



Sacajawea Audubon News

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* NOVEMBER 2018

8	SAS Board Meeting at the Lehrkind Mansion
10	Cornell Project FeederWatch (through April 5th)
12	SAS Monthly Meeting

DECEMBER 2018

5	SAS Book Group Discussion
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Hairy Woodpecker by Lou Ann Harris

I ♥ GRASS:

The Future of Birds and Montana's Grasslands

**Monday, November 12th, 2018 @ 7pm,
Hope Lutheran Church, 2152 W. Graf (off of 19th)**

Though Montana is named for the mountains, over two-thirds of the state is made up of temperate grasslands -- the least protected, most threatened biome on the planet. Join Martha Kauffman, managing director of World Wildlife Fund's Northern Great Plains program, for a look at Montana's grasslands, the birds and other wildlife they support and the important role they play in providing clean air and water. We'll talk about the challenges they face with a changing climate and growing demands for food and energy. And we'll look at exciting efforts to conserve this important ecosystem and what it will take to be successful at a scale that matters...to the birds.

Martha Kauffman is Managing Director for WWF's Northern Great Plains Program, one of WWF's 35 global priority places. She engages leaders from across the region including tribal communities, ranchers, public land and wildlife managers and other conservation organizations to conserve these important grasslands and restore abundant wildlife. A hydrologist and earth scientist by training, Martha has focused on solving complex environmental problems throughout her career. In her role as Managing Director for



Martha Kauffman

the NGP Program, Martha has built an eco-regional program focused on addressing the greatest threats to Montana's grasslands. Join Sacajawea Audubon for a look at the present and potential future of Montana's important grasslands.

Sacajawea Audubon programs are free and open to the public. We meet the 2nd Monday of each month, September through May, at Hope Lutheran Church, 2152 W. Graf (off of S. 19th). Come for the social beginning at 6:30 p.m. A short chapter meeting starts at 7p.m. with the program following.

WWF photo



OCTOBER BIRD NOTES

This past month has been another exciting period for birds in our area, with interesting and noteworthy sightings from across this corner of Montana. Now that it is getting toward the end of the fall migration, it's time to focus on waterfowl (before final freeze-up) and lingering passerines.

The bit of unsettled weather on September 24th dropped a couple of nice warblers into Jim Manning's yard northwest of Bozeman. On that day he had both a **Nashville Warbler** and a **Townsend's Warbler**, proving that one good bird deserves another. While working at her desk, Paulette Epple spied a different looking warbler out the window that merited further investigation. Once outside, Paulette was able to get extended views of a **Magnolia Warbler** as it foraged in the aspen trees with a flock of **Ruby-crowned Kinglets**.

Two flycatcher sightings in our area this fall established new Montana late date records. The **Eastern Kingbird** that Harold Ziolkowski found along Burnt Road west of Belgrade September 26th was four days later then the previous late record. While at the East Gallatin Recreation Area, Tom Forwood observed a **Least Flycatcher** October 1st, which is nine days later then the former late date.

The **Common Nighthawk** that Lou Ann Harris saw over her house northwest of Bozeman on October 5th equaled the second latest date for a nighthawk in the Gallatin Valley. The latest a Common Nighthawk has been seen in Montana was a bird seen October 17th at Davis Lane Pond here in Bozeman, five years ago.

The first **Blue Jay** to the season turned up October 8th at Don Bishop's house on Dry Creek Road north of Belgrade. Will there be as many in western Montana this year as last fall's huge invasion?



Harris's Sparrow by Don Profota

This fall has been an exceptional year for finding migrant sparrows as they move southward along the Rocky Mountain Front and then spread out across Montana's southwestern valleys. The numbers of **White-throated Sparrows** seen locally have been high, but the numbers to the north of us have been even more impressive. During the second week of October many people got to see up to three **Harris's Sparrows**, which were frequenting the willows at the Cherry River Fishing Access in Bozeman. **Swamp Sparrows** may not be as flashy as the big *Zonotrichia* sparrows, but the small and secretive sparrow is a rare find, so two **Swamp Sparrows** in the area was quite unusual. On October 6th Vic Fesolowitz discovered a Swamp Sparrow at the Castle Mountain Marsh north of Clyde Park, then six days later Andrew Guttenberg found another at the Cherry River Fishing Access.



