

# December 2018

## Birding Observer



**Five Valleys Audubon Society, a Chapter of the National Audubon Society**

### Calendar of Events

---

- **Sunday, December 2nd:** All-day field trip to the Mission Valley. Meet in the northwest corner of the Adams Center parking lot at 7:50 am or at the Cenex Gas Station in Ronan at 9:00 am.
- **Monday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6:45-8:45pm:** The FVAS Board meeting will take place in the large meeting room at the Missoula Public Library.
- **Friday, December 7<sup>th</sup>, 4:30-6:30pm:** First Friday and Holiday Pop Up sale with Patagonian Hands at the Montana Natural History Center.
- **Monday, December 10<sup>th</sup>, 7:00pm:** Learn about all of the exciting Audubon projects happening in Missoula and across the state at our December meeting. The presentation will take place in Room 106 of the Gallagher Business Building on the UM campus.
- **Saturday, December 15<sup>th</sup>:** The deadline for the January 2019 edition of the *Birding Observer*.
- **Saturday, December 15<sup>th</sup>:** Christmas Bird Count. See page 2 for details. (\*Please note, there will be no Beginning Bird Walk at Lee Metcalf NWR on Dec 15<sup>th</sup>.)
- **Wednesday, December 19<sup>th</sup>, 6-9 pm:** PINT NIGHT fundraiser for The State of Montana Arboretum. See page 3 for details.



### Audubon Projects Across Montana

---

Our December chapter meeting brings a special treat as we will be hearing from two distinguished speakers, Larry Berrin

and Jim Brown, as they talk about exciting Audubon projects on both the state and local level.

Larry Berrin is the new Executive Director of Montana Audubon. He will give a presentation entitled Montana Audubon – Birds and Beyond in which we will join him as

he shares what the future will look like for Montana Audubon with the launching of the three-year strategic plan. We will learn about innovative projects focused on expanding the organization's reach state-wide by working with new and existing partners to help achieve its mission.

Next up will be Jim Brown. Jim will be describing conservation efforts and some accomplishments of Five Valleys Audubon beginning with establishment of the Clark Fork River--Grass Valley Important Bird Area. We will hear how that work has expanded into using bird surveys to promote establishment of conservation easements and influenced Missoula County land use decisions through review and comment on all subdivision proposals and planning protocols.

Larry has been involved in the field of conservation for over 25 years, holding such positions as Vermont State Education Director for the National Audubon Society, President/CEO of Asbury Woods Partnership (Pennsylvania) and Director of Conservation Education for Discover Your Northwest where he led the campaign to develop the first Children's Forest in the Northwest - The Deschutes Children's Forest in Oregon. He is an avid birder and has led international eco-trips to Mexico, Costa Rica, the Galapagos, the Amazon, and Kenya.

Jim is past president of Five Valleys Audubon Society and Montana Audubon. He currently is a board member of Five Valleys Audubon and Five Valleys Land Trust. He is a retired forest scientist and project leader with the U.S. Forest Service Fire Sciences Laboratory in Missoula. He has been an avid birder for 64 years including many international birding ventures. He is currently involved with many efforts to achieve conservation of bird habitats in varied landscapes across Montana.

Join us on Monday, December 10, 2018 at 7:00 PM in Rm 106 of the Gallagher Business Building on the UM campus. Please note the change from our regular meeting room.

## Peeps from the Board: Pairing Up

By Susie Wall

---

I found that I rarely learn anything of substance on Facebook, but a recent post on Raptor View Research Institute's page caught my eye. In October, Executive Director Rob Domenech and his team captured and banded a hybrid of a Red-tailed Hawk and Rough-legged Hawk. In the institute's seventeen years of banding fall migrators, this find was a first. The list of field characteristics they used to help verify the bird was long and filled with words I had to Google. "Google, what is 'remiges'?" As an amateur birder, this discovery fascinated me and made me want to learn more about hybrids in the bird world.



Lazuli & Indigo Bunting Hybrid  
Photo by Steve Mlodinow

What I learned was that hybridization is rare, yet possible in almost all major avian categories and approximately ten percent of the 10,000 known bird species have mated with another species. The most common instances occur between closely related species but hybrids have been documented between different genera. Animals do have to be in the same

family to hybridize. (A quick review of the taxonomic rank: Species, Genus, Family, Order, Class, Phylum, Kingdom, Domain.) Hybrids have even been known to produce offspring but this is not a given.

