APRIL 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: Monday, April 14 at Hope Lutheran Church

THE BEAUTY OF NORTH AMERICA'S PRAIRIE

with John Carlson

John Carlson
Photo: Kris DelMonte

Before being broken by the plow, prairies comprised the largest continuous ecosystem in North America. They stretched from Texas in the south to Saskatchewan, Canada in the north and from the Rocky Mountains east beyond the Mississippi, covering nearly ⅓ of the continent. This vast open land of grasses and forbs supported a multitude of mammals, birds, and other wildlife. Lands of once open beauty, the grassland biome is now the most threatened in the world. Sadly, the suite of birds that populated these plains are now among the most rapidly declining of all the world's avian groups.

John will present an overview of North America's prairie including a discussion of what a prairie is, how prairies are formed and maintained, grassland ecology, management issues, and ongoing conservation efforts. In addition to this technical approach to the subject, John will delve into the understated beauty of our prairies through a series of photos displaying the flora and fauna of this highly threatened ecosystem.

Bobolink. Photo: John Carlson

John Carlson is the Regional Grassland Conservation Coordinator for the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Prairie and Mountain Region based in Billings, MT. He was formerly the Branch Chief for Resources and Sage-Grouse Implementation Lead for Montana/ Dakotas Bureau of Land Management in Billings. Other relevant positions he has held include Wildlife Biologist with the BLM in Glasgow, MT and the Zoology Program Manager at the Montana Natural Heritage Program in Helena. Additional irrelevant positions include bread store worker, fence builder, and snow shoveler at an Antarctic base. John obtained his BA in Zoology from the University of Montana and MS in Zoology and Physiology from the University of Wyoming. He was born and raised in northeastern Montana and has had a strong interest in wildlife in general and birds specifically for as long as he can remember.

Chestnut-collared Longspur. Photo: John Carlson

Many of you will recognize John as he is a past-president of SAS and has long been deeply involved with the birding community in Montana.

The in-person meeting will be held Monday, April 14 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:/ sacajaweaaudubon.org/program

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.

MESSAGE *from* SAS PRESIDENT, CHRIS NIXON

I want to first highlight the incredible decision your SAS Board made to jump in and help fill in the huge gap in efforts to track migration of birds and other winged critters through the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. The SAS Board voted to commit to funding and installing up to three Motus Towers in this SW area of Montana and partnering with Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks and the American Bird Conservancy to do so. Motus towers, utilized within the Motus Wildlife Tracking System, are proving to be extremely helpful, providing migration information for all things flying (birds, bats, and larger insects such as Monarch Butterflies). Currently there are no Motus towers in our Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem region. SAS will change that. Board members are meeting with Motus experts, private landowners, Government Officials and other interested parties. They have written and submitted a grant for potential partial funding for the three towers.

As a result, the board has decided that all donations to SAS during the Give Big event this May will go to purchase, construct, and install the Motus towers in the area. Please consider donating to this important undertaking this Give Big cycle. See the article on page 5. You can give your donation directly to SAS and make note in the description for Motus Towers. If you do so, it will save on processing fees that would otherwise be incurred.

Motus Towers are being erected across all of North, Central, and South America, the first having been erected in Canada. They have been instrumental in building knowledge about bird's movements. Your support through Give Big contributes to building knowledge about birds, migration, and conservation and supports inquiry-based learning for our future stewards.

Don't miss our April meeting with John Carlson who served as one of SAS's past presidents in the early 2000's when he was in graduate school at MSU. He is highly respected and is one of the most knowledgeable persons on grassland birds in Montana.

The Raptor ID Class with Steve Hoffman was a wonderful day, with participants sighting over 116 Bald Eagles.

Spring is here…in theory. So look forward to next month's newsletter for the list of Spring Birding Trips. Make certain to join one of these wonderful outings. Really….how many wonderful things are still free in today's world? So, everyone should be flocking to those free trips. Just offer to help out with gas if you carpool. And enjoy your day outdoors with the birds and other bird admirers!

SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Officers

President	Chris Nixon pres@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Vice President	**Open Position**
Treasurer	Loreene Reid treas@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Secretary	Emma Narotzky sec@sacajaweaaudubon.org

Board Members

Aaron Clausen	aaronclausen@sacajaweaaudubon.org
John Edwards	johnedwards@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Ben Goodheart	bengoodheart@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Mikaela Howie	mikaelahowie@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Frank Marchak	frankm@bozemanwetlands.org
Doug McSpadden	dougmcspadden@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Halle Neinhaus	halleneinhaus@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Vicki Saab	vickisaab@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Ken Sinay	kensinay@sacajaweaaudubon.org

Activity Leaders

Education Chair	**Open Position**
Conservation Co-Chairs	Paulette Epple conservation@sacajaweaaudubon.org Lou Ann Harris louann@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Field Trips, Bird Sightings	John Parker birdsightings@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Hospitality	**Open Position**
Membership	Loreene Reid membership@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Newsletter	Terri Narotzky newsletter@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Programs	Ken Sinay programs@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Website	Lou Ann Harris & Doug McSpadden webmaster@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Social Media/ Communications	Lou Ann Harris and Mikaela Howie socialmedia@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Book Club	Elisabeth Swanson & Hilary Johnson bookclub@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Newsletter Design	Tamara Knappenberger tkknappenberger@gmail.com

Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve

IAWP, LLC President	Frank Marchak frankm@bozemanwetlands.org
IAWP Busy Beavers	Loreene Reid loreener@bozemanwetlands.org

SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY

INDRELAND AUDUBON WETLAND PRESERVE

UPDATE: APRIL 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.

BUSY BEAVER VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

This IAWP program provides a unique opportunity for people to understand up close the value of wetlands and the watersheds they support. We strive to inspire our Busy Beavers to become advocates for wetland conservation and get involved in relevant policy-making, planning and management.

Volunteering at the Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve (IAWP) as a Busy Beaver is a fun opportunity to get involved with your local urban wetlands!

There are many different types of volunteer activities to help support the IAWP. Whatever your skill set or interests, there is a place for you at the IAWP!

Busy Beaver activities can be from 2 to 3 hours to an all day event at the IAWP and around the Gallatin Watershed. The program benefits include: free monthly workshops, discounted tuition in our Wetland Master Naturalist Program, and access to areas usually closed to the public. Experience the joy of conserving local wetlands and educating our community on their value.

Busy Beavers constructing the Interpretive Preservation Host Observation Deck

Ready to Join the IAWP Busy Beavers?

The first of several Busy Beaver orientation sessions will be held Sunday, April 13 at 1:30 – 3:30pm. Sign-up at https://bozemanwetlands.org. This 2-hour orientation session will cover the natural and human history of the IAWP, highlight 2025 season activities, research projects, and upcoming wildlife & biodiversity workshops. We will also offer a walking tour of the IAWP.

A Summary of Busy Beaver Opportunities:

Restoration Busy Beaver

Get your hands dirty and feet wet by helping us with restoration and management of wetland habitats at IAWP.

Here are just a few examples of the projects/activities you may participate in as a Restoration Busy Beaver:

- Plant Management – non-herbicidal removal of invasive plant species and installation of native plants.
- Trash and debris removal
- Water monitoring
- Beaver management
- Conducting bird and other wildlife surveys

Interpretive Preserve Host Busy Beaver

Our IAWP is open to the public every day along the historic railroad berm trail. This provides the public with the perfect opportunity to view birds and other wildlife while learning about wetland ecology. As an enthusiastic host, you will help welcome visitors to the Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve, answer questions, and direct them to other available resources. Hosts may at times give tours of the IAWP. This opportunity is less physically demanding. Host training will be provided - NO prior experience is necessary!

Wetland Naturalist Busy Beaver

This is an opportunity that requires more training. The IAWP provides a variety of science-based education programs for ages Pre-K to Adult. Serving as a Wetland Naturalist, you will conduct fun, interactive activities to SAS members and the public, covering various aspects of wetland ecology and history unique to the IAWP. You will get a chance to lead outdoor science workshops and educational tours of the wetlands. As a Busy Beaver you will receive a discount on the Wetland Master Naturalist Course if you choose to dive that deeply. Scholarships will be offered.

