S.

Learn more on the Festival website: https://mtaudubon.org/events/wings/

Registration will open in March—keep an eye out for more information coming soon!

Presented by the University of Montana Bird Ecology Lab.