Buff-breasted Sandpiper by Bob Martinka

Last month I was excited to report a **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** seen at Cottonwood Reservoir north of Wilsall. Well, yet another Buff-breasted Sandpiper was discovered September 27th at Harrison Reservoir by Bob Martinka. Of the twenty-seven records for Montana, two of the four seen this fall, were found locally.

On October 12th, a beautiful adult **Sabine's Gull** was observed from above by Paulette Epple, Lou Ann Harris, and John Parker as it flew below the Clute's Landing overlook at Ennis Lake.

During the first week of October **Surf Scoters** were turning up at several locations, including one at Black's Ford west of Bozeman, one at Newlan Reservoir north of White Sulphur Springs, and at least four birds at Harrison Reservoir.

A **Pacific Loon** first seen October 5th at the Three Forks Ponds stayed there for more than a week, giving many local bird enthusiasts an opportunity to see and enjoy this less than annual visitor to this area.

~ 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@sacajaweaudubon.org



Kestrel Numbers Down in 2018

Sacajawea Audubon once again monitored kestrel boxes in the Gallatin Valley and surrounding areas during the 2018 breeding season. The program has grown from its inception of 40 boxes in 2013 to over 70 boxes that Sacajawea volunteers and private landowners maintain and monitor. Our chapter became involved with this project as a partner with the American Kestrel Partnership in response to long-term population declines of kestrels in North America. The kestrel population in the United States has declined 50-60% since the 1960s, and the reason(s) are unknown.

This year's kestrel breeding productivity in our local area was disappointing and certainly shows that kestrels can experience down years in terms of reproductive success. In 2018 we found more nests abandoned, more nests predated upon, more eggs that failed to hatch, and more young that died in the nest before fledging than in past years.

2017 had been an encouraging year with a high nesting success rate—76 eggs laid in 16 boxes, 60 eggs hatched and 58 nestlings fledged. Nine of the boxes in 2017 actually fledged 5 young birds each, the most that can be expected and an indication of high productivity. But in this year's nesting cycle the success rate plummeted. There were again 76 eggs laid, this time in 18 boxes that we were monitoring. But of the 76 eggs, only 47 hatched and only 34 nestlings survived to fledge. Only one box fledged 5 young this year.

Still, there were successes to note. Thirty-four nestlings did survive and we were able to band all of them as well as one adult. Feathers were collected from one banded bird in each box and sent to the American Kestrel Genoscape program



Immature Kestrels photo by Paulette Epple

at Boise State University. So important data from Gallatin County was collected and added to the body of scientific knowledge, even if our localized numbers were down.

The big question is: why were the kestrel numbers down in 2018? With only a small sample and without further research we can only hypothesize, but it seems the most likely factors to affect success would have to be weather and prey base. Most noteworthy about the weather this spring was the above average amount of rain we had. June precipitation was 1.5 inches above average in the Gallatin Valley, and the MSU campus station recorded more than 12 inches during the three-month rainy season which was the third highest record in the last 120 years. Kestrels are typically incubating clutches of eggs during May and early June. When the eggs hatch in mid to late June, the need for readily-available prey increases. The vast majority of prey taken by American

Kestrels is medium to large insects (especially grasshoppers in Montana) and small mammals such as voles and mice. Perhaps the extra rain affected the rodent population. Perhaps the excessive moisture caused such lush vegetative growth that it was harder for kestrels to hunt for their prey. We do know that the extra moisture did affect the development of grasshoppers. Grasshopper surveys done in Montana by the USDA in the Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program found that grasshoppers' development was delayed by 2 to 3 weeks this summer. This would have meant fewer large grasshoppers for kestrels to eat right at the time they needed the nutrition the most.