Even if you are unable to commit to being a Busy Beaver today, there are many opportunities for you to participate. Check out www.bozemanwetlands.org

Give Big Events for Wildlife Conservation

The IAWP is excited to host two Give Big Events on Saturday April 26 and Friday May 2nd, highlighting the Motus* Wildlife Tracking System Towers. The SAS Board recently voted to support, install and maintain these towers. These towers will enable the IAWP to undertake impactful, cost-effective data collection for research and education on the ecology and conservation of migratory animals that utilize the IAWP. The IAWP Board is thrilled that the SAS Board voted to support the installation of Motus Towers in the vicinity of the IAWP.

Donate: https://sacajaweaaudubon.org/project/motus-towers/

INDRELAND AUDUBON WETLAND PRESERVE

Kevin Cox Finds His SAS Anchor at the Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve (IAWP)

If you have been to the IAWP, you have certainly seen the handiwork of SAS member Kevin Cox. How did Kevin become so involved with birding, SAS, and the IAWP? That's quite a story.

Kevin's wife, Heleen Bloethe, moved to Bozeman in 1990, and Kevin did so shortly after. They married, after which he went back to attend college in Sheridan, Wyoming before returning to MSU, Bozeman where he got his degree in geo-hydrology. He worked for a hydrologic consulting firm for a couple of years, a job that required him to be traveling about most of the time - rarely being home.

Heleen and he had their first child and later completed the family with the arrival of their twins.They decided that his being out of town and having a family just didn't work for them. He quit his traveling consulting job and became a handyman carpenter until he retired. Heleen managed the books and scheduling for their business. Kevin gloats that she could totally manage a Fortune 500 Company. So, theirs was truly a mom-and-pop business, a family affair, as is everything in their lives. (Note: So, the arrival of those twins are what ultimately led to the great looking woodworking projects Kevin built at the IAWP. Thanks twins!)

Kevin's venture into birding started very casually 25 years ago - also due to the kids. Heleen and Kevin always homeschooled the kids. Heleen said the two most important items for homeschooling are a library card and a National Parks Pass. Each year they traveled the Southwest, February through May. They camped and backpacked over the SW, visiting the incredible National Parks, State Parks, BLM Lands, National Forests, Natural Areas - mining gold 'within' the kids so to speak.

On one trip 25 years ago at Dead Horse Ranch State Park outside of Sedona, the family of five went on a bird walk with a guide. Walking up a wash, the guide pointed out an Abert's Towhee that simply darted across the trail, and Kevin thought "What the Heck! I want to be able to do that!" That was "the personal birding spark" for Kevin. They started attending bird walks wherever they traveled. His interest in birding has continued to grow until he practically sleeps with his binoculars in hand.

In 2018 they purchased a winter home in Sierra Vista, AZ and shortly thereafter retired in 2021. At 4600 feet Sierra Vista sits at about the same elevation as Bozeman. Sierra Vista is a smaller community, but the mountains there are surprisingly similar to the mountains here in Montana, having Douglas Fir and Ponderosa Pine forests. But, importantly, many more hummingbird species come up into the mountains near their home in AZ - 16 species thus far recorded.

Kevin and Heleen Cox in Ramsey, Arizona. Courtesy of Kevin Cox

Being busy with work for most of their lives when here in Bozeman, they were not really aware of SAS. Finally, several years ago, when here for the warmer months, they went on a couple of spring birding trips with Robin Wolcott.

It was in 2022 when Kevin learned about the IAWP project that he really found his place within SAS. They participated in a wetland clean-up day and a point count at the IAWP. The wetland is what gets him excited about being a member of SAS. He has been volunteering his time and carpentry skills to help out at the IAWP since. Thanks to all those skills as a handyman carpenter, he recognized he had something to contribute to this inspiring undertaking here in Bozeman.

What has been Kevin's favorite project at the IAWP? – The Kingfisher Pavilion. He views it as a very unifying amenity for the wetland, serving as a gathering place and a meeting space for classes and events.

