



SacajaweaAudubonNews

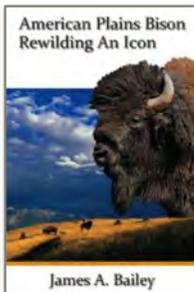
SACAJAWEA AUDUBON BUILDS ON AN INTEREST IN BIRDS TO PROMOTE THE CONSERVATION OF OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT THROUGH ENJOYMENT, EDUCATION AND ACTION.

Calendar at a Glance

March 10th	SAS Meeting
March 7th & 8th	Raptor workshop & field trip
March 15th	Madison Valley IBA
March 22nd	Owl Prowl
March 23rd	MT Audubon Nomination Due
June 6th-8th	Wings Across the Big Sky Festival



Check it out! Beginning in 2014, a fellow alum of my high school Dorian Anderson started out on a birding adventure in which he is traveling around the country by bike, foot, and boat in a twist on the traditional North American Big Year. You can track Dorian's progress at: <http://bikingforbirds.blogspot.com>.



Dr. Jim: Local Author Joins SAS to Share His New Book About Bison

Monday January 13th, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.
Hope Lutheran Church
2152 W. Graf Street (off of South 19th) in Bozeman

Jim Bailey, retired professor of wildlife biology at Colorado State University, will present excerpts from his recent book: **American Plains Bison: Rewilding an Icon**. Dr. Bailey will review the status of wild bison in the USA south of Canada. He will address three questions: What are wild bison? What is the status of wild bison in the USA? and, What can we do about it?

He will discuss the meaning of wildness, in contrast to domestication. Based on travels and interviews with bison managers, he will summarize the wildness status of 44 conservation herds of plains bison in the USA.

His conclusions provide useful background for considering ongoing controversial issues of bison conservation in Montana. Copies of the book will be available for sale and signing.

Owl Prowl Planned for March 22nd

Come join us for an Owl Prowl with Sacajawea Audubon this winter.

The Owl Prowl will be held on Saturday March 22 and will be held in the Battle Ridge Campground area (up at the top of the Bridger Mountains). We will hope to hear (and maybe find) Boreal Owls, possibly Northern Saw-Whet, possibly Great Gray Owls. We will meet at the City Hall Parking Lot (on Rouse) at 7:30 PM. **Snowshoes** will be required for this trip and there will be an 8 person maximum. Please call Peter Norlander 222-4646 to sign up. There will be a short discussion of owl lore, prior to leaving by car to the trail.

Please note that due to increased human activities in past locations for the Owl Prowls have inhibited owl breeding and nesting behavior. Please contact Peter Norlander if you have any questions (norlander@q.com, 222-4646). Please dress appropriately for **Nighttime** (Temperatures can be in the 0° F range) Winter/Cold Spring weather with snow boots or warm waterproof boots (no sneakers). You may bring binoculars and a flashlight. **Snowshoes will be required** for this night time excursion.



Bird Notes

On January 31st, Lou Ann and John Harris had an exciting sighting in their yard northwest of Bozeman. While getting into the car, they saw a **Merlin** shoot by and grab a House Finch that was on one of the spruce trees. As the Merlin sped off with its catch, it passed in front of a **Sharp-shinned Hawk**, that had been observing the events from a nearby perch.

During the early part of February, 3 **Evening Grosbeaks** and a flock of nearly 20 **Pine Grosbeaks** had been visiting Roxanna McLaughlin's feeders near Bozeman Pass. These Evening Grosbeaks have been the only ones reported in southwest Montana since early in January.

Purple Finches are seldom seen anywhere in Montana, and especially outside of the northeastern corner of the state. So it was quite a surprise when a single female **Purple Finch** showed up at George Kelly's feeder in Livingston, on February 3rd. George was able to study this lone bird closely, but unfortunately she didn't reappear after that day.

