



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, May 11

The **Last Best Flyway** Conservation in an Unexpected Landscape

with Mark Mariano, President of Montana Wetlands and Waterfowl

Montana Wetlands and Waterfowl is a grassroots conservation organization based in Butte, Montana, focused on wetland health, waterfowl conservation, and public education across the state. The organization was founded to address a gap between scientific understanding and on-the-ground conservation, particularly in landscapes influenced by mining and restoration, like the Upper Clark Fork.

Started with a simple goal: connect people to wetlands and waterfowl while contributing meaningful data and restoration work. Over time, that mission has expanded into a blend of education, applied science, and habitat improvement. Our work includes school and community outreach, wetland restoration projects, and collaborative research—such as ongoing efforts to understand contaminant exposure in local waterfowl populations.

Southwest Montana sits within a major migration corridor of the Pacific Flyway, where seasonal movements of waterfowl



Sacajawea Middle School students pose for photo highlighting the waterfowl nest they collaborated in building and installing in the wetland on the schools grounds.

depend heavily on the availability and quality of wetlands. These habitats provide critical stopover, overwintering, and nesting areas, making their health essential not only locally but across the broader flyway.

Ultimately, Montana Wetlands and Waterfowl exists to ensure that wetlands remain healthy, waterfowl populations remain strong, and communities across Montana remain connected to both.

May 11th is the Annual Membership Meeting and Board of Directors Election!

Your participation is requested and highly valued.

SAS is among the few remaining local member-driven environmental not-for-profits. As members **YOU** make this organization what it is and determine what it will become! Join us on Monday, May 11 for the Annual Membership Meeting including a **Sweet & Savory Potluck** at **6:00 PM** at Hope Lutheran Church, 2152 West Graf (off S. 19th). A main dish, plates, and utensils will be provided by SAS. **Bring a sweet or savory dish to share** if you would like. After the potluck, there will be a short meeting and board elections beginning at 7:00 PM followed by the program.

For virtual attendance, register at: 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 programs@sacajaweaaudubon.org.



Mark Mariano holds a newly banded Pintail duck.

Mark Mariano is a co-founder and serves as President of Montana Wetlands and Waterfowl. His work is rooted in a deep appreciation for the ecological and cultural importance of wetlands in southwest Montana, particularly within the Pacific Flyway migration corridor.

Mark helped guide the organization from a grassroots idea into a growing nonprofit engaged in habitat restoration, scientific research, and statewide outreach.

Mark is passionate about connecting people to the landscapes and species that define Montana. His work emphasizes practical solutions, strong partnerships, and ensuring that wetlands and waterfowl remain a vital part of the region's future.



SAS Upcoming Events!

MESSAGE from PRESIDENT, CHRIS NIXON



May 11th will be our last membership meeting of the spring, and with it comes new beginnings.

We are excited that our speaker, Mark Mariano will be informing us about wetlands in the Last Best Flyway, including the Butte area of the Pacific Flyway, as Butte and the former Pintler Audubon Chapter

is now merged into the Sacajawea Audubon Society coverage area. Thus, this is a very timely presentation and pertinent to our chapter.

Also, this is when we will **elect SAS Officers** and **Board Members**. The majority of the board members hope to continue in their positions. Vicki Saab will not be seeking re-election and Ken Sinay has stepped down from his position. Huge thanks to Vicki and Ken for their commitment and service to the chapter! This leaves two open seats on the SAS Board.

It has been a pleasure to serve as SAS President for the past six years. I will be stepping down as President but hope to remain on the Board as Past President and return our organizational structure to how it traditionally operated. In that tradition, Vice-President (currently Doug McSpadden) would step into the President's seat for the coming two years. The incoming Vice-President would then, after two years step into the role as President. As the Vice-President's position will soon be available.... are you the individual to fill that seat? Or do you have in mind someone that would be a great selection for that position? Please contact me if you wish to share your thoughts on the matter.

SAS continues to grow in numbers, in territory, and in the scope of its projects and with its impacts on the area and region. **YOU** are among the individuals that make that happen through your donations of time, attendance, expertise and financial support. **There is a place for you within SAS.**

If you have yet to determine just where you fit in, please contact me. If you have interest and ideas you are convinced SAS should be addressing—that could be your role and place within SAS. I find that the Board is always willing to consider new ideas and is supportive of those with a vision and drive to make important progress happen for ornithology, conservation or just the existential enjoyment of birds.

I encourage you to read through this newsletter and be in tune with the birds and all that SAS has underway. There is a summer of excitement and fun just waiting for you with and within SAS!