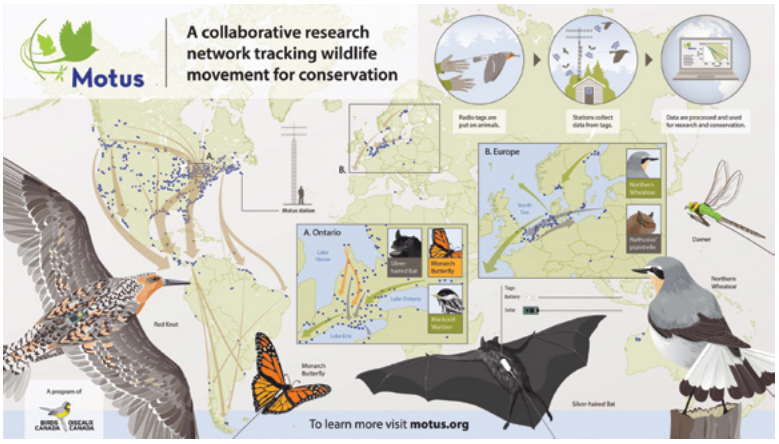
The very first thing Kevin constructed at the IAWP was a deck to support the small vinyl storage shed. Last fall he, with other volunteers, moved that small storage shed up the slope to sit right next to the Kingfisher Pavilion for easier access to supplies for events. At that time, he donated an additional larger stick built 8' x 8' shed he no longer needed. That gift saved literally thousands of dollars for the IAWP, and met a huge need for storage. Kevin designed and built the wooden interpretive platform, to which he attached a double-sided bench, atop the old historic Milwaukee Railroad Berm that runs through the IAWP. Kevin also volunteers to lead the bird walks at the IAWP.

What are Kevin's big wishes for the IAWP? Seeing the restoration of the wetland completed is # 1 for him, and getting a nice trail down to the lower area, terminating where the lower access road now ends. He also intends to help with construction of a couple of bird blinds.

SAS Needs Your Support for Motus Wildlife Tracking Towers!

by Doug McSpadden & Ben Goodheart

The Sacajawea Audubon Society Board is very excited to present a Motus Tower project to its membership and to the birding and conservation communities across Montana and the Northern Rockies.



The Motus Wildlife Tracking System is an international collaboration that uses miniaturized radio transmitters to track birds, bats and even insects across Canada, the United States, and Mexico, down through Central and South America. This data provides researchers with a better understanding of critical flyways and habitat so we can better protect migratory populations.

Currently, there are approximately 40 towers in Montana. The objective is to create radio telemetry "fences"; one across Montana's Hi-Line and another along the Yellowstone River extending over to Dillon and down to Idaho. There are Motus towers covering the western part of the state. These towers will be the first in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

A representative of the American Bird Conservancy, a national partner in the Motus network, reached out to SAS to see if we would like to partner with them and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP) to help plug a hole in the southern fence from Paradise Valley over to the Jefferson River.

The SAS Board has signed on and our objective will be to raise $40,000. These funds will cover the cost of three Motus towers and the long-term maintenance of the system, and to purchase radio transmitter "tags". One tower will be located near the Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve (IAWP)to help collect data for the wetland and along the East Bozeman drainage. This will provide endless educational opportunities for the public to engage in science and conservation locally at your IAWP. This includes tagging birds and tracking movements of our wetland migrants on the open source Motus website!

For more information and to make a donation, visit our website https://sacajaweaaudubon.org/project/motus-towers/

These Motus Wildlife Tracking Towers will be the featured project during Give Big on May 1 and 2 for Sacajawea Audubon Society.

Learn about the Motus Wildlife Tracking System at the IAWP Motus Events on April 26 and May 2.

Give BIG Gallatin Valley

Give Big for Wildlife Conservation

Motus Wildlife Tracking System

Support SAS's Motus Wildlife Tracking System Towers

- ❒ **$50**
- ❒ **$100**
- ❒ **$250 - (**Cost of one transimitter tag)
- ❒ **$500**
- ❒ **$1,000**
- ❒ **$5,000 –** (Funds a Receiver Station Tower)
- ❒ **Other Donation $** _____

Name: _____

Address: _____
(Street or PO Box)

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

Phone: (_____) _____

Email: _____

Make checks payable to: Sacajawea Audubon Society

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

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

Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge Tour

May 24-26 2025 Memorial Day Weekend

Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge is located in the scenic and 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 Red Rock Lakes 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 1930's.

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

Red Rock Lakes N.W.R. Montana. Photo: Ronana Donovan

Tanager and various ducks, flycatchers, kinglets, warblers, vireos, thrushes, woodpeckers and, if we're lucky, Greater Sage-Grouse!