After learning more about the fairly common occurrence of avian hybrids, my next question was "why". Mistaken identity is thought to be one reason. Also, a bird may have trouble finding one of its own in an unfamiliar territory so it looks to the closest thing.

Hybrids often possess common mating traits such as a largely uninterested monochrome female and an eager colorful male. Parenting is also a factor. If the male expects to leave as soon as the deed is done and the female expects to do all the work, there will be no clash of parenting behaviors.

As a novice, the concept of hybrids brought a new frustration to identification. Just when I thought I was learning key identifiers in birds, I now had to obtain a whole new skill set to determine if I am looking at a hybrid. But as I continued my research I learned, as with

all birds, possessing knowledge of a few clues goes a long way in helping you identify a hybrid.

First, it helps to know that hybrids are common among several birds, such as hummingbirds, ducks and gulls. It is also helpful to know what hybrids frequent the area where you are birding. Here in the northwest, common examples include Lazuli and Indigo buntings; Stellar's and Blue jays; and Western and Glaucous-winged gulls.

Second, look for physical features that remind you of a similar bird—the head of one duck and the body of another, for example.

Flickers throw an even bigger wrench in things with intergrades, or two distinct subspecies in areas where populations are found that have the characteristics of both. Use your field guide to tell if you are looking at an intergrade flicker rather than a straight Yellow-shafted Flicker.

It is impossible to fully delve into this topic in the space I have, but if you would like to learn more there have been some excellent articles recently on Audubon.org about hybrids. So when you see a bird that just doesn't quite match that bird in your guidebook, take a moment to consider if you are witnessing one of the many tricks the natural world plays on us mere mortals. Consider that you may in fact be witnessing a hybrid.

## 2018 Missoula Christmas Bird Count

By Larry Weeks

---

The Missoula Christmas Bird Count will be held on Saturday, December 15, 2018. If you would like to participate in the field count or are interested in being a feeder watcher, contact Larry Weeks at 549-5632 (home) or 540-3064 (cell) or [bwsgenea@gmail.com](mailto:bwsgenea@gmail.com). The Count will end with a potluck dinner at the home of Larry Weeks, 2428 West Kent, in Missoula. Dinner will commence at 6:30 pm. Bring your favorite potluck dish, or A-L, bring a salad or dessert, and M-Z, a hot dish. After the potluck, we will tabulate the results of the field count.



Tufted Titmouse  
Photo by Michele Black

## Field Trip Summaries

By Larry Weeks

**Sunday, October 28th:** The late October field trip was to Brown's Lake to look for loons and scoters. The first stop was on the Clearwater River where we met Jeff Ipsen and Becky White and Janice Kelly from Seeley Lake. The best bird at that location was a flock of Clark's Nutcrackers. The second stop was at the shallow bay on Brown's Lake where we met Paul Lloyd-Davies from Great Falls. Birds at that location included Horned, Eared and Pied-billed Grebes, Northern Shovelers, Ring-necked Ducks, Ruddy Ducks, and a Northern Harrier. As we worked our way along the shoreline, we picked up 3 Common Loons, 3 Western Grebes and a Townsend's Solitaire. At the camping area, we saw a flock of American Tree Sparrows in the shrubs. After considerable scoping of the lake, Rose Leach identified a Black Scoter. Unfortunately, it was on the far side of the lake and it wasn't a satisfying look. A mink was also spotted along the shoreline as it alternated between running on land and swimming in the water. The ponds on Cut-off Road yielded a variety of ducks and several Trumpeter Swans. There was also a Rough-legged Hawk and at least 10 Bald Eagles. There were 14 people on the field trip, and we had 36 bird species.

**Saturday, November 3rd:** The field trip to Metcalf was under threatening skies, but the rain held off. Ponds 5 and 6, by the visitor's center, had a variety of ducks and grebes. Shorebirds included 15 Long-billed Dowitchers and 10 Killdeer. As we started hiking on the Kenai Trail, we encountered a few American Tree Sparrows and Song Sparrows. Pond 8 had a female Canvasback, 3 Redheads and 7 Trumpeter Swans. Five of the swans did a fly-by while trumpeting their signature call. As we returned to the visitor's center, a gull flew by. Alex Kearney took several photos of the gull which we were able to identify as a Bonaparte's Gull. After lunch, we hiked both trails at the Wildlife Viewing Area. We had an Osprey flying over the Bitterroot River and a mixed flock of small birds that included Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted and Red-breasted Nuthatches, and a Downy Woodpecker. Rose Stoudt located a well-camouflaged Great Horned Owl that was roosting near the trunk of a cottonwood tree. Since the field trips year-to-date had not seen a California Quail, I decided to drive the Stevensville River Road on our return to Missoula. We stopped to investigate some bird song, which turned out to be House Sparrows, and discovered quail in the shrubs along the river. They eventually flushed to a gravel bar across the river and they must have been close to 100 quail. As we continued along River Road, there were other small flocks in the road. There were only 6 people on the trip and we had 46 bird species and 1 porcupine.

