



# SacajaweaAudubonNews

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

September 2013

## Calendar at a Glance

Sept 1st - Nov 5th	23rd Annual Bridger Raptor Count
Sept 9th	SAS Meeting
Sept 9th	Bird Sightings to John Parker
Sept 15th	Newsletter Submissions Due
Oct 2nd	eBird Class
Oct 4th-6th	2013 Raptor Fest

## Save the Gunnison Sage-Grouse

The Gunnison Sage-Grouse has been identified by Audubon as one of the ten most endangered birds in the country. With fewer than 5,000 individuals left, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service recently proposed to list the species as "endangered" under the Endangered Species Act.

Submit your public comments in support of protecting Gunnison Sage-Grouse TODAY at [www.audubonaction.org](http://www.audubonaction.org). The deadline to comment has been extended to September 3.



Photo by Gary Kramer / FWS

## Montana Songbird Habitat in 2063



Monday September 9th, 2012 at 7:00 p.m.  
Hope Lutheran Church  
2152 W. Graf Street (off of South 19th) in  
Bozeman

Join SAS September 9th at 7 p.m. for an interesting program that looks into the future of songbird habitat diversity in Montana. This presentation by Richard Keigley describes how ungulate browsing is causing declines in songbird habitat diversity, and outlines a role that citizen science can play in habitat conservation. It begins with a simple method of interpreting habitat trend based on the relationship between plant height and plant age. The method is used to describe how wild and domestic ungulates are affecting habitat across a broad swath of Montana. Richard Keigley is a retired Research Ecologist with the National Park Service and the U.S. Geological Survey. For the past 20 years, he has focused on the development of methods to document changes in habitat due to ungulate browsing. He has collaborated with a variety of federal and state agencies, with study areas that range from Montana to Colorado. In retirement he hopes to develop a program of habitat-focused citizen science that involves adults and young people.

The Sacajawea Audubon Society meets the second Monday of the month (September through May) at 7:00 p.m., at the Hope Lutheran Church, 2152 W. Graf Street (off of South 19th) in Bozeman. We invite the public to attend our meetings and participate in our field trips.



## Introduction to eBird Class

October 2, 2013 6:30 pm  
Bozeman Public Library, Small Community Rm

You've probably been hearing about eBird and wondering how this new online birding tool works. Join Sacajawea Audubon for a 2 hour class to learn how you can add your bird observations to this valuable citizen-science data base. Forrest Rowland, international tour guide with *Rockjumper - Worldwide Birding Adventures*, is passionate about eBird and will be presenting an **Introduction to eBird** class. Come learn to enter and track your bird records online and share them with the birding community while making them available for science and conservation efforts. eBird allows birders to post sightings, keep life lists, and manage their personal records. eBird is also a remarkable tool to learn more about birds and birding. This is a free class but a reservation is required. Contact Paulette Epple to register at [sec@sacajaweaaudubon.org](mailto:sec@sacajaweaaudubon.org) or call 580-6186.



## Bridger Raptor Festival

October 4-6, 2013

The annual Bridger Raptor Festival is being held October 4-6. The festival, which is free to the public, centers around a raptor migration count of the largest known Golden Eagle migration in the United States which takes place at the Bridger Bowl ski area north of Bozeman. Friday night features a keynote speaker at the Museum of the Rockies. Saturday and Sunday events at Bridger Bowl continue with interpretive hikes, lectures, displays, adult and kids activities and live bird presentations.

## Bird Notes

Hopefully everyone has had many opportunities to enjoy this past summer season's birds. With the urgency of the spring migration and then the breeding season, it's hard to keep up with all the incredible birds passing through this corner of Montana. Once again this summer, **Burrowing Owls** successfully nested and fledged young, south of Three Forks. Having this declining species of owl, nesting in this area has been a great opportunity for many people to see Burrowing Owls locally. On July 11th, while walking down a wash north of Three Forks I flushed two fledgling **Long-eared Owls** out of some junipers. A short time later Robin Wolcott spotted one of the adult Long-eared Owls watching us. This is the first conclusive evidence of breeding success for Long-eared Owls in this area. As the naturalist at Lewis and Clark Caverns State Park, Tom Forwood has been seeing a number of interesting birds in the park and the surrounding countryside. On May 20<sup>th</sup> Tom documented the first of the year **Common Poorwill** at the park. During the middle part of July, Tom found several locally uncommon and habitat specific species, including **Sage Thrasher**, **Brewer's Sparrow**, and **McCown's Longspur** in the Whitetail Valley north of Whitehall.

