OCTOBER 2026

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, Oct 12

The Endangered Species Act:

50 Years of Conservation Success–And an Uncertain Future

For more than 50 years, the **Endangered Species Act** has stood as our nation's most powerful environmental law. Enacted to stem a **rising tide of extinctions** that threatened to claim even our national symbol, the Bald Eagle, the Act represented a decision by our nation to do what no country had done before: establish what amounts to a bill of rights for animals and plants. Half a century later, the Act's **track record of success** speaks for itself: it has prevented the extinction of 99 percent of species that have come under its protection and recovered many – including the **Bald Eagle**, **Brown Pelican**, and **Peregrine Falcon** – from their formerly imperiled status.

Now, however, due to recent regulatory changes, the future of the Endangered Species Act looks uncertain, prompting the writer Terry Tempest Williams to wonder recently in the New York Times: "What if **50 years from now**, having plundered America the Beautiful and destroyed the habitat for the creatures around us, we are plagued by an inconsolable loneliness because so **many species have left** us?"

Join us as **Tim Preso**, managing attorney of the Biodiversity Defense Program of the national environmental law organization **Earthjustice**, discusses the Endangered Species Act's contributions to conservation of birds and many other species and canvasses recent regulatory changes that weaken the Act's protective framework for endangered wildlife.

Shorebirds and Crabs. Photo by Aristide Economopoulos for Earthjustice

Florida Scrub-Jay. Photo by Zach Stern

Tim Preso is an environmental lawyer who has **spent more than 25 years** working to protect some of our nation's most iconic wildlands and wildlife; first as **managing attorney of Earthjustice's** office in the Northern Rockies and more recently as **leader of the organization's national biodiversity program**. He is a recognized expert in public lands, wildlife, and natural resources law who has worked to enforce the Endangered Species Act on behalf of species ranging from grizzly bears to Red Knots. Tim is also a **Bozeman birder and occasional leader of SAS field trips.**

MESSAGE *from* PRESIDENT, DOUG MCSPADDEN

Thank you in advance to all the volunteers who have stepped up to help with this year's **Bridger Raptor Festival**! Volunteers play a huge role in making the Bridger Raptor Count, and celebration festival come together. This couldn't happen without you.

A special thanks to **Bridger Bowl** for their support of the Bridger Raptor Count and their generous, continuing donation of **two season passes** to help fundraise for the Count. And thank you to **Simkins Lumber** for donating all the materials for making the bird nesting boxes.

Thank you, **Steve Hoffman**, for his decades of leadership and tenacity in continually managing the Raptor Count over the past 35 years. We appreciate Steve for giving his western raptor migration presentation at the September meeting.

I can't think of anyone better to present our October program than **Tim Preso**, head of the Biodiversity Program at Earthjustice. Tim–a longtime SAS member and field trip leader–will discuss how the **Endangered Species Act** originated and demonstrate its progression over time. We'll look at recent changes and how they're coming into effect, and what this could mean for the future.

I hope you've been reading The Bozeman Daily Chronicle over the past six weeks. They've been running a column written by several SAS members featuring birds of our choosing and showcasing their importance. This project was the brainchild of **Amanda Fulton**, Audience and Copy Editor at the Chronicle. She has guided this column with passion, interest and lots of gentle editing.

SAS first started working with Amanda, when she was Editor of The Exponent—promoting our **Master Naturalist Class** taught by **Cedar Mathers-Winn**. That arrangement continues with this year's coming naturalist course. So, thank you Amanda for all your interests and support of Sacajawea Audubon Society's mission.

Amanda is part of a young group of editors at The Chronicle who are breathing fresh life into the paper. If you haven't read the Bozeman Daily Chronicle in a while, check it out. **I think you will be impressed.**

SAS Upcoming Events!