Guides: Steve Hoffman – Steve is the founder of HawkWatch Intenational and owns Merlin Birding & Nature Tours, LLC.

Cedar Mathers-Winn – Cedar is a naturalist, wildlife biologist, and Master Naturalist instructor based in Bozeman, MT.

More information and registration online at: https://sacajaweaaudubon.org/red-rocks-nwr-tour-may-24-26/

IAWP Wetland Master Naturalist Course

Tuesday, June 24 – Saturday, August 2, 2025

This certified wetland-focused Master 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 10 classes and three 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 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 frankm@bozemanwetlands.org

- 6 consecutive weeks Tuesday/Thursday | 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://bozemanwetlands.org

2025 SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY SPRING BIRDING WORKSHOPS

with ASHLEY MARTENS

BEGINNING BIRDING IN FOREST & FIELD 3-WEEK SERIES

Learn to identify and appreciate bird families, common birds in our region, and what to look and listen for when seeking out the identity of a bird. Meet new friends to go birding with!

Classroom: Wednesday evenings, May 14, May 28, & June 18 (5:30–7pm)

Field Trips: Friday (Section A) or Saturday (Section B) mornings May 16/17, May 30/31, June 20/21

Cost: $100 members; $125 non-members

CAVITY NESTERS

Learn all about the woodpeckers, nuthatches, and others who excavate cavities and those who use them again.

Dates: Thurs., May 8th (5:30–7:00 pm) & Sat., May 10th (7:30–10:30 am)

Cost: $55 members; $70 non-members

WARBLERS

Learn to identify differences between these wonderfully flashy, fidgety little birds by focusing on plumage, habitat, songs and calls.

Dates: Wed., May 21st (5:30–7:00 pm) and Sat., May 24th (7–10am)

Cost: $55 members; $70 non-members

BIRDING BY EAR: THRUSHES AND OTHER SONGSTERS

Learn a variety of techniques to help you identify the bird sounds you hear.

Dates: Wed., June 4th (5:30–7:00 pm) & Sat., June 7th (7–10am)

Cost: $55 members; $70 nonmembers

-

SPARROWS & ALLIES

Learn to appreciate the little brown birds' subtle beauty and differences by focusing on plumage, habitat, and songs and calls.

Dates: Wed., June 11th (5:30–7:00 pm) & Sun., June 15th (7–10am)

Cost: $55 members; $70 nonmembers

ART & SCIENCE OF BIRD LANGUAGE

Learn how and why birds are the messaging system of the forest! Join naturalists Ashley Martens and Cedar Mathers-Winn and you'll never hear the forest the same again.

Dates: Wed., June 25th (6:00–8:00 pm) & Sat., June 28th (7–10am)

Cost: $75 members; $90 non-members

BIG BEAKED BIRDS: FINCHES, GROSBEAKS, AND MORE!

NEW! Learn to identify and appreciate the birds with big beaks and varied plumage by sight, sound, and habitat.

Dates: Thurs., June 26th (6:00–7:30 pm) & Sun., June 29th (7:00 –10:00 am)

Cost: $55 members; $70 non-members

Register for all classes: https://sacajaweaaudubon.org/

Migratory bird flyways in North America.
Image: North Dakota Game and Fish Department

Sacajawea Audubon Society Trivia Night

Spring Migration Marvels

Mikaela Howie, SAS board member and ecologist, will pose questions that both test you and tease your knowledge of great wildlife migration feats. Learn who is passing through Montana this spring and find out more about the MOTUS wildlife tracking system!

Tuesday, April 15

5:30 PM – Social Hour | 6:30 PM – Trivia begins

Lockhorn Cider House – 21 S. Wallace, Bozeman

Trivia is free, followed by a raffle. Enter to win a prize basket and support the efforts of SAS. Raffle tickets are $5 each or 5 for $20. Included in the raffle package for this evening will be a copy of the recently released 2nd edition of *National Geographic Field Guide to Birds of the United States and Canada - West,* featuring the artwork of local artist Andrew Guttenberg! We're so proud of Andrew. He served as the youngest SAS board member ever.