In 2019 we will continue to move boxes that aren't being used to more suitable habitat and take steps whenever possible to avoid predation problems and nest abandonment. Let's hope that future years will see kestrels thriving with higher nesting success again!





Evening Grosbeak by Lou Ann Harris

Project FeederWatch

Don't forget to join Cornell Lab's annual Project FeederWatch! This is a winter-long survey of birds that visit feeders at backyards, nature centers, community areas, and other locales in North America.

FeederWatchers periodically count the birds they see at their feeders from November 10th to April 5th and send their counts to Project FeederWatch. FeederWatch data help scientists track broadscale movements of winter bird populations and long-term trends in bird distribution and abundance.

For more information:

feederwatch.org/about/project-overview



Northern Flicker Intergade by Lou Ann Harris



Harris's Sparrow by Ian Davis - Cornell

Bird of the Month

Harris's Sparrow (*Zonotrichia querula*)

Length: 7.5 in; Weight: 1.5 oz; Wingspan: 10.6 in

During fall migration in Montana, you might be lucky enough to spot a large, plump sparrow with a pink bill, white belly and black bib. This would be a Harris's Sparrow, North America's largest sparrow. As is typical of sparrows, you'll find them foraging on the ground, venturing boldly out into the open to look for food.

The Harris's Sparrow is the only North American songbird that breeds exclusively in the semiforested tundra of northern Canada. Because of its remote breeding grounds, it was one of the last species to have its nest described. The first nest was found in 1931 in Churchill, Manitoba.

In winter, Harris's Sparrows prefer hedgerows, agricultural fields & other shrubby areas of the southern Great Plains.

The Harris's Sparrow was named after Edward Harris, a friend of John J. Audubon, who collected a specimen in 1843. Audubon eagerly named the specimen thinking he was the first person to do so. Little did he know that Thomas Nuttall collected the bird first in 1834 and named it "Mourning Finch."

As they get older, the black areas around the face change from patchy black to fully black. The darker the throat patch, the more dominant the individual, who will chase or push younger, lighter colored birds out of the way.

The population of Harris's Sparrows has declined 63% between 1970-2014. The causes of the decline are unknown, but it's likely tied to habitat loss both in their breeding and wintering grounds.

The oldest recorded Harris's Sparrow was at least 11 years old when it was recaptured during banding operations in Kansas in 1983.

Source: Cornell Lab of Ornithology



BRIDGER RAPTORS PROJECT RAFFLE

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Bridger Raptor Project Raffle

Be One of 2 Winners of a
Bridger Bowl 2018-19 Season Ski Pass (\$840 value ea.)
or many other prizes

(see list of prizes at www.sacajaweaaudubon.org)

Tickets: \$10 ea or 6 for \$50

Drawing: 7 pm on December 10, 2018

*At the Sacajawea Audubon's Program Meeting
Ellen Theatre, Bozeman*

Sponsored by:
Sacajawea Audubon

BRIDGER BOWL

Support Bridger Mountain's Raptor Count, the largest concentration of autumnal migrant Golden Eagles known in the lower 48 states. Help Sacajawea and Montana Audubon continue this important research project, in our very own Bridger Mountains.

For more information visit: www.sacajaweaaudubon.org

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Note: if you have already purchased your season pass, Bridger Bowl will reimburse you if you win!

Win one of 2 Bridger Bowl Season Pass for 2018/2019 (value of \$840 each). . .or a chance to win many more prizes!

Buy your tickets for the Birdger Raptor Project Raffle!

All proceeds support the Bridger Mountains Raptor Project, one of the most important localities to monitor migrating Golden Eagles in the western United States for the past 28 years. This project is critical to provide the data needed to assess population trends in Golden Eagles and other raptors.

