



# SacajaweaAudubonNews

SACAJAWEA AUDUBON BUILDS ON AN INTEREST IN BIRDS TO PROMOTE THE CONSERVATION OF OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT THROUGH ENJOYMENT, EDUCATION AND ACTION.

May/June 2011

## Calendar at a Glance

May 9th	SAS May Meeting
May 7th-June 25th	SAS Spring Birding Series
May 11th-June 4th	International Migratory Bird Festival
May 14th-June 19th	SAS Birdathon
May 28th	Headwaters IBA Count
June 3rd-June 5th	MT Audubon Bird Festival

## HEADWATERS IBA COUNT

Our next Headwaters IBA count will be Saturday May 28th. We'll meet at 7:30 am at the Visitor's Kiosk across from the campground. The end of May will be a great time to visit the park to survey nesting birds. Highlights from past May IBA counts include the following species: White-throated Swift, Clay-colored Sparrow, Veery, four Wren species, five species of Swallow, Bullock's Oriole, Least Flycatcher, and both Prairie and Peregrine Falcon. Don't miss this opportunity to collect data as a citizen scientist! For questions or to sign-up for this opportunity please contact Annie Sisk at 285-6596 or [rnr605@hotmail.com](mailto:rnr605@hotmail.com).

## Join SAS for the **Annual Sweet and Savory Social!**



Monday, May 9, 2011 at 7:00pm  
 Downstairs Community Room  
 First Security Bank at 670 South 19th Street  
 Bozeman, Montana

Come join the annual Sacajawea Audubon Society Sweet and Savory Social. Everyone is welcome to join SAS and share their interest in birding and conservation. The meeting will include:

- The Sweet and Savory Social, including treats provided by members.
- Election of two at-large positions to the SAS Board.
- A "Show and Tell" time for sharing nature-related stories, poetry, pictures, or art.

For next year, our meeting place will change to Hope Lutheran Church, 2152 W. Graf Street (off South 19th) in Bozeman. We have reserved space there for the second Monday of the month, September 2011 through May 2012.

## SAS Birdathon May 14th-June 19th

Spring is just around the corner, which means it's time to call 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 for birds. The challenge is to identify as many bird species as possible within a 24 hour period. You don't have to be an expert! By participating you could win prizes and awards. Check-out the Birdathon Rules and Prize & Award information sheets in the Birdathon Kit online at [www.sacajaweaudubon.org](http://www.sacajaweaudubon.org) or call 406 600-6666 for more information.

## President's Comments: A pip of a bird

Discovered by Isaac Sprague on June 19, 1843, near Fort Union at the confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers, Sprague's Pipit was originally called Sprague's Missouri Lark. Once common in the northern prairies of the Dakotas and Montana, this *Anthus spragueii* is in a family of ground-dwelling songbirds called *Motacillidae*.

John James Audubon wrote on June 24, 1843:

"The male rises by constant undulations to a great height, say one hundred yards or more; and whilst singing its sweet-sounding notes, beats its wings, poised in the air like a Hawk, without rising at this time; after which, and after each burst of singing, it sails in divers directions, forming three quarters of a circle or thereabouts, then rises again, and again sings; the intervals between the singing are longer than those which the song occupies, and at times the bird remains so long in the air as to render it quite fatiguing to follow it with the eye."

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology says this pipit has "the longest known flight display of any bird"— up to three hours. Bozeman is on the edge of its range, and my summer goal is to see a Sprague's Pipit.

Happy Birding!

*Anne Millbrooke*

President  
 Sacajawea Audubon Society

## Bird Notes

During the weekend of March 12-13, as soon as the ice was off, Peter Murray reports that two **Trumpeter Swans** returned to the pond at Emigrant. Trumpeter Swans have been nesting to the Emigrant pond for a number of years now. On March 20<sup>th</sup> two pair of **Wood Ducks** spent about thirty minutes investigating the cottonwoods along Baker Creek, by Terry and Mary Danforth's house west of Belgrade. The next day while driving Dry Creek Road the Danforths saw 2 **Sandhill Cranes**, along with numerous raptors on their drive north of the Gallatin Valley.

Peter Norlander, Travis Kidd, and Dave Story spent a very rewarding evening listening for owls on the Owl Prowl around the Battle Ridge campground. They located multiple individuals of three species of owls, including **Great Gray Owls**, **Northern Saw-whet Owls**, and **Boreal Owls**.