## Celebrate trees--and the holidays--at a PINT NIGHT for The State of Montana Arboretum

**When:** Wednesday, Dec. 19, 2018, from 6-9 pm

**Where:** Lolo Peak Brewery, 6201 Brewery Way, Lolo, MT

Birds and trees go together. The State of Montana Arboretum is the University of Montana campus in Missoula; it was designated by state legislature in 1991. Home to about 2,200 trees and over 100 species, the arboretum hosts many bird species. Nestled at the base of Mt. Sentinel, the arboretum provides a transitional cushion between the mountain's open space and the urban valley floor.

Seventy-five cents per beer sold on Pint Night will go to the arboretum. These days, donations to the Arboretum are mostly going for signage: general interpretive signs to orient visitors, as well as basic signs specific to every tree. Earlier this year, Five Valleys Audubon donated \$500 to the arboretum.



### SAVE THE DATE Olympic Birdfest April 12-14, 2019

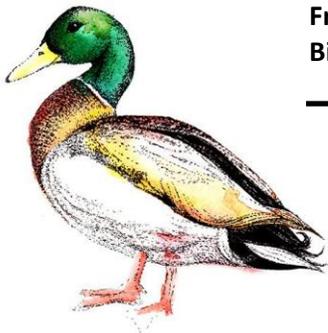
Enjoy guided birding trips, boat tours, live auction, raffle, gala banquet, and more. Our featured speaker will be John Marzluff, Professor of wildlife science at the University of Washington and author. Join our festival pre-trip on April 9-11: a three-day, two-night birding and sightseeing cruise of the San Juan Islands. Or extend your festival with our Neah Bay post-trip on April 14-16: three days of exploring northwest coastal Washington.

To learn more and register, visit  
[www.olympicbirdfest.org](http://www.olympicbirdfest.org).

## Attention Duck Enthusiasts!

The link below will take you to a new interactive PDF on the natural history of the Gadwall by Tom Reaune. Happy reading!

<https://indd.adobe.com/view/8c64c4b6-f095-471e-8ccd-41d5439104cb>



## Free Software for Young Birders Available

As of September 21, 2018 any young birder in pre-K, grade school, middle school or high school will be able to download the new version 7.7 of Thayer's Birds of North America at NO COST. The kids do this by using a Young Birder code; in our case use **"FiveValleysAudubonYoungBirder"** where it asks for payment code. This same code will work for anyone – no matter how many times it is used.

Kids can visit [www.ThayerBirding.com](http://www.ThayerBirding.com), select either the Windows or the Mac download, and enter the Young Birder code: **"FiveValleysAudubonYoungBirder."**

Why are we doing this? Because the company founder, Peter W. Thayer, decided that this would be the perfect way to celebrate his 70th birthday.

It takes a while to download the files, so allow 40-60 minutes. Also, there are helpful tutorial videos that I recommend watching (this means you with the Y chromosomes).

For more information about the young birder program, see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uuryabHrPYQ>



## History of the Christmas Bird Count Reprinted from [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org)

Prior to the turn of the 20th century, hunters engaged in a holiday tradition known as the Christmas "Side Hunt." They would choose sides and go afield with their guns— whoever brought in the biggest pile of feathered (and furred) quarry won.

Conservation was in its beginning stages, and many observers and scientists were becoming concerned about declining bird populations. Beginning on Christmas Day 1900, ornithologist Frank M. Chapman, an early officer in the then-nascent Audubon Society, proposed a new holiday tradition—a "Christmas Bird Census" that would count birds during the holidays rather than hunt them.

So began the Christmas Bird Count. Thanks to the inspiration of Chapman and the enthusiasm of 27 dedicated birders, 25 Christmas Bird Counts were held that day. The locations ranged from Toronto, Ontario to Pacific Grove, California with most counts in or near the population centers of northeastern North America. Those original 27 Christmas Bird Counters tallied around 90 species on all the counts combined.