On July 5<sup>th</sup> while conducting a bird survey, Phillip Chaon and Dave Spangenburg discovered **3 Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** in a juniper wash 17 miles north of Three Forks. This exciting find is the first likely breeding record in Montana away from the Pryor Mountains. What makes this discovery even more unique is that there are only a couple of other records in Montana away from the gnatcatcher's extremely restricted range in the state. A **Chestnut-sided Warbler** was seen by Lurah Klaas, June 3<sup>rd</sup> on the grounds of the Trakker building off of Baxter in Bozeman. This breeding plumaged male was the most unusual warbler reported this spring. Once again this year, a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak mated and nested with a female Black-headed Grosbeak, along the Sourdough Nature Trail in Bozeman. At least two nestlings were seen by Robin Wolcott in the nest on several occasions, with the last observation being July 6th. This is now the **second state record for breeding Rose-breasted Grosbeak**, the first occurring in 2010 along the same trail. In the intervening years a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak was seen and heard in the same area. Is it the same bird?

A male **Indigo Bunting** was first observed by Andy Epple and Paulette Epple coming to their northeast Bozeman feeder June 25th. This bunting continued coming to the feeder till early August. Indigo Buntings are rarely seen in southwestern Montana, and when they are it's usually for just a short duration during the peak of spring migration. Anita and Jack Krueger noticed an unusual looking tanager with all the Western Tanagers in their Bozeman yard, May 28<sup>th</sup>. Fortunately this tanager stayed around for several days, and they were able to get photographs of the bird, which turned out to be a female **Summer Tanager**. This rare vagrant to Montana has only been seen six times previously in the state.

-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)



## MT Audubon Announces Start of the 23rd Annual Bridger Raptor Count!

Bret Davis & Kalon Baughan will be returning for the 2013 season to count all birds of prey along the crest of the Bridger Ridge.

*The Bridger project is also designed to monitor widespread environmental changes, using these apex predators as insightful barometers of ecological health.* Montana Audubon, in partnership with HawkWatch International (HWI), has coordinated this scientific project for the past 5 years. HWI initiated these annual scientific counts in the Bridgers in 1991. A total of 17 raptor species are recorded each season, including Golden & Bald Eagles and numerous species of hawks and falcons. The migrants originate primarily from breeding locales in western Canada and Alaska, and their destinations include a wide range of latitudes (varying by species and populations), from the American Southwest & Mexico all the way to Central and South America.

*The Bridger migration site consistently records the largest concentration of autumnal migrant Golden Eagles known in the lower 48 states!* Recent Golden Eagle count totals have varied from 1,000 to 1,400 eagles/season, and up to 250 on a peak migration day (usually during the first two weeks of October)! However, it is noteworthy that the counts of Golden Eagles at this and many other western sites have shown steady declines during the past 10-12 years. The cause of this remarkable drop in Golden Eagles is unknown at this time, although these findings have stimulated additional research.

*The best overall raptor viewing in the Bridgers is from mid-September to mid-October.* The counts are being conducted daily (weather permitting) from September 1st through November 5th. From the parking area above the Bridger Bowl Ski Area facilities it is a two hour hike to the observation point (elevation gain is 2,200 feet). For further information, including directions for visiting the site as well as previous annual project reports, please visit: <http://www.mtaudubon.org/birds/raptor.html>.

Funding for the 2013 count is being provided by the USDA Forest Service (Gallatin National Forest), NaturEner USA (a wind power company with multiple projects in western Montana), Sacajawea Audubon Society (Bozeman-based Audubon chapter), and individual Montana Audubon donors.