While walking in the neighborhood of the Cattail Pond on Davis Road, Madeline Lieb saw a **Peregrine Falcon** on several occasions during March. Madeline also had a **Purple Finch**, which is quite uncommon locally, in her yard the third week in March.

South of Ennis Lake, near Jeffers on April 4<sup>th</sup>, Robin and Richard Wolcott found a very early **Say's Pheobe**.

Kathryn Hiestand and Neal Miller heard a **Pacific Wren** singing along with an **American Dipper** up South Cottonwood Canyon, March 25<sup>th</sup>. After listening to these two beautiful and intricate songs sung in tandem, Neal eventually made his way down the slope to get a good look at the wren. Last year the Winter Wren complex was split into two distinct species, with the *pacificus* subspecies of western North America given full species status.

On April 9, as Mary and John Griffith were enjoying a picnic lunch along Bridger Creek across from the Fish Hatchery, Mary thought she saw another Junco. However, it turned out to be a surprising and beautiful **Varied Thrush**. The biggest surprise during March, was the **Lincoln's Sparrow** that Joan Ryshavy saw and heard sing a brief song, in her yard west of Belgrade. This March 20<sup>th</sup> observation was a first for the month in southwestern Montana.

As she drove the road from Mammoth to Tower on March 29<sup>th</sup>, Sally MacDonald came upon a vast flock of a least **500 Gray-crowned Rosy Finches**. Meanwhile 100 or so Rosy Finches continued to frequent Charles Spangler's feeders near Pray, as they have since November. As always, the tempestuous weather of late March and April keeps the Rosy Finches moving until they can sustain themselves on their high elevation breeding grounds.

I hope everyone has a great spring and summer and be sure to enjoy the migration. Thank you for all of the great bird sightings!

-John Parker

Thank you to all our sharp-eyed birders for reporting your great sightings. Please report your Bird Sightings by the 9<sup>th</sup> of the month to John Parker at 586-5863 or [conundrum@imt.net](mailto:conundrum@imt.net)

## Montana Audubon's Wings Across the Big Sky Bird Festival



Montana Audubon presents their annual Bird Festival in Glasgow, MT. Festival activities will begin Friday, June 3<sup>rd</sup>, and extend through Sunday, June 5<sup>th</sup>. Consider making a vacation out of it! This year MT Audubon has added full-day, Pre-Festival Workshops titled: **Grassland Bird Conservation** and **Greater Sage Grouse Conservation**. Both workshops will include a series of talks by biologists with expertise in grasslands or sage-grouse and sage-steppe conservation.

For the **Festival Keynote Speaker**, MT Audubon welcomes nationally renowned writer **Gary Ferguson**. His talk, *Gifts from the Sky: How Birds Shaped American Conservation*, will be a mix of lore, history, and science—and celebrates our long-standing love affair with birds.

For more information visit the Montana Audubon website at <http://mtaudubon.org/birdwatching/festival.html> or contact: Larissa Berry at [lberry@mtaudubon.org](mailto:lberry@mtaudubon.org) or 406-443-3949

### Field Trips For June 4-5 Include:

- **Fort Peck**-This trip will concentrate on the area around the town of Fort Peck and below Fort Peck Dam
- **North Valley County 1&2**-These field trips will explore the unique native grasslands of northern Valley County.
- **South Valley County 1&2**-These tours will explore the sagebrush and Ponderosa Pine habitats of southern Valley County
- **Missouri River Float/Canoe Trip**-This canoe trip is ideal for the beginner canoeist and will allow birders to see up-close the birds and habitats of the Missouri River from a unique perspective.
- **Bird Banding**-This field trip will allow you to get up close and personal with a variety of birds associated with the Milk River riparian habitats.
- **Bowdoin National Wildlife Refuge**-This field trip will visit one of the jewels of the National Wildlife Refuge system.
- **Manning Lake Tribal Wildlife Refuge**-The Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes invite you to explore the avian diversity of Manning Lake Wetlands, believed to be the first tribal wildlife refuge.

## 2011 Sacajawea Audubon Spring Birding Series

Participants in all trips will meet at the front parking lot of the Museum of the Rockies at 6:45 a.m. and leave at 7:00 a.m. unless otherwise noted. Car pools will be arranged at the museum; an offer to help with gas to the person driving is always appreciated but not mandatory. Dress for the weather; good footwear is a must as field trip conditions are not always dry. Turn off your cell phones and keep unnecessary conversations to a minimum. Some field trips are limited to a certain number of participants. Contact the trip leader for more details about any trip, and to sign up for the trip. We encourage beginning birders to participate. Come have a good time and learn something new.