Gallatin Valley Earth Day Festival

Saturday, April 19th | Gallatin County Fair grounds

5K Fun Run

9:00 AM (8:30 AM for same day registration)

Register: Big Sky Wind Drinkers website www.Winddrinkers.org

Festival Activities

Children's Activities & Exhibits 10 am – 2 pm

Talks 11 am, 12pm, 1 pm

Topics include native plants, medicinal plants and a live raptor presentation.

Schedule online at: https://www.gallatinvalleyearthday.org/

Loving Our Wild Backyard: How Can We Save The Mini-American Serengeti?

Talk with Todd Wilkinson, journalist and author and panel discussion

Wednesday, April 9th at 7 pm | Museum of the Rockies
In Person & Live Streamed

Join Bozeman journalist Todd Wilkinson for a lively conversation with experts on what we can do to save the best of the Northern Rockies that remain and hear from scientists who will speak to how growth is threatening our world-renowned wildlife and what citizens can do to save it.

Advance Registration: https://www.gallatinvalleyearthday.org/

Registration is Now Open

Join Montana Audubon this summer in Missoula, May 30 – June 1, for a weekend filled with birds, nature, and community.

For more information and a link to registration, visit the Festival website: https://mtaudubon.org/events/wings/

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

- ❒ **April 9:** Earth Day Presentation: ***Bozeman's Wild Backyard***
- ❒ **April 13:** Busy Beavers Orientation
- ❒ **April 14:** SAS Monthly Program with John Carlson
- ❒ **April 15:** Trivia
- ❒ **April 17:** Volunteers for Bird Conservation meeting
- ❒ **April 19:** Earth Day Festival
- ❒ **April 26:** Motus Tower presentation at IAWP
- ❒ **May through June:** SAS Spring Birding workshops
- ❒ **May 1-2:** GIVE BIG
- ❒ **May 2:** Motus Tower presentation at IAWP
- ❒ **May 3:** IAWP Bird Walks begin (Saturdays & Tuesdays)
- ❒ **May 10:** World Migratory Bird Day
- ❒ **May 12:** Special SAS Annual Meeting potluck, program & board elections
- ❒ **May 16 – 19:** Sweetgrass Prairie Birding Tour - trip is full, with waiting list
- ❒ **May 17 – June 22:** SAS Birdathon
- ❒ **May 24 – 26:** Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge Tour
- ❒ **May 30 – June 1:** Wings Across the Big Sky
- ❒ **June 24 – August 2:** Wetland Master Naturalist Class

Sacajawea Audubon 2025 Birdathon

Saturday, May 17 – Sunday, June 22, 2025

It's that time! Gather your favorite birders and register your Birdathon team.

A Birdathon is similar to a walk-a-thon, but instead of collecting pledges per mile walked, you spend a great spring day outdoors with fellow birders, scanning skies, trees, shrubs, fields and water - even your backyard feeder - for birds. The challenge is to identify as many bird species as possible within a 24-hour period. You collect pledges per bird species or number of birds seen. The money raised benefits SAS conservation and education projects.

Participants have a chance to win prizes and awards! All the information you need is in the Birdathon kit, which you can find online at www.sacajaweaaudubon.org

In 2024 the Hotspotters birdathon team had to lay on the ground to spot the Pileated Woodpecker that was perched up under the roof! Photo: John Parker

Want to join a team or need help setting up a team? Contact Loreene Reid at 406-600-6666 or treas@sacajaweaaudubon.org

Have your business take a "Bird Break"? Trade in your briefcase for binoculars, grab your co-workers and count birds on your lunch hour! Businesses can also become Birdathon Sponsors. Create a company Birdathon team. Sign up today!

The most fun you'll ever have helping to protect Southwest Montana's birds & other wildlife.

Save the Date: Birdathon Awards Party will be June 25 at 7pm, at the IAWP. All are welcome! Come and celebrate!

Sponsor a Bluebird Nest Box or Kestrel Nest Box in 2025!

Sacajawea Audubon Society offers a fun way to support our chapter's conservation projects. We are giving members and friends the opportunity to sponsor one or more bluebird nest or kestrel nest boxes.