While attending this past month's very informative Sacajawea presentation on bluebirds, I realized just how soon they will be returning to Montana. Spring migration starts! Typically **Mountain Bluebirds** arrive in southwestern Montana's valleys sometime during the first ten days of March. Most often, these early arriving bluebirds are male and then the females start arriving the second half of March. During spring storms, the massing of Mountain Bluebirds, in the Gardiner Basin north of Yellowstone Park, is one of the truly extraordinary wildlife events in our area. These early storms will often push early arriving bluebirds out of the higher elevations, and stall still migrating bluebirds. These fallouts sometimes concentrate bluebirds in amazing numbers; where from hundreds to thousands of Mountain Bluebirds can be seen along just a short stretch of the Stevens Creek Road, northwest of Gardiner. One of the largest of these events occurred on April 7, 2006, when Mark Donahue counted at least 7,500 Mountain Bluebirds, in just the three miles from the North Gate to Stevens Creek. "The fields were blue" and the cottonwoods near the river were "covered". This same phenomenon can also occur during the fall migration, especially during the second half of September. The bonus during the autumn fallouts, are that there are often numerous other songbirds mixed in with the bluebirds.

I'm excited to hear about the first bluebirds of the spring.

-John Parker

Thank you to all our sharp-eyed birders for reporting your great sightings. Please report your Bird Sightings by the 9th of the month to John Parker at 586-5863 or birdsightings@sacajaweaaudubon.org



Bird of the Month –

Sharp-shinned Hawk

Accipiter striatus

Length: 11" Wing Span: 23" Weight: 5 oz

If you have house finches or house sparrows coming to your feeders this winter, chances are that you might have a Sharp-shinned Hawk coming to your yard as well. The "Sharpie" is a small feisty accipiter that feeds almost entirely on small birds. The Sharp-shin is a small forest-dwelling hawk with short rounded wings and a long, narrow tail for maneuvering in tight spaces, such as hedgerows and thick trees. It is lightning-fast and will capture songbirds by surprise, often using bushes for cover. It's large eyes and long middle toes are also helpful in catching fast prey.

The Sharp-shinned Hawk is the most *sexually dimorphic* of all North American Raptors, meaning that males are much smaller than females, having generally only 57% of the female's body mass. Identifying a Sharpie in the field can be a bit tricky, as the larger Cooper's Hawk is almost identical in plumage. On a perched bird, look for a square-shaped tail when folded, as opposed to a rounded tail in the Cooper's. When flying, look for a "flying mallet" shape and quick snappy wingbeats, too fast to count. Other common names for the Sharp-shinned Hawk include "Little Blue Darter" and "Bird Hawk".

-Lou Ann Harris

Call for Montana Audubon Award Nominations!



Please nominate a deserving person for their work for conservation and/or Audubon! We are now seeking nominations for awards that will be given away at Montana Audubon's June annual meeting in Bozeman. The awards acknowledge individuals who exemplify a commitment to birds, other wildlife, and habitat conservation. This year awards will be given for Conservationist of the Year, Environmental Educator of the Year, Special Achievement, Citizen Scientist of the Year, and Lifetime Achievement Award.

To nominate your candidate, please visit our website at <<http://mtaudubon.org/about/awards.html>>. To be considered for this year's award, nominations must be submitted no later than May 23, 2014. Nominations can be submitted by email or mailed to Montana Audubon, PO Box 595, Helena, MT 59624, or by fax: (406) 443-7144. Questions? Contact Janet Ellis at 406-443-3949 or <jellis@mtaudubon.org>.

Madison Valley IBA Bird Survey – March 15th

March 15th we will conduct our first IBA survey of the year in the Madison Valley. With snow melting off by that time it will be a welcome opportunity to get out birding. Raptors should be present in good numbers, Ennis Lake will have patches of open water for ducks, and there should be some early songbird migrants back in the valley. Thanks to our dedicated volunteers last year we recorded 122 species on the IBA and counted (estimated, really) almost 35,000 birds!



If you can help, email Paulette at bigskyepples@msn.com or call 580-6186. We will meet at the Ennis Pharmacy Café in Ennis by 7:45 am. Come early if you would like to eat breakfast there. We should be finished by noon.