3–4 Oct: Bridger Raptor Fest; at Bridger Bowl

5 Oct: SAS Board of Directors Meeting; only Virtual

6 Oct: Indreland Board Meeting; at Confluence

10 Oct: Indreland Bird Walk with Kevin Cox; meet at Cafe´ M (Main Street)

12 Oct: Tim Preso leads SAS Program Meeting; at Hope Lutheran Church

17 Oct: Fall Field Trip to Ennis Lake; meet at Museum of the Rockies

17 Oct: Indreland Bird Walk with Kevin Cox; meeting at Cafe´ M (Main Street)

17 Oct: Busy Beaver Rendezvous; at the Bozeman Wetlands

21 Oct: Book Club Meeting; at Hope Lutheran Church

24 Oct: Spooky Stroll; at the Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve

9 Nov: Laura Dykstra leads SAS Program Meeting; at Hope Lutheran Chruch

14 Dec: Special Holiday Program; at The Ellen Theater

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 Doug McSpadden, pres@sacajaweaaudubon.org

Vice President *Open Position*

Past President Chris Nixon, saschrisnixon@gmail.com

Treasurer Brad Frazee, treas@sacajaweaaudubon.org

Secretary John Edwards, sec@sacajaweaaudubon.org

Membership Loreene Reid, membership@sacajaweaaudubon.org

Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve

President Frank Marchak, Frankm@bozemanwetlands.org

Treasurer Loreene Reid, loreener@bozemanwetlands.org

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

BIRD NOTES

..... by John Parker

In mid-September, we are moving into the later part of fall migration, with the peak raptor and waterfowl movement still ahead of us. The shorebird and passerine movements are winding down, with only a few late season surprises ahead.

Before this year there had only been five previous reports of **Upland Sandpipers** in Gallatin County. But this year Upland Sandpipers were seen at two locations on the same day! On the morning of August 10th, an Upland Sandpiper flew overhead Davey Walters at Headwaters State Park. Later that afternoon, Andrew Guttenberg saw another Upland Sandpiper just north of the Belgrade airport.

Gray Flycatchers are a rarity anywhere in Montana other than very specific locations in Beaverhead and Carbon Counties. Empidonax flycatchers are notorious for their difficulty of identification, especially without any vocalizations to go by. But on September 8th, while walking up the road at the Goose Creek state land west of Gallatin Gateway, a small plain flycatcher pumping its tail in a downward motion caught Dave Benes' eye. Upon closer examination this turned out to be the second recorded sighting for a Gray Flycatcher in Gallatin County.

Amazingly, a second Gray Flycatcher was seen interacting with the first later that day. These very cooperative flycatchers continued to be seen for another four days, and many local birders were able to enjoy close up views of these wayward birds. It makes you wonder if they might have come from a heretofore unknown breeding location.

Relatively few **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** passed through southwestern Montana this spring, and only one has been reported since May. The lone report for Rose-breasted Grosbeak was a male bird that spent two days at Mark Sherkenney's yard on Bozeman Pass, August 7th-8th.

What would be the first **Orchard Oriole** for southwestern Montana, was the female oriole spotted along the East Gallatin River at Glen Lake Rotary Park by Marco Salvo on September 9th. Orchard Orioles aren't uncommon in eastern Montana, but seldom stray anywhere west of Billings.

There was a small flurry of **Tennessee Warblers** around the 1st of September. Lou Ann Harris and Andrew Guttenberg started it off when they saw one in the east woods at Glen Lake on August 29th. Two days later, Don Profota had one in his yard south of Bozeman, and then on September 4th Davey Walters saw another along the Sourdough Nature Trail.

Gray Flycatcher. Photo by Dave Benes

Earlier that same day on the Sourdough Nature Trail, Andrew Guttenberg got a fleeting look at a **Cape May Warbler**. A rare find anywhere in Montana, this is only the third time one has been reported in the southwestern part of the state.

September 13th brought a huge flight of nocturnal migrants, including thousands of **Swainson's Thrushes** passed over this area. Due to a storm that night, these nocturnal migrants were travelling at a lower altitude than usual, enabling birders to hear them calling throughout the night. The following morning, Swainson's Thrushes could be found everywhere across the Gallatin Valley. It is such a thrilling time of year for birding, how does one decide where to go?

WHERE WOLVES WALK, RAVENS FLY & OTTERSPLAY: THE FILMS OF BOB LANDIS

SAS Special Holiday Program December 14, 2026 at the Ellen Theatre

For more than five decades, Bob Landis has followed the wild—camera in hand—capturing extraordinary moments in Yellowstone, Denali, Glacier, and beyond.