Sponsorship costs **$20 for bluebird boxes or $50 for kestrel** boxes per year, and you can sponsor as many boxes as you like. Once the nesting season begins you will receive emailed updates and photos from the field. At the end of the season, we will send a summary of how the season went. **We have made an important change from past years and won't be assigning specific box numbers to sponsors going forward.**

A nest 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 Bluebird Nest Box Trail, Kestrel Nest Box project, as well as SAS's other conservation and educations projects. Visit: sacajaweaaudubon.org for more information.

NEST BOX SPONSORSHIP

To sign up for a nest box sponsorship, donate online at: https://sacajaweaaudubon.org/give

or fill out the form below and send with a check to: Sacajawea Audubon Society PO Box 1711 Bozeman, MT 59771

Name: _____ **Email:** _____

Address: _____

 # Of Bluebird Boxes Sponsored ($20 each): _____ **# Of Kestrel Boxes Sponsored ($50 each):** _____

Is This Sponsorship A Memorial? ☐Yes ☐No **In Whose Name?** _____

BIRD NOTES

by John Parker

Spring has definitely arrived, notwithstanding the occasional snowstorm. As is typical, the first waves of bluebirds began arriving early in March. The first reported **Mountain Bluebird** in Park County, was seen March 1st by Mike Himmelspach, near Dailey Lake in Paradise Valley. The following day Tim Preso and John Parker saw a single male bluebird on Bench Road near Three Forks. Then two days after that, George Kelly and George Nixon came across a flock of approximately 50 Mountain Bluebirds along the I-90 frontage road between Springdale and Big Timber. As near as they could tell, all of the birds in the flock were males. It's not unusual to see early arriving small flocks of bluebirds, but 50 birds together is impressive.

Snow Bunting. Photo: John Parker

The same day that Tim and John saw the bluebird, they watched three **Sandhill Cranes** glide in from the south to land in a field east of Manhattan.

A pair of **Greater Yellowlegs** were discovered wading in a slough along Swamp Road northwest of Belgrade on February 21st. Ian van Coller was the first to see these yellowlegs that continued to forage at this location for at least the next two weeks. This is the first record for this area of Montana during the month of February. Last winter we had the first January record for Greater Yellowlegs in the same general area.

On March 13th Katja Shimkin watched a **Say's Phoebe** flycatching over the Gallatin River, north of Manhattan. This is the third earliest date for this flycatcher in southwest Montana.

Also on March 13th, Peggy Olliff spotted the first **Tree Sparrow** of the year, close to where the yellowlegs were being seen.

On the last day of February, while walking the Sourdough Nature Trail, Joan Ryshavy and Pat Craig came across a small flock of **Pine Grosbeaks**.

Perhaps the biggest surprise was the **Vesper Sparrow** Lou Ann Harris saw along Bench Road on March 11th. This spot always seems to attract some of the earliest migratory sparrows, but this bird was off the charts. Usually, Vesper Sparrows don't arrive till late in April, this sighting precedes the previous early record by more than a full month.

A single **Snow Bunting** was seen north of Bozeman March 11th, by Durrae Johanek. As you read this, these lovely birds of the open country should be well on their way to their tundra breeding grounds in the high Arctic.

TURN YOUR LOVE OF BIRDS INTO ACTION!

By Paulette Epple

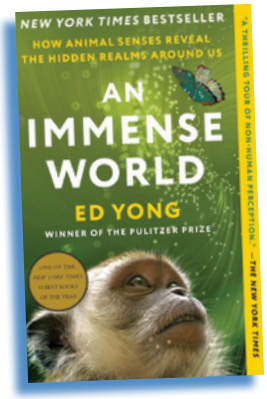
Join the fun and get involved with our numerous opportunities to make a difference for birds and other wildlife in our community.

The Conservation Committee will be holding a Volunteers for Bird Conservation meeting on Thursday, April 17th, from 6:30 to 7:45 pm at the Bozeman Public Library upstairs in the Cottonwood Room. If you have an interest in helping with conservation projects, plan to attend this meeting and join our work for the benefit of birds and their habitats. Volunteers work on a variety of projects, such as: maintaining and monitoring nest boxes for bluebirds and kestrels; conducting bird surveys; maintaining our Plants for Birds Demonstration Garden; working to control invasive weeds; helping with tabling at events; and much more!