30 Apr - 01 May: Give Big Gallatin Valley
02 May - Jun 30: Tuesdays & Saturdays: Bird Walks at the Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve

06 & 09 May: Cavity Nesters Class

09 May - Jul 1: SAS Spring Birding Series, Various locations and times, see pgs. 8-11 for

11 May: SAS Monthly Membership Meeting and Board Elections - Hope Lutheran Church

15-18 May: Sweet Grass Prairie Birding Tour

16 May - 21 Jun: SAS Birdathon

19 May: SAS Wildlife Trivia at Lockhorn Cider House

20 & 23 May: Beginning Birding Class

27 & 30 May: Warblers Class

10 & 12 Jun: Sparrows Class

16 & 18 Jun: Bird Kinship Class

23 Jun: Wetland Master Naturalist Course begins

24 & 26 Jun: Birding By Ear Class

24 Jun: SAS Birdathon Celebration Party - Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve

11 Jul: Habitat Restoration and Birding Tour

17 & 18 Jul: 5th Annual Bio Blitz at Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve

5 Aug : Bird Friendly Garden Tour

20 & 22 Aug: Raptor Class

Partner Events

12 - 14 June: Wings Across the Big Sky Birding Festival in Kalispell, MT

Visit sacajaweaaudubon.org for the latest happenings and bozemanwetlands.org for all that will be going on this summer at the Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve

SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY LEADERSHIP

President	Chris Nixon, pres@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Vice President	Doug McSpadden, vicepres@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Treasurer	Brad Frazee, treas@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Secretary	Mikaela Howie, sec@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Membership	Loreene Reid, membership@sacajaweaaudubon.org

Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve

President	Frank Marchak, Frankm@bozemanwetlands.org Bozemanwetlands.org
Treasurer	Loreene Reid, loreener@bozemanwetlands.org

For a complete list of board members and activity leaders, visit: sacajaweaaudubon.org/our-board

This month's edition of Bird Sightings should be called the Early Bird Special. Our warmest winter on record (the continental U.S. and Montana), has transitioned to a mild start of spring, and some of the migratory birds seem to be responding to the widespread early warmth.

Perhaps the most exceptional early bird was the **Calliope Hummingbird** that was at Dave Benes and Dana Skorupa's feeder at Gallatin Gateway on April 11th. This sighting was fifteen days earlier than the previous early spring record for anywhere in Montana, outside of the far western valleys. Dave said he had just put out the feeder, and not more than an hour later the Calliope was there.

Another surprising early record was the **Swainson's Hawk** that Mike Vivian saw along Davis Lane on March 24th. This date equals the earliest record for Montana. This spot in northeast Bozeman has had nesting Swainson's Hawks for many years. John Edwards spotted another early Swainson's Hawk five days later, over his house several miles north of Bozeman.

On March 30th, Lou Ann Harris found a **Long-billed Curlew** along Bench Road south of Three Forks. This is about a week earlier than the expected first arrivals.

While birding the south end of Hyalite Reservoir on March 17th, John Parker heard at least two **Varied Thrush** singing, eventually spotting one singing from the top of the highest spruce tree. Fairly uncommon in this area, Varied Thrushes aren't usually detected until later in March.

There was quite an early run of **Spotted Towhees** this spring, the earliest being the one that showed up in Linda and Ray Forrest's Paradise Valley yard following a storm early in March. With the lack of spring snow storms to push rosy finches into



BIRD NOTES

..... by John Parker



Calliope Hummingbird. Photo by Dave Benes

the valleys, there have been fewer reports than normal this year. But during that same period early in March, Linda and Ray had quite a few **Gray-crowned Rosy Finches**, which were joined by several **Black Rosy Finches**.

With many warm nights in late March and early April, it was a great opportunity to go out owling in the foothills around the Gallatin Valley. Birders were able to see or hear up to seven different species of owls, including **Great Horned Owl**, **Great Gray Owl**, **Barred Owl**, **Long-eared Owl**, **Northern Saw-whet Owl**, **Northern Pygmy Owl**, and **Western Screech-Owl**.



In Memory of Mary Griffith

By: Lou Ann Harris

Sadly, this past month we lost long time Sacajawea Audubon Society member **Mary Griffith**. Mary was an active member of the club for many years, starting in the early 1980's, serving

as a board member and Secretary. She was also involved with many other chapter activities, from leading field trips to folding newsletters and preparing them for mailing in the monthly "folding bees". Over the years, Mary traveled all across North America in pursuit of birds, compiling an extensive list of over **700 species**, #700 being a **Falcated Duck** seen 2017 in

Eugene Oregon. Locally, she was an avid member of the "Bird Hotline Phone Loop". For many years, Mary helped with Bob Moore's Montana State University field ornithology classes, helping students enjoy "the song". Mary especially loved bluebirds, and would look forward to scouring the countryside with her husband John, looking for the first bluebird of spring. When I see that first male bluebird against the snow under bright blue skies, I'll think of her.

*If you wish to make a donation in Mary's honor; consider sponsoring a **bluebird box** or a donation to the **MSU Robert Moore Scholarship Fund**. Checks can be mailed to: Sacajawea Audubon Society, P.O. Box 1711, Bozeman, MT 59771-1771. Make sure to note Griffith-blue bird or Griffith, Moore scholarship fund in the memo.*



SACAJAWEA
AUDUBON
SOCIETY

INDRELAND AUDUBON WETLAND PRESERVE UPDATE: MAY 2026

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.

BECOME A CERTIFIED WETLAND MASTER NATURALIST

Wetlands are among the most productive ecosystems on Earth, providing vital habitat for birds, wildlife, and aquatic species. For those interested in learning more about these unique landscapes, the Wetland Master Naturalist program offers an opportunity to deepen knowledge while contributing to conservation.

