

Brother Can You Sparrow Dime? Birdathon 2016 Report

Creatures of Habit

We seem to be devoted to our Birdathon route, faithfully making our rounds of the Helena Valley and beyond. Even after 23 years it doesn't get old. We had classic Memorial Day weekend weather—a mix of sun, clouds, rain, and wind. And, we got to relive the wet-dog-in-the-car moment from many years ago (different dog). We were happy to see more abundant Horned larks this year, and we were treated to a view of a Dusky flycatcher sitting still for several minutes. Bobolinks were numerous on Head Lane and Duffy Lane! Wood ducks at Spring Meadow Lake. Our last bird of Sunday evening was a Lazuli bunting sitting in the middle of Dump Gulch Road—very accommodating.

Monday we were constantly amazed by the stunning beauty of Montana—early morning sun brought out such an array of shades of green—even Sherwin Williams might not have names for them. Giant Springs State Park was empty, soggy, windy, and rainy, but blue skies awaited us at Benton Lake National Wildlife Refuge where we saw Sharp-tailed grouse, Upland sandpiper, and a Loggerhead shrike. An American bittern at Freezeout Lake was accompanied by howling winds. And then a great moment from Little Prickly Pear Canyon; we stopped to look at two Bald eagles on a branch above the creek, and a Lewis' woodpecker flew into an adjacent snag. Serendipity! And finally at Duffy Lane, moments before our time ran out, we watched a Lark sparrow on one side of the road and a LeConte's sparrow (we have photos) on the other. A happy ending to a great 24 hours.

We ended the day with 124 species (a new record for our team) and a Wilcoxson's fudge bar. Thank you for your pledge/donation. Your contribution helps us with education and conservation programs. Please make your check to Last Chance Audubon and mail to us at 210 S. California, Helena 59601. *Happy Summer!*

Jo, Brian, Don, & Andrea