-Steve Hoffman, Executive Director of Montana Audubon

## Update from the Board

Sacajawea Audubon's Board of Directors met for a weekend retreat in August, hosted by the Galanis family at their Yellowstone Ranch Preserve located on Horse Butte Peninsula. The strategy meeting included setting goals for the coming year, plus presentations by Ian Galanis of YRP, and Anne & Jason Miller of the Ruby River Restoration Project. YRP is a 753 acre ranch community on Hebgen Lake protected by a conservation easement and Yellowstone bison are allowed to naturally migrate to the ranch in spring to calve. The Ruby River Restoration Project is working to restore a 1,500 foot reach of an artificially straightened section of the Ruby River. The Miller family, which own a working cattle ranch along this section of river, have partnered with Sacajawea Audubon in order to receive a Audubon/Together Green Grant to help fund the project. The chapter's involvement would be providing bird census data by conducting regular bird surveys.



Left to Right - Front Row: Janet Keigley, Paulette Epple, Janae Galanis, Jackie Wilson, Peter Norlander, Chris Nixon, Jeff Safford, Ian Galanis Back Row: Richard Keigley, Tamie Parker, John Parker, Lou Ann Harris, Loreene Reid, Sharon Hanton, Leo Freeman, Vickie Backus, Dillon Potter, Mary Lou Freeman.

## Sacajawea Audubon Wages War on Burdock

You've probably noticed over the past several years that Burdock has proliferated at many of Bozeman's most popular trailheads, and along the trails themselves. Burdock is a particularly obnoxious weed which, in its second year of growth, can reach six feet in height and produce innumerable clusters of spiky flower balls. As these flowers develop and mature into seed heads, they become an increasing danger to song birds, whose feathers can get caught in their grip and cause the birds to perish. Beyond the threat to birds, burdock is a nuisance for dogs, livestock, and other forms of wildlife whose fur gets hopelessly tangled in the spiky flowers after brushing up against the plant. So effective is burdock at attaching to fur, hair and clothing, that it was the inspiration for the invention of Velcro adhesives, which replicate the hook-tipped spikes of the seed-bearing flower head.

But now, as the end of summer nears, there is far less burdock to worry about in and around Bozeman's popular trails. This past August, a small army of Sacajawea Audubon volunteers has been diligently chopping off thousands of clusters of spiky burdock seed heads, bagging them up, and hauling them off to their final resting place – the Logan Landfill. Once buried there, they can do no more harm to the environment. And

fortunately, because burdock only lives for two years, when the seed heads are destroyed, the plant will not produce again and will die.

This is the second year Sacajawea Audubon has spearheaded a movement to eradicate burdock from our area trails and favorite recreation sites. Much



progress was made last year to initially thwart the spread of millions of burdock seeds into the environment. This year, two-year old plants were preparing to unleash their fusillade of seeds upon Gallatin Valley when Audubon volunteers successfully counter attacked – an estimated sixteen 15-gallon bags of seed heads have been hauled to the landfill as the result of this herculean effort. (Incidental amounts of spotted knapweed and hoary alyssum have also

been removed from the environment in this process...)

Depending on how long burdock seeds remain viable after dispersal (hopefully not more than two years), there is an excellent chance that the scourge of burdock-infested trails in and around Bozeman could be all but eliminated in the next couple of years. So plans are already being made to attack the burdock problem again in 2014, and again in 2015, until victory has been achieved!

Areas where significant progress toward the eradication of burdock has been made thus far include: East Gallatin Park and trail system; the "M" trailhead and trail; the Drinking Horse trailhead; the Story Mill Spur Trail and the Sourdough Trail.

Please plan on volunteering next year and join in the effort to control burdock. The birds (and dogs and horses and deer and bear) will thank you!

[Note: Simply cutting down the plant and leaving partially mature seed heads on the ground is not an effective method of control, since seed heads can continue to mature and develop even after the plant has been destroyed. Flowering seed heads must be removed from the environment, through bagging and disposal in a landfill, for effective control.]





**Sacajawea Audubon Society**  
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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 [newsletter@sacajaweaudubon.org](mailto:newsletter@sacajaweaudubon.org).

**Change of Address:** Please notify Sally MacDonald, 223-9167 or [membership@sacajaweaudubon.org](mailto:membership@sacajaweaudubon.org) 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/>

**SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

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**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: \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_ 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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Montana Audubon: 406-443-3949; PO Box 595, Helena, MT 59624; [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

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