Through training offered by the Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve, participants explore wetland ecology, bird and wildlife identification, native plants, and the important role wetlands play in maintaining healthy watersheds. The program blends classroom learning with field experiences, giving participants the chance to observe wetland systems firsthand and learn from local experts.



Participants also learn how wetlands filter water, store floodwaters, and provide essential habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife. Graduates often support local conservation through volunteer service, habitat restoration, wildlife monitoring, and community education.



COURSE DETAILS: Begins Tuesday, June 23

- **Five consecutive** weeks of **Tuesday** and **Thursday** evening classes (5:30–7:30 PM)
- **Three** full-day **Saturday** field trips

For more information and to register, visit: BozemanWetlands.org



Certification is awarded through the Montana Natural History Center. **Becoming a Wetland Master Naturalist is a meaningful way to connect with nature, build conservation skills, and help protect the wetlands that sustain wildlife and our communities.**

SUMMER GUIDED BIRD WALKS

Guided Bird Walks at the Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve **Saturday & Tuesday Mornings | May 2– June 30**
Visit bozemanwetlands.org/events for specific times.
(May Bird Walks begin at 7:30 AM; June Bird Walks begin at 7:00AM)

Curious about the Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve being restored by Sacajawea Audubon Society?

Eager to see some great birds without leaving the city? Meet at Café M, 777 East Main for a brief intro to SAS's vision for the future of this amazing wetland, followed by a short walk to the Preserve. Bring your binocs and your enthusiasm for birds and wetlands. All birding abilities welcome. No registration required.





SACAJAWEA
AUDUBON
SOCIETY

INDRELAND AUDUBON WETLAND PRESERVE UPDATE: MAY 2026

NEW FOR 2026:

PHENOLOGY MONITORING PROGRAM

The Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve is excited to launch a new Phenology Monitoring Program in partnership with the National Phenology Network.

Volunteers will help observe and record seasonal changes— such as plant flowering, leaf-out, and animal activity—within the wetland. These observations provide valuable data that help scientists track how climate influences plant and animal life over time.



This is a great opportunity for citizen scientists to contribute to wetland research, restoration, and stewardship. No prior experience is required, and all participants will receive training and ongoing support.

If you're interested in getting involved and making a meaningful impact, we'd love to have you join us in the field. For questions or to sign up, contact: Frank Marchak at frankm@bozemanwetlands.org.

JOIN THE 5TH ANNUAL BIOBLITZ AT THE INDRELAND AUDUBON WETLAND PRESERVE!

Mark your calendar for an exciting 24-hour celebration of biodiversity at the Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve! Taking place from **Friday, July 17 at 6:30 PM through Saturday, July 18 at 6:30 PM**, this annual BioBlitz invites community members of all experience levels to explore, learn, and contribute to meaningful citizen science.

Hosted by SAS's Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve, this urban wetland restoration site provides a unique opportunity to observe how conservation efforts are helping local ecosystems thrive. The BioBlitz plays an important role in documenting species presence year after year, creating valuable ecological snapshots of the preserve.

What is a BioBlitz?

A BioBlitz is a focused effort to identify as many species as possible within a designated area over a short period of time. Throughout the weekend, participants will join expert-led groups to survey plants, animals, and insects while learning field identification techniques. All observations will be recorded using iNaturalist, contributing to a growing database used by scientists and conservationists.

Each survey session lasts approximately 2 hours, and participants are welcome to sign up for as many time slots as they like. Whether you're a seasoned naturalist or just curious about the natural world, there's something for everyone.

Be Part of the Discovery! Come connect with nature, meet fellow community members, and help document the incredible biodiversity of your local wetland. Register for your time slot(s) at: bozemanwetlands.org

BECOME A BUSY BEAVER VOLUNTEER



Interested in helping restore wetlands and protecting wildlife in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem of Montana? Join us for the Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve Busy Beaver Volunteer Corps.

The Busy Beaver Volunteer Corps is a community of dedicated volunteers who assist with habitat restoration and stewardship projects at the Preserve. Volunteers help with activities such as water monitoring, planting

native vegetation, removing invasive species, maintaining trails, monitoring wildlife, serving as interpretive hosts and supporting educational programs.

Whether you can volunteer regularly or just occasionally, your help makes a difference. Learn how you can become one of our "Busy Beavers" and help restore this special wetland landscape at: bozemanwetlands.org



Ronan Donovan collects aquatic samples at the Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve.

SWEET GRASS PRAIRIE BIRDING TOUR: MAY 15-18, 2026

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 15-18, 2026**. 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 carpool or drive their own vehicles to the ranch (20 miles N of Big Timber).



- **3+ days, 3 nights:** Depart Bozeman Fri, May 15
Return Bozeman, Mon May 18
- **\$435/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

Registration opens April 1: register and make payment by emailing meg@jbarl.com. For tour information or questions, email bethmadden64@gmail.com.

2026 BIRDING CLASSES WITH ASHLEY MARTENS

Deepen your connections with birds this season with a class or two with our local educator, Ashley Martens. Contact her at truenatureed@gmail.com with questions.

CLASS DESCRIPTIONS:

Cavity Nesters Knock! Knock! Learn about and delight in the woodpeckers, nuthatches, and others who excavate cavities and those species who use them again.