Raffle tickets are \$10 each or 6 for \$50

Note: if you have already purchased your season pass, Bridger Bowl will reimburse you if you win!

The drawing will be held Dec. 10, 2018 at the Sacajawea Audubon monthly program "Yellowstone's Forgotten Birds" by Doug Smith, which begins at 7 p.m. at the Ellen Theatre in downtown Bozeman.

To get your raffle tickets and see the list of prizes visit sacajaweaaudubon.org or email raffle@sacajaweaaudubon.org

You can also get your raffle tickets at Sacajawea Audubon's monthly program meeting on Monday, November 12.



Townsend's Solitaire by Lou Ann Harris

JOIN THE FLOCK & FLY HIGH TOGETHER

SAS Annual Local Membership Drive for 2019

If you enjoy our field trips, monthly programs or our conservation work, please join Sacajawea Audubon Society (SAS). 100% of your dues will directly support SAS's educational and conservation programs.

Even if you belong to the National Audubon Society, we need your support through a Local SAS Membership. As a Sacajawea Audubon member, you'll enjoy the benefits of membership while knowing that your annual dues will be used locally, for conservation right here in your own neighborhood. You can choose from the following membership levels:

Basic Membership \$25
 Supporting Membership \$50

SAS Members Are.....

- Protecting working lands for birds and other wildlife.
- Preserving and protecting bird species and their habitats.

- Supporting bird-friendly communities in Montana with our bird-friendly landscape program.
- Contributing to important environmental education programs for people of all ages and abilities on birds, wildlife and habitat.
- Supporting vital partnerships between other nonprofit environmental groups, citizens and local government to shape the health of our community.
- Advocating for important local and regional environmental issues.

SAS Members Enjoy:

- Free Monthly Keynote Speakers.
- Free guide to birding around the Gallatin Valley & beyond.
- Free member e-newsletters published nine times a year.
- Member-only discounts on educational courses, programs, special events, and other purchases.

- Opportunities to meet new people who share an interest in birds, wildlife, the environment, and conservation.
- Participating in citizen science projects.
- Free guided birding field trips.

While SAS is a chapter of both the National Audubon Society and Montana Audubon, your SAS membership does not include membership in the National Audubon Society. We are an independent 501(c)3 nonprofit organization with its own board of directors, membership, budget and programs. We rely on financial support from local members to carry out our wide array of programs.

As we approach our 52th year, we hope you will join us in building on an interest in birds to promote the conservation of our natural environment through enjoyment, education and action. You can fill out the membership form below or join online at sacajaweaudubon.org. Thank you!



Sacajawea Audubon Society

Membership

Individual or Family

- Basic Membership \$25
- Supporting Membership \$50
(Supporting local conservation & education project)
- Additional Donation \$ _____
- Bridger Raptor Study
 - Education
 - Wetland Capital Campaign

Name _____

Address _____
(Street or PO Box)

(City) (State) (Zip)

Phone () _____

Email _____

- ❖ Sacajawea Audubon News is sent by email. There is a \$10 annual fee for a paper copy mailed to you.
 would like a paper newsletter mailed to me and have included an additional \$10 to cover the annual cost.
- ❖ We do not share your information except with Montana Audubon, so your contact information is safe with us.

Mail this form with your check to: *Sacajawea Audubon Society*
 Attn: Membership
 PO Box 1711
 Bozeman, MT 59771-1711

Thank you for your membership and donation. We look forward to birding with you!



newsletter 11/18



December 5th SAS Book Group Discussion: African Eagles

The next meeting of the Sacajawea Audubon Book Group will be December 5th. The book, *When Eagles Roar: The Amazing Journey of an African Wildlife Adventurer*, by James Alexander Currie with Bonnie J. Fladung, promises adventure and surprises. The book begins with a wonderful poem entitled “On the Nature of Truth” and the story proper begins with the sentence: “An eagle sparked my love for adventure and my passion for wildlife, and it was an eagle that nearly took it all away.” We will just have to read this book to see how things turn out.