Join us for a special holiday presentation celebrating Bob's remarkable career as a wildlife filmmaker and storyteller.

Bob Landis. Courtesy Billings Gazette

SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY

INDRELAND AUDUBON WETLAND PRESERVE

OCTOBER 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.

Murder at the Wetland

by Ashley Hall

One chilly October night in 2006, I was walking back to my dorm at Indiana University Bloomington when I heard **strange caws and clicking** sounds coming from a series of large trees along a sidewalk. Curious where the sounds were coming from (and a bit spooked) I was astounded to see **hundreds of crows gathered** and settling in for the night. As a spooky soul and lover of crows, I could have stayed there all night listening to sounds of rustling feathers, and subtle chatter. This was my first encounter with a "**murder of crows**".

While this annual phenomenon might remind some of the unsettling scenes from the 1963 Alfred Hitchcock classic, The Birds; for birders, it's a great opportunity to observe crows and their social behaviors. Every fall night around this time you can see **masses of American Crows** (*Corvus Brachyrhychos*) in the trees, but why are they gathering, and why only at this time of the year?

Though roosting occurs in smaller groups year-round, it begins in the fall when adults are **free from their responsibilities of raising their young**. Adult American Crows and their fledglings come together in the hundreds to roost in stands of trees at night. In the early afternoon, crows fly in from around the region to gather in **raucous "staging" or "pre-roosting"** areas. Some scientists think crows may use this time to share important details about where to find food, resources, and to warn others about danger, while others believe gathering provides safety in numbers, protection from predation like owls, or **warmth and thermoregulation** in the colder months of the year. Their complex language and roosting behaviors have been studied by researchers like Bozeman's Dr. John Marzluff, professor emeritus at the University of Washington and world-renowned corvid expert Dr. Kaeli Swift.

This gregarious roosting behavior is not unique to American Crows, but many other groups of birds as well. Red-winged Blackbirds, European Starlings, Tree Swallows, and Chimney Swifts roost in large numbers, especially around the Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve.

Interested in experiencing this phenomenon for yourself this spooky season? To find your local American crow roost, go outside before sunset, keep your eyes to the sky, and watch the mass "murder" settle in for the night.

SPEND A DAY AT THE WETLANDS

Ready to explore the beautiful Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve? Located just south of downtown Bozeman, the preserve offers a chance to experience a thriving urban wetland right in the heart of the community.

BY FOOT OR BIKE: THE GALLIGATOR TRAIL

From East Main Street, head south along the trail toward the wetland and follow the signs directing you toward the Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve. **The trail provides a scenic approach to the preserve and is a great way to arrive on foot or by bike.**

PARKING LOCATIONS

1. Near the mailboxes on Village Downtown Blvd: Just east of N. Broadway Ave. Look for the Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve trail sign and walk the trail to the Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve gate. (0.2 mile).

2. Park on Village Crossing Way: As you head southeast (off Village Downtown Blvd.) at the end of the street is a gravel trail - walk northeast to the gate (less than a block). Do not park in The Kestrel apartment building lot, which is for residents only.

3. Park in the parking lot behind DA Davidson, 1101 E. Main St: Drive to the parking area in the furthest northeast corner of the parking lot. The dirt trail off the parking lot leads you downhill to the Indreland Audubon Wetland gate.

The Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve is a special place that offers opportunities for looking closely at wildlife.

Stay on the designated trails. If you'd like to explore the lower path by the Kingfisher Pavilion, join our bird walks or become a Busy Beaver Volunteer, otherwise it is normally closed off due to wetland restoration.

SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY

INDRELAND AUDUBON WETLAND PRESERVE

OCTOBER 2026

Featured Research: Montana Bee Atlas

by Frank Marchack, President of the Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve

For the third successive year, the Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve has contributed to the **Montana Bee Atlas**, a statewide citizen-science effort coordinated to document the **diversity, distribution, and abundance** of Montana's native bumblebee species. Native bees are essential pollinators of both wild plants and agricultural crops, yet far less is known about them than their more closely scrutinized cousin, **the honeybee**. The Bee Atlas provides training for volunteers to conduct standardized surveys and collect specimens. The data are submitted to a state-wide database so that researchers can build a clearer picture of where Montana's bees live, how their populations are faring, and which habitats matter most to their survival. Over many seasons, this growing dataset helps **guide conservation and land-management** decisions across the state.