➤ **May 7: Mount Ellis**

**Leader: Matt Keefer, 556-0639**

**(4 to 5-hour trip; moderately strenuous walking)**

We will explore a variety of habitats including grassland, aspen meadow and conifer forest edge, while we look for early spring migrants such as Red-naped Sapsucker, Orange-crowned Warblers, and several species of sparrows, among many others.

➤ **May 15: Triple Tree Trail**

**Leader: John Parker, 586-5863**

**(4 to 5 hour trip; moderately strenuous walking)**

This trail passes through a number of habitats, and transitional edges between them. From grassland sparrows to forest woodpeckers, the trail has a wide diversity of bird species. Lincoln's Sparrow, Swainson's Thrush and Western Tanager are expected on this walk. **12 person limit.**

➤ **May 21: Sourdough Nature Trail**

**Leader: Andrew Guttenberg 585-2623**

**(3-hour trip; easy walking)**

After leaving the MOR parking lot, this trip will begin at the Goldenstein entrance. The trail is an easy, level stroll following Sourdough Creek. This trip is at the peak of spring migration so we should see and hear a variety of flycatchers, thrushes and warblers. **12 person limit.**

➤ **May 28: Mission Creek**

**Leader: Robin Wolcott, 582-0070**

**(Until mid-afternoon; bring a lunch)**

**After leaving Bozeman, we will meet at Albertson's parking lot in Livingston at 7:30 a.m. and then leave from there at 7:45 a.m. Car-pooling is essential.**

In rolling prairie we may find McCown's Longspur, Long-billed Curlew, and raptors. In the Mission Creek Valley we will watch for Wild Turkeys and listen for warblers, and watch for crossbills in the spruce forest. On the return trip we may see Lark Buntings. We have seen over 110 species along this route, including Sprague's Pipit, Upland Sandpiper, and Broad-winged Hawk.

➤ **June 3-5: Please join us at the 2011 Montana Audubon Bird Festival in Glasgow, MT.**

Contact Montana Audubon at (406) 443-3949 or go to [www.mtaudubon.org](http://www.mtaudubon.org). Come join the fun.

➤ **June 11: Trail Creek to Battle Ridge**

**Leader: Jeff Pentel, 586-3534**

**(Until mid-afternoon; bring a lunch)**

We travel through a variety of habitats, from lowland riparian to juniper woodlands and high-altitude forest, focusing on birding by sound and sight. We have seen 65-85 species on this trip, including Ovenbird, Cordilleran Flycatcher, and Broad-tailed Hummingbird. At Battle Ridge Campground we have seen Black-backed Woodpeckers and Williamson's Sapsuckers. Walking is easy, and a spotting scope would be helpful for viewing waterfowl and shorebirds at Cottonwood Reservoir

➤ **June 18: Bridger Bowl**

**Leader: Lou Ann Harris, 600-3585**

This half-day field trip will take us on a hike through the coniferous forest and wildflower meadows at Bridger Bowl Ski Area. Species we hope to find include: Western Tanager, Lincoln's and White-crowned Sparrows, both Kinglet species, Steller's Jay and Yellow-rumped Warbler. Dusky Grouse, Williamson's Sapsucker and Three-toed Woodpecker are also possible. Most of the hike will be on an old logging road, with some steep sections. Wear appropriate clothes and shoes for hiking. **12 person limit.**

➤ **June 25: Kelly Canyon**

**Leader: Ron Farmer, 586-3987**

**(driving and walking along gravel roads)**

This trip passes through open fields, then climbs past dry juniper covered hillsides, mature wetlands, mixed woodlands, and eventually reaches into the conifer forest. Bluebirds, towhees, kingbirds, hummingbirds, warblers, grosbeaks, and tanagers are just a few of the species that we should see along this route. **Four car limit.**

This summer, check the Sacajawea Audubon website at [www.sacajaweaudubon.org](http://www.sacajaweaudubon.org) for leader's choice field trips in late July and August.

## American Birding Association Principles of Birding Ethics

Everyone who enjoys birds and birding must always respect wildlife, its environment, and the rights of others. In any conflict of interest between birds and birders, the welfare of the birds and their environment comes first.