## CBC in the Modern Era

Each November, birders interesting in participating in the CBC can sign up and join in through the Audubon website. From December 14 through January 5 each year tens of thousands of volunteers throughout the Americas brave snow, wind, or rain, and take part in the effort. Audubon and other organizations use data collected in this long-running wildlife census to assess the health of bird populations, and to help guide conservation action.

## How the Christmas Bird Count Helps Protect Species and Their Habitat

The data collected by observers over the past century allow Audubon researchers, conservation biologists, wildlife agencies and other interested individuals to study the long-term health and status of bird populations across North America. When combined with other surveys such as the Breeding Bird Survey, it provides a picture of how the continent's bird populations have changed in time and space over the past hundred years.

The long term perspective is vital for conservationists. It informs strategies to protect birds and their habitat, and helps identify environmental issues with implications for people as well.

## Thanks & Welcome to Our New Members:

Elena Furrow  
Marci Keller  
Donna M. Moses  
Karla Murphy  
Patricia Petrilli



**The Five Valleys Audubon Society would like to thank those of you who renewed your membership this past month.** We generally encourage our members to receive your newsletter via email (to conserve resources and our expenses), which is the default mailing option if provided by new members. If you want to change how your newsletter is delivered or have any changes to your mailing preferences, please contact the Membership Chair, Poody McLaughlin, at [pmcregan@bresnan.net](mailto:pmcregan@bresnan.net).

### Five Valleys Audubon Society Membership Application

Please support Five Valleys Audubon Society (FVAS). There are several ways to donate. Any method ensures that you will receive our *Birding Observer* newsletter and may participate in all chapter activities. Please help us reduce our \$3,700 annual newsletter cost by signing up for email delivery. FVAS is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit.

Make checks out to Five Valleys Audubon Society and mail to: PO Box 8425, Missoula, MT 59807

Or donate on our website: [fvaudubon.org/join](http://fvaudubon.org/join)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ \$15 FVAS membership only, includes newsletter sent via email.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Legacy Fund, creating and supporting local urban bird habitats for citizen enjoyment without leaving the city.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ \$25 FVAS membership only, includes newsletter sent via USPS.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total contribution

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ General Fund, use as needed for conservation, field trips, education and outreach.

\_\_\_\_\_ Volunteer - Please contact me. I would like to know more about how I may help birds and FVAS.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Phillip L. Wright Fund, small grants for student research.

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

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

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

Email: (Required to receive the newsletter and birding alerts via email.) \_\_\_\_\_

Please note: FVAS does not share email addresses with anyone except Montana Audubon. Your email address is safe with us!

Please be aware that membership in Five Valleys Audubon Society (FVAS) alone does not confer membership in the National Audubon Society (NAS). FVAS and NAS are separate 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations. To become a new member of NAS and receive Audubon magazine (or to renew a current or lapsed membership) visit the website: [fvaudubon.org/nas](http://fvaudubon.org/nas). Using this website will ensure that FVAS receives a \$20 one-time credit for your NAS membership. All NAS members become members of FVAS. A third organization, Montana Audubon (MTA), is also an independent organization and receives no financial support from NAS. MTA handles statewide issues and is responsible for its own fundraising. To assist in this important statewide work you may contact MTA through their website: <http://mtaudubon.org/>. Please give generously to each organization. Although independent, we work together to protect what we all love.

Five Valleys Audubon Society  
PO Box 8425, Missoula, MT 59807

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
MISSOULA, MT  
59807  
PERMIT NO. 490



TO:

Five Valleys Audubon Society  
PO Box 8425, Missoula, MT 59807  
[www.fvaudubon.org](http://www.fvaudubon.org)

Montana Audubon  
PO Box 595, Helena, MT 59624  
(406) 443-3949  
[www.mtaudubon.org](http://www.mtaudubon.org)

**OFFICERS:**

President, 2018-2021	Rose Leach	721-0779	<a href="mailto:rleach-2@bresnan.net">rleach-2@bresnan.net</a>
Vice President, 2017-2020	Catherine Goodman	549-5404	<a href="mailto:catherine.goodman08@gmail.com">catherine.goodman08@gmail.com</a>
Secretary, 2018-2021	Andrea Stierle	782-6419	<a href="mailto:andrea.stierle@mso.umt.edu">andrea.stierle@mso.umt.edu</a>
Treasurer, 2017-2020	Jeffrey Ipsen	543-7051	<a href="mailto:treasurer@fvaudubon.org">treasurer@fvaudubon.org</a>