Volunteers add mulch to our Plants for Birds Demonstration Garden. Photo: Paulette Epple

For more information, please contact Conservation Committee co-chairs Paulette Epple, at conservation@sacajaweaaudubon.org or Lou Ann Harris at louann@sacajaweaaudubon.org.

SAS BOOK CLUB NEWS – APRIL



Did you know that bumblebees can sense the electric field of flowers, or that catfish are basically swimming tongues with taste buds all over their skins, or that dolphins using echolocation can perceive not only a human's outer shape but also what's inside, including skeleton and lungs? In our final book selection of the spring, *An Immense World: How Animal Senses Reveal The Hidden Realms Around Us*, you will embark on a thrilling and dazzling tour of the radically different ways that animals perceive the world. Ed Yong, a science journalist for *The Atlantic*, gives us a new sense of wonder about organisms that we, with our own limited sensory bubble, may view as simple, only because we have no idea about these animals' unknown facets of knowing about their world. Yong reminds us that we each have purchase on only a sliver of reality. Just prepare to have your perspective forever altered.

Yong's research is prodigious and thorough. As with other science writers he embeds himself in the labs, homes, study sites and lives of dozens of researchers who have made amazing discoveries. He proceeds through the senses of the animal kingdom, every page filled with revelation, including the details of how these abilities were discovered and the science behind them. Yong also gives us a glimpse of the many mysteries that remain unsolved. To top it off, he is a beautiful writer and an exceptional storyteller.

An Immense World comes with a host of accolades and glowing reviews. It won the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Nonfiction, was a finalist for both the Kirkus Prize and for the National Book Critics Circles Award and was long listed for the PEN/E.O.Wilson Award. It was judged one of the Ten Best Books of 2022 according to the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Guardian, Outside, and Mental Floss.

The Sacajawea Audubon Society Book Club will gather on April 16th at Hope Lutheran Church from 6:30 to 7:45 pm. You can find us in Room 123 laughing, reminiscing and discussing this month's book selection as we munch on treats. This will be our last meeting before we adjourn for summer birding. If you would like to join the meeting remotely, contact Elisabeth Swanson (406-570-8325; elsswa@gmail.com) before the meeting. Thank you and please be on the lookout for an email asking for nominations for our fall reads.

SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

Individual or Family | January – December 2025

❒ **Basic Membership** **$25**

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

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

❒ **Additional Donation $** _____

❒ Bridger Raptor Study ❒ Wetland Campaign

❒ Story Mill Park Bird Feeding Station ❒ 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 the 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! include 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!

April '25 Newsletter

Choose your membership level above, and thank you for considering an additional donation.

Join or Renew for 2025 by filling out the membership form below or check out the many benefits of membership and join online at https://sacajaweaaudubon.org/join-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.

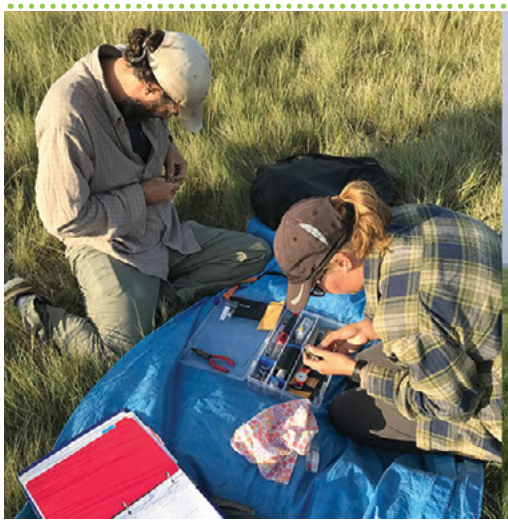
Deadline for article submission is the 10th of the month preceding the month the articles will appear. Send articles electronically to newsletter@sacajaweaaudubon.org.

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

Give BIG
GALLATIN VALLEY
May 1– 2, 2025
SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY
Motus Wildlife Tracking System
INDRELAND AUDUBON WETLAND PRESERVE

Remember... all donations to SAS through Give Big on May 1st & 2nd go to support tracking wildlife movement for conservation.

Learn about the Motus Wildlife Tracking System at the IAWP Motus Events on April 26 and May 2.

See our website https://sacajaweaaudubon.org/motus-towers/ to learn more and donate.