Classroom Session*– Wed, May 6th • 5:30-7:00pm

Field Trip**– Sat, May 9th • 7-10am

Cost– Members \$55, Non-Members \$70

Beginning Birding Love birds? Curious about learning to identify them without having to use another app? Learn basic identification skills you can use anywhere you go to connect with the birds around you.

Classroom Session*– Wed, May 20th • 5:30-7:00pm

Field Trip**– Sat, May 23rd • 7-10am

Cost– Members \$55, Non-Members \$70

Warblers Learn about and delight in these wonderfully colorful little birds by focusing on plumage, habitat, songs and calls.

Classroom Session*– Wed, May 27th • 5:30-7:00pm

Field Trip**– Sat, May 30th • 7-10am

Cost– Members \$55, Non-Members \$65

Sparrows Learn about and delight in these little brown birds' subtle beauty and differences by focusing on plumage, habitat, songs and calls.

Classroom Session*– Wed, June 10th • 5:30-7:00pm

Field Trip**– Fri, June 12th • 7-10am

Cost– Members \$55, Non-Members \$70

SCAN HERE TO REGISTER FOR ANY OF THESE CLASSES:



sacajaweaadubon.org



Instructor Ashley Martens has a B.S. in Biology, an M.S. in Environmental Science, and certifications in teaching yoga, dance, and meditation.

Birding By Ear Cultivate presence and listening skills. Learn a variety of techniques to help you identify the bird soundscapes around you.

Classroom Session*– Wed, June 24th • 5:30-7:00pm

Field Trip**– Fri, June 26th • 7-10am

Cost– Members \$55, Non-Members \$70

Bird Kinship Settle into a deeper relationship with birds in this session. We'll learn the ancient and wise skill of listening for "Bird Language" and spend time appreciating birds without (necessarily) having to identify them. You'll develop a sensitive, grounding, and relaxing practice to take with you anywhere you go.

Classroom Session*– none

Field Trip**– Tues & Thurs, June 16th & 18th, 5:30-7pm

Cost– Members \$55, Non-Members \$70

**Classroom sessions are at Hope Lutheran Church Room 123.*

***Field trip locations in the Gallatin Valley TBA*

SUMMER GARDEN TOURS



Tour 40 acres of habitat restored by botanist, Marlena Renwyck.

Habitat Restoration and Birding Tour

July 11th – 8:30 am

This tour is on rural land east of Bozeman off Jackson Creek Rd. Marlena Renwyck has used her botanist skills to restore degraded habitat on 40 acres of land by planting over 1,500 native trees, shrubs, and wildflowers on the site. We will take a birding walk as we learn about her restoration work. Expect a 1 mile walk on uneven terrain. We will be gone most of the morning. Carpooling from town available.



Bird Friendly Garden Tour

August 5th - 6:30 pm

We will tour Mary and Tom Keck's yard in Bozeman where a mature landscape of trees, bird-attracting shrubs, vines, berries, gardens, perennials, and ground covers combine to create the multi-layered, dense habitat so valuable to birds.

To register or get more information contact either Vicki Saab, victoriaannsaab@gmail.com or Paulette Epple, conservation@sacajaweaudubon.org

Visit the Keck's garden and learn more about bird-attracting landscape design.

Both tours are subject to a 20 person limit.

THANK YOU GIVE BIG DONORS

Thank you to **SAS members and our local community** who gave so generously to the **Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve** during Give Big Gallatin Valley!

Your support helps fund restoration work, habitat improvements, trails and wildlife viewing blinds, volunteer programs, and conservation education.



RECIPES FOR INVITING BIRDS AND POLLINATORS TO YOUR YARD

Sacajawea Audubon Society has a great new resource to help you attract birds and pollinators to your yard. **We have created four downloadable "recipe cards":**

1. Invite Finches To Your Home
2. Invite Hummingbirds To Your Home
3. Invite Fruit-Eating Birds To Your Home
4. Invite Pollinators To Your Home

Each of these recipe cards will simplify how to go about creating bird and pollinator friendly habitat. They include a list of preferred plants for our growing region, tips on adding water features, feeders, and helpful facts for attracting each group.

Download your copy today:

sacajaweaudubon.org/invite-birds-pollinators-to-your-home/

EXCLUSIVE RIVER TRIPS FOR SAS MEMBERS!

River Birding Safaris! See riparian birds and wildlife, on their terms, on the Madison River at the Headwaters of the Missouri. **Montana River Safaris is donating** four Madison River Birding Tours to Sacajawea Audubon Members: June 10, June 20, July 1, and July 8, 2026.



Up to 4 participants per 4 – 5 hour river tour. Suitable for all ages and abilities. Secure and comfortable non-motorized boat with sturdy deck chairs.

A donation of \$75 per person is suggested to Sacajawea Audubon Society for this unique and fun outdoor adventure!