Following the Bee Atlas standardized protocol, we collect bees directly from flowers. Each specimen is then placed in a vial and **chilled on ice**, which calms the bees without harming them and makes handling for photography easier. Each bee is photographed from multiple angles to capture the features needed for identification, such as **wing venation, coloration, and body structure**. The bees are then placed in a sunny spot where they soon recover and fly off.

Specimens are later identified to genus or species using these photos and physical characteristics by regional experts. Alongside each bee record, data are also gathered on the plant it was collected from, including the **species and bloom status at the time**.

These plant-pairing data are a core part of the Atlas, since they help researchers understand which plants support which pollinators.

We carried out surveys **May through September** this year, including along the length of the berm, the upland area above the gate, as well as along the access road. But unlike previous surveys, this season brought an important and somewhat concerning result: **bee numbers were strikingly low**. Where past years produced steady, varied catches, this season resulted in single digit findings. This appears to not be confined to the Preserve. Conversations with fellow Bee Atlas participants in Billings and Helena revealed a similar pattern of **fewer bees, across very different landscapes and habitats.**

The specific cause for these findings is unclear. Whether this reflects a single unusual year, shifting climate conditions, or something more persistent is still to be determined. This is yet another reason why **continued consistent monitoring** is so important.

To learn more about the Montana Bee Atlas, visit: bumblebeeatlas.org

UPCOMING EVENTS AT THE WETLANDS

OCTOBER 17, 2026 | 1 - 6PM

END-OF-THE-SEASON BUSY BEAVER RENDEZVOUS

Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve

Celebrate the **end of another busy season** of conservation, restoration, and community. We'll spend the afternoon **winterizing the wetland** to help ensure it's ready for the wildlife the depend on it. Then head to the Kingfisher Pavilion for good food, stories, and a **toast to our amazing volunteers.**

OCTOBER 24, 2026 | 5:30 - 7PM

SPOOKY STROLL

Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve

Stroll along the berm with **eyes, ears, and flashlights** open for some of the preserve's nocturnal residents: **beavers, bats, corvids, crows, magpies, ravens, and more.** Enjoy the sights and sounds of the wetlands after dark, while learning about the fascinating creatures that come alive as daylight fades. Hot beverages and Halloween candy will be provided while supplies last. **Costumes encouraged!**

Whether you're an experienced conservationist, someone who loves nature, or just want to lend a hand, there's a place for you at the Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve. From habitat restoration and invasive species removal to wildlife monitoring, special events, and other hands-on projects, Busy Beavers help keep this remarkable wetland thriving and have a lot of fun along the way!

Come get your hands dirty, meet fellow nature lovers, and help care for one of Bozeman's special natural places.
Ready to become a Busy Beaver? Learn more and sign up at bozemanwetlands.org**.**

NEW SAS MERCHANDISE

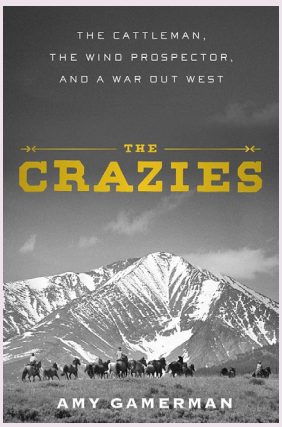
A fun way to show your support! All proceeds directly benefit Sacajawea Audubon Society and our efforts for birding, conservation, education and recreation in southwest Montana.

Purchase at: SAS Meetings and Events

Cost: $10.00

OCTOBER BOOK CLUB NEWS

For the October 2026 SAS Book Club meeting, we will be discussing ***The Crazies: The Cattleman, the Wind Prospector, and a War Out West by Amy Gamerman***. The meeting will be held at Hope Lutheran Church on Wednesday October 21st. Doors will open at 6 pm with the book discussion and online link starting at 6:30 pm. Email Dr. Chris Brown at chrisb.sunroom@gmail.com for further information and to request Zoom access.