Abstract of Minutes, Sacajawea Audubon Society Board Meeting, Feb. 3, 2014

President Loreene Reid's Report: Seventy-nine new members since July 2013. Loreene has made grant requests to both National Audubon and Montana Audubon to fund our Birding Hotspots Brochure, being edited and re-written by John Parker.

Committee Reports: Bird Festival. Progress towards was discussed. Loreene suggested we add a youth component or activity.

Education. March 7th and 8th is our already fully subscribed Raptor Identification Workshop and Field Trip, taught and led by Steven Hoffman with assistance from John Parker. Two June classes, "Beginning Birding," and "Beginning Birding by Ear," will be offered by Ashley Martin. Richard Keigley reported on his plans to meet with Bozeman High's Robin Hompesch to involve her class in habitat education. Richard will also make an independent March presentation on habitat conservation to Yellowstone National Park's superintendent and members of his staff.

Field Trips: Peter Norlander will lead an "Owl Prowl" field trip in March.

Programs: Our March public meeting will feature Jim Bailey and the "rewilding" of American plains bison. April's program will be on merlins. And May's season's finale, the traditional "Sweet and Savory" gettogether, will feature a slide show by Martha and Hobart Collins on the birds of Tobago and Trinidad.

New Business: Reflecting the increase in membership, the Board approved purchase of additional liability insurance for the Chapter.

Next Board Meeting: March 3, 2014, at Hope Lutheran Church, 6:30 p.m.





Wings Across the Big Sky
June 6-8, 2014, Bozeman, Montana



Come join us for Montana Audubon's Annual Bird Festival, this year co-hosted by the Sacajawea Audubon Society, June 6-8, 2014, at the Best Western GranTree Inn, 1325 N 7th Avenue, Bozeman, MT. We are very excited about this facility, which will be the center for all festival activities Friday through Sunday, including registration, birding field trip departures, guest speaker presentations, meals, banquet festivities, and much more.

The GranTree is located right off the interstate in the heart of the Gallatin Valley and provides easy access to all our birding activities and field trips.

Currently we have 80 rooms blocked out for festival-goers Friday and Saturday nights. Be sure to tell them you're with the Bird Festival group to get the special rate! We suggest you make your reservations soon at the hotel directly at 1-406-587-5261.

Our Festival Registration Brochure is scheduled to be mailed by March 3rd, with our online registration system going active on March 5th. Use either the registration form with the brochure or the online system to make your registration for this annual event. The brochure is full of information on the festival events and all the field trips that will be available.

A Sneak Peak at Some of our Scheduled Events for the Festival includes our lineup of Saturday Presenters:

We are excited to once again feature a diverse array of Saturday afternoon speakers to educate and inspire us. We will host break-out sections from highly regarded researchers, conservationists, and bird aficionados. The hardest part will be choosing which talk to see! Topics include:

- Montana's nesting Ospreys and toxins;
- Sage-Grouse conservation;
- Bird migration in the Middle East;
- A new "Field Guide to Birds in a Changing Climate";
- Bridger Raptor Migration Project; and
- Birds, Beetles, and Burns.

Plan now to attend this event and learn about the amazing world of crows from our keynote speaker, and then hear from our break-out speakers regarding birding in far-flung places, as well as our Montana concerns and interests including the osprey, sage-grouse, raptors, forest birds in burned forests, and how birds will fare in Montana with our rapidly changing climate.

THE NATURE LIBRARY

by Mike Becker



Simplify your life, preserve the wilderness, stay free as long as you can in body and soul—Henry David Thoreau’s proffered wisdom has worn well, if not always heeded, since he penned that advice in Walden in 1854. His famous book, as all the world knows, was an experiment in living better, a two-year sojourn at Walden Pond, a small deep body of water (“the earth’s eye,” he beautifully called it) outside the village of Concord, Massachusetts. There he built a cabin, without a lock, of one room, a window, and no doormat (“it is best to avoid the beginnings of evil”) and wrote about living deliberately and recovering a childlike “irrepressible satisfaction with the gift of life.” When he set out for the woods with a borrowed axe on that July 4th “Independence” Day in 1845, Thoreau had definite ideas about the wayward direction of his “restless, nervous, bustling, trivial Nineteenth Century.” Like Wordsworth, Carlyle, Emerson, and a host of like contemporaries, he feared the ill effects of the increasing accumulation of men in cities, the uniformity of their industrial occupations, the consequent craving for gross stimulation and for “things.” “The mass of men,” he said, “lead lives of quiet desperation.” When we pick up this book for its fine nature writing and spiritual views, we should also recall the occasion of its birth—Thoreau as social critic, who marches to a distinctly different social drummer.