Inquire and schedule directly with Ken Sinay at: 406-539-7359 or Ken@MontanaRiverSafaris.com. For more information: www.MontanaRiverSafaris.com

2026 SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY SPRING BIRDING SERIES



Participants in all trips will meet at the front parking lot of the [Museum of the Rockies](#) at 6:45 AM and depart at 7:00 AM unless otherwise noted. **Contact the trip leader to reserve a spot** and for more details about all trips. **If you signed up for a trip, but are unable to attend, please notify the trip leader as soon as possible**, as others may be on a waiting list. **Field trips are limited to a certain number of participants and vehicles.** Car pools will be arranged prior to the trip or at the pre-determined meeting place. Dress for the weather; good footwear is a must as field trip conditions are not always dry. Bring any food or beverages that you will need during the course of the trips, and some of the longer trips might require that you pack a lunch. An offer to help with gas to the person driving is always appreciated but not mandatory. Please turn off your cell phones and keep unnecessary conversations to a minimum while in the field. **We encourage all skill levels** of birders to participate. Enjoy a good time with the birds and your fellow birders!

MAY 9, SATURDAY: SACRED PINE RANCH

Leader: John Parker
406-586-5863 • conundrumjp@gmail.com

This is a full day's trip, with light walking on uneven ground.

On this trip we will visit a private ranch in the northwest corner of the Madison Valley above Ennis Lake. We will get an introduction to the ranch's regenerative practices and their mission to improve the quality of the land from the soil up. We will then bird the property as it extends from wet meadows, benchlands, and up into the foothills of the Tobacco Root Mountains. As we move upslope we should encounter a wide variety of birds, giving us a nice cross section of the birdlife in the valleys of western Montana. If time permits in the afternoon, we may visit the north shore of Ennis Lake.

Meet at Museum of the Rockies at 6:45 AM 8-person limit.

MAY 10, SUNDAY: SOURDOUGH NATURE TRAIL

Leader: Woody Martyn
406-224-1476 • woodymartyn@hotmail.com

3-4 hours – easy walking

Enjoy a morning stroll following Sourdough Creek during the peak of migration and early breeding season. We should see and hear a wide variety of flycatchers, thrushes and warblers. During this time of the migration there are often some surprises! Some of the neotropical birds nesting here are Northern Waterthrush, American Redstart, and Black-headed Grosbeak.

Meet at Museum of the Rockies at 6:45 AM 8-person limit.

MAY 16, SATURDAY: HEADWATERS STATE PARK AND THREE FORKS AREA

Leader: Dave Story
206-718-5940 • story.david.m@gmail.com

1/2-day trip; easy walking

The Headwaters area includes a variety of habitats, including sage/grassland and riparian, so anything from waterfowl to sparrows can occur. One of the unique features of the Headwaters area are the limestone cliffs, which support several cliff nesting species such as Peregrine Falcons and White-throated Swifts. The park, which is situated along the Missouri River corridor, is an ideal location to observe early spring migrants. Later in the morning we will also explore the sagebrush and grasslands south of Three Forks to look for additional bird species.

Meet at the Headwaters Visitor Kiosk on Trident Road at 7:30 AM. **15-person limit.**

MAY 17, SUNDAY: MOUNT ELLIS

Leader: Brian Thorpe
406-581-8544 • thorpe_22@hotmail.com

(underscore between thorpe and 22)

4 -5-hour trip; moderately strenuous walking 3 miles

This slow-paced hike of approximately 3 miles, will explore a number of habitats on State and Forest Service lands, including grassland, aspen meadow, and conifer forest edge. At this time of year many of the nesting birds, such as Calliope Hummingbirds, Dusky Flycatchers, Red Crossbills, Orange-crowned Warblers, MacGillivray's Warblers and a wide variety of sparrows will have arrived on their territories. Along with terrific views of the Gallatin Valley, the wildflowers on this walk will likely distract you from the diversity of birds.

Meet at Museum of the Rockies at 6:45 AM 8-person limit.

2026 SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY SPRING BIRDING SERIES

MAY 20 WEDNESDAY: BOZEMAN FISH TECHNOLOGY CENTER

Leader: Travis Kidd
989-820-0078 • travis.w.kidd@gmail.com

Until late morning; moderate walking

There are several habitat types that come together in this relatively compact area, including the riparian areas along Bridger Creek, the conifer slopes of Drinking Horse Mountain, and the drier slopes of the M Trail. Many of the breeding birds should already be on their territories and actively singing at this date. Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Townsend's Solitaires, Green-tailed Towhees, Yellow-rumped Warblers, and American Dippers are expected here.

Meet at the Drinking Horse Trail parking lot at 7:15 AM
8-person limit.

MAY 23, SATURDAY: MILLIGAN CANYON AND THE HEADWATERS AREA

Leader: Josiah Kiehl
406-539-6832 • josiah.kiehl@gmail.com

Until early to midafternoon; 2 miles of easy walking on gravel roads

This trip begins with a walk through the arid limestone cliffs of Milligan Canyon. Canyon Wrens, Rock Wrens, and Spotted Towhees frequent this dry landscape. Golden Eagles and Pinyon Jays are also a possibility along this portion of the trip. Later in the morning we will explore some of the other areas near Three Forks featuring a variety of habitats, including sage/grassland and riparian, so anything from waterfowl to sparrows is possible.