### Code of Birding Ethics

#### 1. Promote the welfare of birds and their environment.

**1(a)** Support the protection of important bird habitat.

**1(b)** To avoid stressing birds or exposing them to danger, exercise restraint and caution during observation, photography, sound recording, or filming.

\* Limit the use of recordings and other methods of attracting birds, and never use such methods in heavily birded areas, or for attracting any species that is Threatened, Endangered, or of Special Concern, or is rare in your local area.

\* Keep well back from nests and nesting colonies, roosts, display areas, and important feeding sites. In such sensitive areas, if there is a need for extended observation, filming, photography, or recording, try to use a blind or hide, and take advantage of natural cover.

\* Use artificial light sparingly for filming or photography, especially for close-ups.

**1(c)** Before advertising the presence of a rare bird, evaluate the potential for disturbance to the bird, its surroundings, and other people in the area, and proceed only if access can be controlled, disturbance minimized, and permission has been obtained from

private landowners. The sites of rare nesting birds should be divulged only to the proper conservation authorities.

**1(d)** Stay on roads, trails, and paths where they exist; otherwise keep habitat disturbance to a minimum.

#### 2. Respect the law, and the rights of others.

**2(a)** Do not enter private property without the owner's explicit permission.

**2(b)** Follow all laws, rules, and regulations governing use of roads and public areas, both at home and abroad.

**2(c)** Practice common courtesy in contacts with other people. Your exemplary behavior will generate goodwill with birders and non-birders alike.

#### 3. Ensure that feeders, nest structures, and other artificial bird environments are safe.

**3(a)** Keep dispensers, water, and food clean and free of decay or disease. It is important to feed birds continually during harsh weather.

**3(b)** Maintain and clean nest structures regularly.

**3(c)** If you are attracting birds to an area, ensure that birds are not exposed to predation from cats and other domestic animals, or to dangers posed by artificial hazards.

#### 4. Group birding, whether organized or impromptu, requires special care.

Each individual in the group, in addition to the obligations spelled out in Items #1 and #2, has responsibilities as a Group Member.

**4(a)** Respect the interests, rights, and skills of fellow birders, as well as people participating in other legitimate outdoor activities. Freely share your knowledge and experience, except where code 1(c) applies. Be especially helpful to beginning birders.

**4(b)** If you witness unethical birding behavior, assess the situation, and intervene if you think it prudent. When interceding, inform the person(s) of the inappropriate action, and attempt, within reason, to have it stopped. If the behavior continues, document it, and notify appropriate individuals or organizations.

#### Group Leader Responsibilities [amateur and professional trips and tours]:

**4(c)** Be an exemplary ethical role model for the group. Teach through word and example.

**4(d)** Keep groups to a size that limits impact on the environment, and that does not interfere with others in the same area.

**4(e)** Ensure that everyone in the group knows of and practices this code.

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The ABA Code of Birding Ethics may be freely reproduced for distribution/dissemination

## The Return of the Swainey

It is that time of year again! Well, at least we are all hoping it is that time of year- when the rough legged hawks head north to their breeding grounds and the Swainson's hawks return for the beautiful Montana summer. The return of the Swainson's is no small feat, to be sure. They make one of the longest raptor migrations flying 11,000 to 17, 000 miles round trip.

These buteos (broad winged, soaring hawks) will gather in large groups, called kettles, in the fall and make their way to Argentina for the winter months. While in South America, Swainson's hawks eat insects, mainly grasshoppers and dragonflies, and their nickname is the "farmer's friend." They rid the fields of insects in Argentina, but are very susceptible to pesticide poisoning. Once back in Montana, Swainson's hawks expand their diets to include small mammals, such as ground squirrels, voles, and mice, as well as the occasional bird and reptile.

Swainson's hawks can be somewhat difficult to identify, as

plumage variation exists among the birds, including light morphs and dark morphs. In the sky, the flight feathers are dark, while the under



wing is usually lighter. Adults will have a white throat patch. Like the common red tailed hawks, you will find these birds perched on poles, overlooking open fields or soaring on thermals to find their prey.

The Montana Raptor Conservation Center is quite fortunate to work with one of these hawks on a daily basis, as one of the permanent resident ambassador raptors is a Swainson's hawk. His name is Chaco, and he will be 10 years old this year. Chaco was

born with a deformed humerus in his left wing, and has never been able to fly. Admittedly, I may be a bit biased, but Chaco is one of the most handsome Swainson's I have ever seen. If you would like to become a sponsor of Chaco or any of the education ambassador birds at the raptor center, please contact us!