The book group meets at Hope Lutheran Church from 4:00–5:15pm. All SAS members are welcome to join the group. The schedule for books and meetings is always available on the SAS website under the tab Bookgroup.

If you want to be on the book group mailing list, email Adele Pittendrigh at adele.pittendrigh@gmail.com. Happy reading!



Wild Turkey by Lou Ann Harris

SACAJAWEA AUDUBON SOCIETY OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Board of Directors

President	Lou Ann Harris pres@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Vice President	John Edwards johnedwards@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Secretary	Adele Pittendrigh sec@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Treasurer	Janne Hayward tres@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Member at Large	Loreene Reid loreener@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Member at Large	Chris Nixon chrisfnixon@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Member at Large	Sharon Hanton sharonhanton@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Member at Large	Billy Burton billyburton@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Member at Large	Travis Kidd traviskidd@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Member at Large	Debi Naccarto debinaccarto@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Member at Large	Stephanie Nelson stephanienelson@sacajaweaaudubon.org

Board Members:

MSU Student Leadership	Jackson St. Clair jacksonstclair@sacajaweaaudubon.org
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Committee Chairs & Project Leaders

Conservation Chair	Paulette Epple conservation@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Education Chair	Travis Kidd traviskidd@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Bird Sightings	John Parker birdsightings@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Field Trips	John Parker birdsightings@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Newsletter	Stephanie Nelson newsletter@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Monthly Program	Carl Roth programs@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Website	Stephanie Nelson stephanienelson@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Membership	Loreene Reid membership@sacajaweaaudubon.org
Hospitality	Sherry Staub hospitality@sacajaweaaudubon.org





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 Monthly Newsletter is available electronically to all Sacajawea Audubon Society members September through May. Members and non-members can receive a mailed paper newsletter for an annual \$10 subscription fee. Please send your check to the address above.

Deadline for article submission is the 15th of the month preceding the month the articles will appear. Send articles electronically to Stephanie Nelson at: 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



photo by Lou Ann Harris

RAPTOR FESTIVAL THANK YOU!

The Sacajawea Audubon Board of Directors would like to thank all the volunteers that helped the 23rd Annual Bridger Raptor Festival be a great success! Despite bad weather, there was a good turnout and a big part of that was our fun kids' activities. Young and old attended over the weekend and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. The new "Great Migration Game" was a big hit, and "Sketch-A-Bird" with Andrew Guttenberg was very popular. Some kids came back twice! Thanks again to Erin O'Connor and Katee Lynch and the rest of the crew at Bridger Bowl for hosting the raptor festival and being a great partner.

Activity Coordinators

- Travis Kidd: *Chapter festival coordinator, Build A Nifty Nest Box, and Chickadee & kestrel nest box kits*
- Loreene Reid: *Binocular Blitz Game and Passport to Education*
- Beth Madden: *Great Migration Game*
- Lou Ann Harris: *Volunteer coordinator, SAS Table*

Special thanks to Simkins-Hallin Lumber, who donated all the lumber & hardware for the nest box kits.

Festival Weekend Volunteers

- | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Carol Anderson | Andrew Guttenberg | Emma Narotzsky |
| Glenda Barnes | Sharon Hanton | Stephanie Nelson |
| Annie Buchwald | Janne Hayward | Chris Nixon |
| Gina Carolan | Margaret Hillhouse | Sandy & Adele |
| Hobart Collins | Janet Kempff | Pittendrigh |
| Kenna & Steve DuBois | Travis Kidd | Dana Sauerwein |
| John Edwards | Roxanna McLaughlin | Sherry Staub |
| Brooke Everest | Nora Miller | Elisabeth Swanson |
| Leo Freeman | Lynn Mugaas | Bob Swinth |
| Diane Gresham | Don & Marilyn Murdock | Judy Tsiang |