Meet in Three Forks, contact leader for details. 4 car and **12-person limit.**

MAY 24, SUNDAY: GLEN LAKE ROTARY PARK

Leader: Woody Martyn
406-224-1476 • woodymartyn@hotmail.com

3-4 hour trip; easy walking; at most two miles

There are many possibilities at this local birding hotspot. Over 180 bird species have been seen in the recreation area. With a pond, riparian habitat, limited grassland, and mature cottonwoods, we hope to see a good diversity of what Gallatin Valley has to offer during peak breeding season. Species may include flycatchers, Warbling Vireo, Gray Catbird, several warblers, Lazuli Bunting, and Black Headed Grosbeak.

Meet at the Glen Lake parking lot 7:00 AM. **8-person limit.**

MAY 26, TUESDAY: SOURDOUGH NATURE TRAIL

Leader: Travis Kidd
989-820-0078 • travis.w.kidd@gmail.com

3-4 hours; easy walking

Enjoy a weekday morning stroll following Sourdough Creek during the peak of migration and early breeding season. We should see and hear a wide variety of flycatchers, thrushes and warblers. During this time of the migration there are often some surprises! Some of the neotropical birds nesting here are Northern Waterthrush, American Redstart, and Black-headed Grosbeak. **Meet at Museum of the Rockies** at 6:45 AM
8-person limit.



Redwing Blackbird.

MAY 30, SATURDAY: SWEET GRASS COUNTY PRAIRIE BIRD TOUR

Leader: Beth Madden
406-224-1012 • bethmadden64@gmail.com

Full day tour, with option for early departure.

Enjoy a day on the spectacular high prairie east of the Crazy Mountains. We will follow an approximately 45-mile driving route through prairie and agricultural landscapes north of Big Timber, with an hour-long walk on some prairie lands. In addition to migrants, we can expect to see early breeders such as curlews, cranes, raptors, and prairie songbirds like longspurs and meadowlarks.

Meet in Big Timber (Big Timber is 63 miles east of Bozeman on Interstate 90) at the Town Pump located at I-90 Exit 367 at 8:00 am. Bozeman carpooling may also be arranged. **12-person limit.**

Continued on page 10

2026 SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY SPRING BIRDING SERIES

Continued from page 9



MAY 31, SUNDAY: SPANISH CREEK

Leader: Tim Preso
406-600-3302 presofamily@msn.com

Until mid-afternoon; moderate walking on forest trail, with several hundred foot elevation gain

This trip follows Spanish Creek through the Flying D Ranch, to the edge of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness. We will spend most of the morning birding along the road focusing on the grasslands and forest edges. Once at the trailhead there is a juxtaposition of habitats, which support an interesting mix of birds. In one direction the trail borders the wet willow riparian area along Spanish Creek. Going in the other direction, the trail climbs through dry open slopes.

Meet at The Jump at Cottonwood Road and Highway 191 (the rear parking lot behind the building) at 7:30 AM. 4 car or **10-person limit**.

JUNE 6, SATURDAY: CHESTNUT MOUNTAIN

Leader: Andrew Guttenberg
406-451-5427 • afgutte@hotmail.com

1/2-day; hike of moderate difficulty, 4 miles out and back

This trail climbs the north slopes of Chestnut Mountain, from Rocky Creek to the back side of Frog Rock. A wide diversity of birds breed here including several species of woodpeckers, flycatchers, and finches including Olive-sided Flycatcher and Cassin's Finch. The cool recesses harbor Swainson's Thrush, MacGillivray's Warbler, and this may be the best local spot to find Ovenbirds.

Meet at Museum of the Rockies at 6:45 AM. **8-person limit**.

JUNE 7, SUNDAY: MOUNT ELLIS

Leader: John Parker
406-586-5863 • conundrumjp@gmail.com

4-5-hour trip; moderately strenuous walking about 3 miles

During this slow-paced hike of approximately 3 miles, we will explore a number of habitats on State and Forest Service lands, including grassland, aspen meadow, and conifer forest edge. At this time of year many of the nesting birds, such as Calliope Hummingbirds, Dusky Flycatchers, Red Crossbills, Orange-crowned Warblers, MacGillivray's Warblers and a wide variety of sparrows will have arrived on their territories. Along with terrific views of the Gallatin Valley, the wildflowers on this walk will likely distract you from the diversity of birds. Meet at Museum of the Rockies at 6:45 AM 8-person limit.

JUNE 13, SATURDAY: SHIELDS VALLEY DRIVING TOUR

Leaders: George and Valerie Nixon
406-219-6169 or 406-219-6170
hawkowl526@gmail.com

Options for half to full day

The Shields Valley is home to some impressive bird diversity. When we leave Clyde Park, we will check some backroads and the riparian corridor along Highway 89 for nesting species as well as any migrants passing through. They should be out in force. We will also visit two separate marshes on the tour in search of Marsh Wren, Virginia Rail, and Sora. One of the highlights will be the visit to Cottonwood Reservoir which can host an impressive variety of migrant shorebirds and waterfowl including displaying Western and Eared Grebes.

The nearby sagebrush environs are a good chance to study Brewer's Sparrow and Sage Thrashers. Finally, we will head up the Shields River Valley drainage to explore some coniferous and montane riparian habitats to round out the experience!

Meet at the Clyde Park Post Office parking lot, at 7:30 AM for car-pooling. 4 vehicle and **12-person limit**.