So be on the lookout for Montana's summer resident Swainson's hawks soon!

Summer is the busy season at MRCC.

Please report injured birds of prey quickly! You are the first step in saving the life of a raptor! (406) 585-1211

The Montana Raptor Conservation Center is a non-profit organization whose mission is to rehabilitate injured birds of prey, release them and education the community about our incredible raptor neighbors!

-Cynthia Zyzda  
Montana Raptor Conservation Center

## Go Wild! Go Birding!

Come join the fun with the Yellowstone Ranger District and the Livingston Adult Community Education program to celebrate International Migratory Bird Day! For more information, call Rachel Feigley, Yellowstone District Wildlife Biologist at 222-1892 or 823-6064. *Free lecture series* to be held at Washington School, 315 N. 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Livingston. *Field trips* will meet at the Yellowstone Ranger District, Livingston Office, 5242 Hwy 89 South. Please sign up for evening lectures and field trips through the Livingston Adult Community Education website @ [www.livingstonace.org](http://www.livingstonace.org).

### Lectures and Field Trips:

#### Thursday, May 5

7:00-8:00 p.m. Bird Conservation in the 21st Century

Presenter: *Catherine Wightman, Avian Biologist/ Bird Conservation Coordinator, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks*

8:15-9:15 p.m. Looking at the World Through Rose-Colored Binoculars

Presenter: *Mary Maj, Gardiner District Ranger and former Wildlife Biologist*

#### Wednesday, May 11

7:00-8:00 p.m. Raptors and Rehabilitation

Presenter: *Montana Raptor Conservation Center staff*

8:15-9:15 p.m. Harlequin Ducks in Montana, Including Park and Sweetgrass County

Presenter: *Steve Gniadek, (retired) Glacier National Park wildlife biologist*

#### Saturday, May 14

7:30 a.m. -1:00 p.m. 2011 Theme: Go Wild, Go Birding!

Presenter: *Rachel Feigley, USFS Wildlife Biologist & knowledgeable field guides, including Robin and Richard Wolcott, Peter Feigley of Absaroka Ecological Consulting, and Mitch Hurt of Paradise Valley Guide Service*

8:00 a.m. -1:00 p.m. The ABCs of Successful Birding

Presenter: *Peter Norlander, vice-president Montana Audubon Board and George Kelly, fly-fishing guide/ 'Ace' birder*

#### Saturday, June 4

7:00 a.m. -11:00 a.m. Banding Demonstration

Presenter: *Neil Travis, Master Permit Holder, Federal Bird Bander*



**Sacajawea Audubon Society**  
**P.O. Box 1711**  
**Bozeman, MT 59771-1711**

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**Sacajawea Audubon Society**, affiliated with the National Audubon Society, meets on the second Monday of each month, September through May.

**Sacajawea Audubon News** is sent to all Sacajawea Audubon Society members monthly September through May. Deadline is the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month preceding the month articles will appear. Please send to: **Mary Cloud Ammons, 503 Bozeman, Bozeman MT 59715** or [mcammons@gmail.com](mailto:mcammons@gmail.com).

**Change of Address:** Please notify Sally MacDonald, 222-5752 or [smacbirder@msn.com](mailto:smacbirder@msn.com) if your address changes. When you move or are away, newsletters are returned to us for an extra fee.

Find more at the **Sacajawea Audubon Society Website** at: <http://www.sacajaweaudubon.org/>

### *Mailing Address*

#### **SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

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[mtaudubon@mtaudubon.org](mailto:mtaudubon@mtaudubon.org); [www.mtaudubon.org](http://www.mtaudubon.org) For direct contact:

[shoffman@mtaudubon.org](mailto:shoffman@mtaudubon.org)

Montana Bird Hotline: 406-721-9799 to report unusual or out-of-season birds

#### **Membership Application**

**National Audubon Society**  
 (Includes chapter membership)

- National, State and Chapter Audubon Membership
- National Audubon Magazine
- Monthly Sacajawea Audubon newsletter September through May by surface mail or E-mail
- Admission to National Audubon sanctuaries
- Support of National Audubon conservation efforts

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ \$20 First Time Member

\_\_\_\_ I would like to receive the chapter newsletter by E-mail only.

Mail your check and application to:

**Sacajawea Audubon Society**

Attn: Membership

P.O. Box 1711, Bozeman, MT 597711711

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