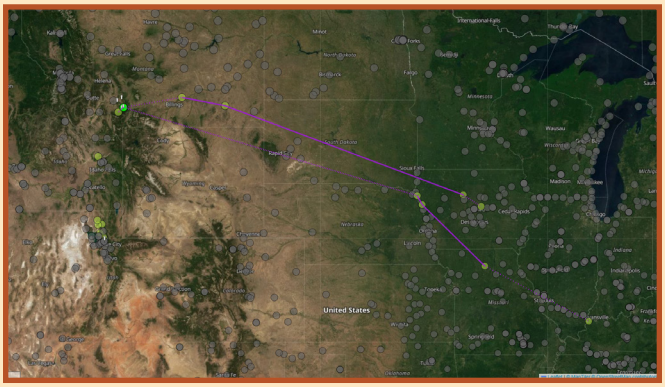
The book relates a true-life Western drama about a modern land and energy dispute in Big Timber, Montana. The story centers on Rick Jarrett, a fifth-generation local rancher who wants to build a wind farm on his family property. His plan sparks an intense legal and cultural battle with his neighbors, most notably Russell Gordy, a wealthy Texas oil and gas billionaire who owns a massive trophy ranch in the shadow of the Crazy Mountains.

As the conflict unfolds, it draws in a colorful cast of characters; including a wind prospector, a Crow activist fighting for tribal rights to the sacred mountains, and an Olympic athlete-turned-attorney. Beneath the courtroom clashes lies a broader struggle over the changing American West. The region's iconic rangelands face severe pressures from climate change, including record droughts, raging wildfires, and shrinking snowpacks. Through this high-stakes showdown, Gamerman captures a poignant portrait of class division, corporate power, and what it truly means to love and survive on a shifting landscape.

MOTUS UPDATE

by Ben Goodheart

In exciting news, two of our tagged **Bobolinks** from the Stucky Road area have begun their migration south-east. Both individuals were detected passing the Indreland tower, likely over **Bozeman Pass.** One individual was detected north of Billings—perhaps following the Yellowstone River corridor—and was last detected in **Iowa** as of September 10th. The other individual was last detected in the southern tip of **Indiana** as of September 18th. These individuals are among the western-most tagged Bobolinks with recorded migrations which will hopefully help conservation measures for this **important and declining species.**



RAPTOR FESTIVAL PREP

There is a lot of prep and organization that goes into the annual Bridger Raptor Festival. The **Bird Box Sales Project** at the Raptor Festival takes a tremendous amount of volunteer time to prepare and package. **Bill Klenn** did an amazing job this year cutting all the pieces for the kits and drilling all the entry holes. Giving new meaning to "drill baby drill", Bill led the "drilling party" to finish off the boxes. Thank you **Noreen Breeding, Roger Breeding, Bill Klenn, Marvin Lansverk and Neil Poulsen** for drilling approximately **1,500 holes to finish off the kits**. And thanks to **Simkin's Lumber** for the donation of screws and lumber for the nest boxes.

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 2027

Membership dues covers an individual or nuclear family

Basic Membership **$25**

Supporting Membership **$50**

Student Membership **$10**

Additional Donation $ _____

- ❒ Bridger Raptor Study
- ❒ Indreland Audubon Wetland Preserve
- ❒ Story Mill Park Bird Feeding Station
- ❒ 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: _____

October '26 Newsletter

YOUR MEMBERSHIP MATTERS!

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/

FALL FIELD TRIP: ENNIS LAKE WATERFOWL

OCT 17, SATURDAY: ENNIS LAKE – MADISON COUNTY

Leader: George Nixon
(406)219-6169 • hawkowl526@gmail.com

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

Meet at Museum of the Rockies at 7:45 AM; **12-person limit.**

We encourage all skill levels of birders to participate. Enjoy a good time with the birds and your fellow birders!

If you sign up but are unable to attend, please notify George as soon as possible, as others may be on a waiting list.

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.