JUNE 14, SUNDAY: BRIDGER FOOTHILLS

Leader: Vicki Saab
406-581-7829 • victoriaannsaab@gmail.com

1/2-day trip; easy to moderate off trail walking

We will spend the morning exploring the burn within the 2020 Bridger Foothills Fire perimeter. This is an opportunity to visit a recent burn and learn about post-fire ecology, including bird responses and relationships to forest fires and burned landscapes. Notably, Black-backed Woodpeckers and other woodpeckers are known to rapidly return to recent burns to

2026 SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY SPRING BIRDING SERIES

feast on the insect life unique to this fascinating change in the ecosystem. Join us to find out what other pioneering birds and plant life can be found in such a recently burned forest.

Meet at Story Mill Community Park, 698 Bridger Dr. Bozeman at 6:45 AM **10-person limit**

JUNE 20, SATURDAY: MISSION CREEK

Leader: Robin Wolcott
406-581-5418 • pajaros@wewolcotts.com (email preferred)

Until mid-late afternoon; mostly driving, light walking on roads

In the rolling prairie just east of Livingston we will seek McCown's Longspur and Long-billed Curlew. Along Little Mission Creek we will watch for riparian species, then search for residents of the spruce/fir forest. On our return along Mission Creek, we could find a Cordilleran Flycatcher or a Golden Eagle. Over 130 species have been seen along this route including Sprague's Pipit, Upland Sandpiper, and Green-tailed Towhee. Spectacular views, abundant wildflowers, and wildlife make the trip through the northern foothills of the Absaroka Mountains a trip to remember.

After leaving Bozeman, we will reconvene at **Albertson's parking lot in Livingston** at 7:30 AM and then leave from there at 7:45 AM Car-pooling is essential. 4 vehicle and **10-person limit**.

JUNE 21, SUNDAY: JACKSON CREEK

Leader: Lou Ann Harris
406-600-3585 • montlou311@gmail.com

4-5 hour trip; moderately strenuous walking on forest road 4 miles

Located near Bozeman Pass, this area features a surprising mix of habitats and birds. We will begin this walk by passing through wet meadows and grasslands, and then follow Jackson Creek into higher elevation conifer forests. This is the beginning of peak breeding season, so most of the birds should be singing and displaying at their best. Over 40 species of birds can be found along this short run of the creek, beginning with cranes and swallows in the open country. As you work your way up the creek several species of warblers inhabit the willows on one side of the road, while on the dry slopes an entirely different set of birds can be found. Once in the upper forest, some higher elevation birds will begin to make their presence known.

Meet at Museum of the Rockies at 6:45 AM **8-person limit**

JUNE 28 SUNDAY: ROCKY MOUNTAIN RD BLUEBIRD TRAIL

Leader: Lou Ann Harris
406-600-3585 montlou311@gmail.com

Half day

Get up close and personal with Mountain Bluebirds. Join bluebirder and bander Lou Ann Harris, as she checks bluebird nest boxes and bands adults and nestlings along Rocky Mountain Road. This is a rare opportunity to get an inside look at the lives of these amazing birds, including nest building, egg laying and raising young.

Meet at 8:30 AM, at the north end of the Target parking lot. Due to the sensitive nature of the work, we are limiting this field trip to **8 participants**.



Please remember to contact the trip leader to reserve a spot and for more details about all trips. **If you signed up for a trip, but are unable to attend, please notify the trip leader as soon as possible, as others may be on a waiting list.**

JULY 1, WEDNESDAY: BEAVER PONDS TRAIL YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

Leader: John Parker
406-586-5863 • conundrumjp@gmail.com

Full day trip-12 hours; moderately strenuous hiking

Once we arrive in Mammoth, we will be hiking the 5-mile Beaver Ponds Trail. The diversity of habitats along the Beaver Ponds Trail is unmatched by any other trail of such short length in Yellowstone. The Beaver Ponds Trail features a wide variety of birdlife including grouse, woodpeckers, and many sparrows as it passes through open forests, sagelands, and skirts several small ponds. If time allows, we will cover other locations on the northern range that are close to Mammoth.

Meet at the Museum of the Rockies at 6:15 AM **8-person limit**.

NEST BOX SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES



Scan here to Sponsor a Bluebird Nest Box.



Scan here to Sponsor a Kestrel Nest Box.



Sacajawea Audubon Society is again offering a fun way to support our chapter's conservation projects by sponsoring one or more **bluebird** or **kestrel** boxes that we monitor. Sponsorship is **\$20 per bluebird box**, or **\$50 per kestrel box**.

You can sponsor as many as you want. Starting in May, you will receive emailed reports and photos from the field. At the end of the season, we will send a summary of how the nesting season went. If you sponsor a kestrel box, you will be

assigned a box number and get to follow its progress through the nesting season. The money raised this year will go towards the expenses of maintaining the bluebird and kestrel projects, along with helping fund a **new project** to attach **GPS tags** to a few of our **female bluebirds** and maybe a few **kestrels** as well. We hope to find out where these birds spend the winter months and the route they take, using the Motus Tracking System (motus.org). **This project will be the first of its kind for Mountain Bluebirds.**

To sponsor a nest box, scan the QR codes to be directed to the online form or, mail a check to: Sacajawea Audubon Society, PO Box 1711, Bozeman MT 59771-1711. **Please indicate "Bluebird" and/or "Kestrel" on your check.**

Speak Up - Your Voice Matters!