**DIRECTORS:**

2018-2021	Larry Weeks	549-5632	<a href="mailto:bwsgenea@gmail.com">bwsgenea@gmail.com</a>
2017-2020	Jim Brown	549-8052	<a href="mailto:brownjs2@bresnan.net">brownjs2@bresnan.net</a>
2017-2020	Jean Duncan	396-1171	<a href="mailto:jeanclaire@montana.com">jeanclaire@montana.com</a>
2017-2020	Gerhard Knudsen	251-2765	<a href="mailto:gmk@bresnan.net">gmk@bresnan.net</a>
2016-2019	Ed Monnig	549-0580	<a href="mailto:emonnig01@gmail.com">emonnig01@gmail.com</a>
2016-2019	Rose Stoudt	880-8060	<a href="mailto:ras120656@yahoo.com">ras120656@yahoo.com</a>
2016-2019	Susie Wall	274-0548	<a href="mailto:susiewall2@gmail.com">susiewall2@gmail.com</a>

**COMMITTEES:**

Archivist	Shirley Holden		
Audubon Adventures	Vacant		
Christmas Bird Count	Larry Weeks	549-5632	<a href="mailto:bwsgenea@gmail.com">bwsgenea@gmail.com</a>
Conservation	Amy Cilimburg		<a href="mailto:amycili@gmail.com">amycili@gmail.com</a>
Education	Larry Weeks	549-5632	<a href="mailto:bwsgenea@gmail.com">bwsgenea@gmail.com</a>
Field Activities	Larry Weeks	549-5632	<a href="mailto:bwsgenea@gmail.com">bwsgenea@gmail.com</a>
Habitat Protection	Jim Brown	549-8052	<a href="mailto:brownjs2@bresnan.net">brownjs2@bresnan.net</a>
Member Records	Poody McLaughlin	543-4860	<a href="mailto:pmcregan@bresnan.net">pmcregan@bresnan.net</a>
Member Promotion	Jerry Dirnberger	360-5133	<a href="mailto:dirnberger@aol.com">dirnberger@aol.com</a>
Newsletter Circulation	Hedwig Vogel-Wright	549-7251	<a href="mailto:hedwigvw@fastmail.fm">hedwigvw@fastmail.fm</a>
Newsletter Editor	Bev Orth Geoghegan	750-0149	<a href="mailto:orthbev@hotmail.com">orthbev@hotmail.com</a>
PL Wright Endowment	Bill Gabriel	273-6880	<a href="mailto:biograf@earthlink.net">biograf@earthlink.net</a>
Program	Susie Wall	274-0548	<a href="mailto:susiewall2@gmail.com">susiewall2@gmail.com</a>
Publicity	Cathy Nolan		<a href="mailto:canolan4@outlook.com">canolan4@outlook.com</a>
Social Media	Thomas Kallmeyer		<a href="mailto:thomaskallmeyer@yahoo.com">thomaskallmeyer@yahoo.com</a>
University Liaison	Chad Bishop	243-4374	
Web Site	Pat Little	493-7115	<a href="mailto:roughleg@gmail.com">roughleg@gmail.com</a>

Larry Berrin, Executive Director  
[lberrin@mtaudubon.org](mailto:lberrin@mtaudubon.org)

David Cronenwett, Development Specialist  
[david@mtaudubon.org](mailto:david@mtaudubon.org)

Janet Ellis, Senior Director of Policy  
[jellis@mtaudubon.org](mailto:jellis@mtaudubon.org)

Cathie Erickson, Accounting Specialist  
[cerrickson@mtaudubon.org](mailto:cerrickson@mtaudubon.org)

Norane Freistadt, Finance Director  
[norane@mtaudubon.org](mailto:norane@mtaudubon.org)

Janet Johnston, Office Manager  
[info@mtaudubon.org](mailto:info@mtaudubon.org)

Amy Seaman, Conservation Program  
Manager  
[aseaman@mtaudubon.org](mailto:aseaman@mtaudubon.org)

Carolyn Sevier, Center Director  
[csevier@mtaudubon.org](mailto:csevier@mtaudubon.org)

Rachel Van Wingen, Board President