Early readers of Walden found Thoreau’s book hard to get into, and readers today might well begin with the second chapter, “Where I Lived, and What I Lived for.” Little “plot” is lost, for the first chapter—“Economy”—details at some length and with wry Yankee humor the expenses and vanities of house-building, of eating sumptuously, of the encumbrances of furniture and fashionable clothing—how when we have finally got our house it may be the house that has got us. “A man is rich in proportion to the number of things which he can afford to let alone,” he reminds us.

One looks for a narrative thread but finds a series of short essays merely, of the most sublime nature writing. The master theme of awakening, of simplifying, is the organizing principle woven into the lovely setting of a symbolic single year in nature. The evolution of the day, the year, the cycle of the seasons, from death to rebirth, from ice to thaw, grub to butterfly, seed to flower—all the images purport to throw off sleep (“I have never yet met a man who was quite awake. How could I have looked him in the face?”). Chapter titles tell of some of the simple subjects: on “Reading,” on

“Sounds”—“the language all things speak”; on “Solitude”—with its dazzling first paragraph beginning “This is a delicious evening, when the whole body is one sense, and imbibes delight through every pore”; on “Visitors,” on “The Bean-field,” on “Brute Neighbors,” which includes the famous “battle of the ants” (which battle “took place in the presidency of Polk”) and the hide-n-seek game with the pond’s pair of loons attracted by his flute playing; and on “The Pond in Winter.”

In the latter chapter as the book draws to a close, Thoreau plumbs the depths of the pond one morning in the “dead” of winter, a water thought by men to be either bottomless or reaching “quite through to the other side of the globe.” At a remarkable 102 feet, he touches bottom. (“Not an inch of it can be spared by the imagination.”) As always Thoreau uses nature to make a point, or symbolically, often paradoxically, several points: We accept without foundation, and live by, truths we have not bothered to test; and, conversely, in his own words “I am thankful that this pond was made deep and pure for a symbol. While men believe in the infinite some ponds will be thought to be bottomless.” Even the dormant pond in the dormant months of solitude and turning inward speaks of renewal.

The chapters “Spring” and “Conclusion” rise expectantly to a lyrical climax. He delights in the stretching and yawning of ice breaking up, the sight of blue water again, frost coming out of the ground, thawing clay—all suggestive of a renewal that is personal as well (“I know of nothing more purgative of winter fumes and indigestions. {Spring} convinces me that earth is still in her swaddling clothes”). The mystical and mythical dimensions of Walden are all there in the celebrated conclusion. Life is good, our human capacities infinite, and Nature, like the universe, largely unexplored by us, infinitely wild, inexpressively lovely, mysterious, unfathomable:

“I heard a robin in the distance, the first I had heard for many a thousand years, methought, whose note I shall not forget for many a thousand more, --the same sweet and powerful song as of yore. O the evening robin, at the end of a New England summer day! If I could ever find the twig he sits upon! I mean *he*; I mean *the twig*. This at least is not the *Turdus migratorious*. “



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Mailing Address

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 15th of the month preceding the month articles will appear. Please send to: **Mary Cloud Ammons, 503 Bozeman, Bozeman MT 59715** or newsletter@sacajaweaudubon.org.

Change of Address: Please notify Sally MacDonald, 223-9167 or 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/>

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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

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

Mail your check and application to:

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www.mtaudubon.org For direct contact: shoffman@mtaudubon.org
 Montana Bird Hotline: 406-721-9799 to report unusual or out-of-season birds

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