Take Action to Protect Habitat for Birds and People Wanting to be **more involved in conservation advocacy in Montana?** We don't have to re-invent the wheel. Our partner organizations already make it easy. **Sign up for timely Action Alerts on their webpages.**

MONTANA AUDUBON
mtaudubon.org/conservation-policy/action-alert/

NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY
act.audubon.org/

MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION COUNCIL (MEIC)
meic.org/take-action/

NORTHERN PLAINS RESOURCE COUNCIL
northernplains.org/campaign/

NEW SAS MERCHANDISE

A fun way to show your support! All proceeds directly benefit Sacajawea Audubon Society and our efforts for birding, conservation, education and recreation in southwest Montana.

Purchase at:
SAS Meetings
and Events
Cost: \$10.00



SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY ANNUAL CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP

Join the Flock, Fly High Together!

Sacajawea Audubon Society (SAS) encourages everyone who enjoys our field trips or our monthly programs or supports our conservation work to join our local chapter. Even if you belong to National Audubon Society, we need your support through a Local SAS Membership.

100% of your Local Membership dues directly support SAS education and conservation programs.

January – December 2026

Membership dues covers an individual or nuclear family

Basic Membership \$25

Supporting Membership \$50

Student Membership \$10

Additional Donation \$ _____

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bridger Raptor Study | <input type="checkbox"/> Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Story Mill Park Bird Feeding Station | <input type="checkbox"/> Wherever is Needed |

Sacajawea Audubon Society **Newsletter** is sent by email.

Check here to receive a **paper copy**.*

**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 National Audubon Society.

YES! Include another **\$20** to join National Audubon Society.

Choose your membership level above, and THANK YOU for considering an additional donation.

Mail this form and your check to:

Sacajawea Audubon Society, Attn: Membership
PO Box 1711, Bozeman, MT 59771-1711

or Visit: sacajaweaaudubon.org/membership to [join](#) or [renew](#) your membership online.

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

PO Box or Physical Address

City

State

Zip

Phone: (____) _____

Email: _____

May '26 Newsletter

YOUR MEMBERSHIP MATTERS!

HIGHLIGHTING SAS PARTNER EVENTS



WINGS ACROSS THE BIG SKY BIRDING FESTIVAL RETURNS FOR ITS 25TH YEAR

This summer, birders from across the country are invited to Kalispell, Montana, for the 25th Annual Wings Across the Big Sky Birding Festival, hosted by Montana Audubon and local partner Flathead Audubon Society. Taking place **June 12–14, 2026**, the festival celebrates the joy of birds, the wonder of Montana’s landscapes, and the connections we share through nature. The weekend is packed with 30+ guided birding trips, two dinner banquets, a keynote presentation by HawkWatch International founder and former Montana Audubon Executive Director Steve Hoffman, and more! **Field trip spaces are limited, so sign up soon for the best selection.**

For more information and to **Register**, visit the the festival website: mtaudubon.org/events

SEEKING EXPERIENCED BIRDERS FOR COLONIAL WATERBIRD SURVEYS

This year **Montana Audubon is partnering with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks** to carry out statewide surveys for colonial-nesting waterbirds. These surveys, which were last carried out in 2009-2011 (some sites were occasionally surveyed more recently), target about a dozen species of concern, including American White Pelican, Black, Common, Forster’s and Caspian Terns, Franklin’s Gull, Western Grebe, Great Blue Heron, White-faced Ibis, Black-crowned Night Heron, and Eared and Horned Grebes.

Most of the survey locations will be large National Wildlife Refuges and Wildlife Management Areas with breeding colonies on islands, lakeshores and in marsh vegetation, depending on the species. These sites include Benton Lake NWR, Browns Lake, Bowdoin NWR, Canyon Ferry WMA, Freezeout Lake, Medicine Lake NWR, Red Rock Lakes NWR, Ninepipes NWR (already assigned to a surveyor) and Arod Lake amongst others.



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

JOIN THE 2026 SACAJAWEA AUDUBON BIRDATHON!

May 16 – June 21, 2026



Red-breasted Merganser © Daniel Gross.

Awards include:

- Most Species
- Most Raptors
- Most Money Raised
- Most Pledges Collected
- Most Magpies – “Einstein of Bird” Award
- Most Species within a 200-ft radius – “Sitting Duck” Award
- Best Bird Seen

Join the fun for the annual Sacajawea Audubon Society Birdathon! Gather your team and spend a day outdoors identifying as many bird species as possible within a 24-hour period—all while raising funds for local conservation and education programs.

Collect pledges per species or bird seen as you explore fields, forests, waterways, or even your own backyard.

Teams can be made up of friends, family, or coworkers. Businesses are encouraged to participate or sponsor.

Register at Sacajaweaaudubon.org to receive your Birdathon kit and start planning.

Submit results by June 23, and celebrate at the **Awards Party on June 24 at 7:00 PM at the Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve.**



Yellow Rumped Warbler.
© Ezra Staengl.

*Get outside, have fun,
while helping protect
birds & wildlife*