

JANUARY MEMBERSHIP MEETING

PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF MEETING DATE AND LOCATION

Last Chance Audubon Society will meet on Monday, January 19, at 7:00 pm at St. Paul's Methodist Church on Lawrence & Cruse Ave. Enter the church at the Cruse Ave. entrance. The meeting will take place in the Choir Room just inside the front door.

The January program will feature a birding adventure to Costa Rica. A year ago LCAS members Jo Lace and Brian Shovers joined their birding companions Don and Andrea Stierle of Butte for a ten day birding adventure to Costa Rica, one of the most diverse ecosystems on the planet. The Stierles' program will feature the birds, mammals, reptiles, and plants of this amazing country as seen by these first-time visitors to Costa Rica. The two couples recorded about 80 new life species, including Quetzals, Motmots, Trogons, Scarlet Macaws, Toucans, and a wide variety of hummingbirds, as well as howler and white-faced monkeys, agoutis, fishing spiders, tree frogs, and American crocodiles. Habitats stretched from the Monteverde cloud forest to Corcovado National Park on the southwestern Pacific coast to the Wilson Botanical Gardens along the Panamanian border. This evening trip to Costa Rica will be a great antidote to the winter-time blues.

The Stierles have taught chemistry at Montana Tech for three decades while pursuing natural products research focused on environmental cleanup of the Berkeley Pit and pharmaceuticals.

The program is free and open to the public.

NOTE: The February Membership Meeting will also be on Monday night, Feb. 16, at St. Paul's.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT: Because of the frigid weather on Dec. 14, the CBC was rescheduled for Saturday, Jan. 3. For complete CBC results, please see the Feb. newsletter.

HABITAT PROTECTION GRANT

LCAS is soliciting applications for \$2,000 dedicated to improving habitat in the Helena area. To apply: Send your 1-page application describing your project and how it will improve habitat, and a detailed budget to Loren Bahls, 1032 12th Ave., Helena, MT 59601 by March 1, 2009. For more info, call Loren at 406-443-2196.

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SILENT AUCTION UPDATE from Jo Lace

The December membership meeting was the final night of the annual silent auction. Bob Martinka's wonderful bird photographs brought a good crowd to the meeting and we raised \$874.00 for our chapter's habitat protection fund and other projects. The following businesses and individuals contributed to the auction. Please thank them when you patronize their establishments.

- Pan Handler ▪ Ghost Art Gallery ▪ Saunders Jewelry ▪ Blackfoot River Brewery ▪ Park Avenue Bakery ▪ Birds & Beasleys ▪ Silver Star Steak Co.
- Montana Book Co. ▪ Montana Outdoor Sports
- Base Camp ▪ Real Food Store ▪ No Sweat Café
- Taco del Sol ▪ Lewis & Clark Library ▪ Great Divide Cyclery ▪ Great Northern Car Wash ▪ Myrna Loy ▪ Montana Audubon ▪ Montana Magazine ▪ Far Country Press ▪ The Sanders Bed & Breakfast ▪ Knit & Nosh ▪ George & Virginia Holton ▪ Jan Donaldson & Mary Ann Guggenheim ▪ Bob Martinka ▪ Marsha Carter Davis ▪ Jim Barngrover
- Janet Sperry ▪ Marie McAlear ▪ Cedron Jones & *(continued on next page)*

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Sara Toubman ▪ Mary Fay ▪ Bill Matheson ▪ Betty Gutman ▪ Drake Barton ▪ Sue Jackson

Thanks to everyone who made a contribution or a bid. The generosity of our donors and our members has once again made our auction a real success. Here's to wonderful birding in the new year!

♪ **BIRDNOTE: OBSERVATIONS FROM A FEEDER WATCHER**
by **Dave Slaughter**

If you're like me, each year you eagerly await the spring. The first meadowlark song and the first sight of a mountain bluebird are signs that the migratory species are returning and any field trip will yield dozens of species. Winter is harder; there are fewer species and fewer numbers of birds. Thank God for my feeder. Although I don't get a lot of species in the area where I live, seeing the chickadees and nuthatches which come in helps me get through the winter. Recently I discovered two things about the birds at my feeder which some other members of the Audubon Society may not know and may find of interest. These are things I have seen and heard a thousand times, but the significance escaped me until I read about the experiments of more astute observers.

Before I tell you about this, let me digress and say that the best scientists are cut from a different cloth than I am, which can be illustrated by the following story: When I was a kid I spent some time camping in the woods of Appalachia. If you've ever done this in the spring, you notice that at about sundown the whip-poor-wills start to sing, a very loud, piercing WHIP-poor-WILL! about once every second. At first this is pleasant, but at about 1 a.m. it starts to get irksome and at about 3 a.m. you'll start to look for a flashlight to find the little buggers and chase them out of the county. Dr. Donald Kroodsma, however, a professor of ornithology, decided to stay awake all night and count the number of whip-poor-will calls, and came up with a total of 20,898 calls by one male in a 9-hour night. If you'd asked me how many calls there were, I'd have said "a bunch."

As astounding as Dr. Kroodsma's endurance was in the pursuit of science, he doesn't have the record. That probably goes to Louise de Kiriline Lawrence, who on May 27, 1952, counted the number of songs uttered by one male red-eyed vireo in a day. The total was 22,197 songs. There's no way I could ever hold a candle to this kind of dedication. (However, if I were a university professor doing the study, I would have done it in a much more rational way. I would have assigned the counting to a graduate student.)

Anyway, when watching my feeder, I've noticed that the chickadees and nuthatches usually fly to the feeder, select a seed, then fly to a nearby perch to eat it. I've also noticed that occasionally they will discard a seed or two at the feeder before taking one and flying off with it. I never thought much about this until I read a book by Bernd Heinrich dealing with survival strategies of animals in the winter. He started wondering why some seeds were discarded and others chosen. The research he has done on this behavior was reported in *The Auk* (114(2):298-299, 1997), and basically what he discovered was that the birds select the seeds based on weight. Not all seeds are the same, some being empty hulls even though they appear to be intact seeds. In an experiment using empty seed hulls, normal seeds, and seed hulls containing heavy plaster of paris, he discovered that the birds discriminate in favor of heavier over lighter sunflower seeds. When the birds were presented with a pile of empty seeds they often discarded multiple seeds, sometimes eventually leaving without taking any. Both species had an approximately fourfold tendency to discard empty seeds when confronted with empty versus normal filled seeds, and the chickadees selected larger vs. smaller normal seeds when presented with a choice. It appears that the birds are judging the weight of the seeds they select, much as a shopper at a grocery store picks through a bin of apples for the best ones.

The next bit of information relates to the chickadee alarm call. We've all heard this, the typical *chicka-dee-dee-dee* which gives the birds their name. Again, I never paid much attention to this until I read about research done by Chris Templeton and reported in the June 24, 2005, edition of the journal *Science*. It appears that the alarm call encodes very specific information about the level of threat present. The more *dee*'s strung out at the end of the call, the higher the threat level. A red-tailed hawk, a relatively minor threat to a chickadee, might elicit only a couple of *dee*'s whereas a pygmy owl, the ultimate chickadee predator, might elicit over 20 *dee*'s. A house cat is in between.

I personally don't generate a single alarm call from the chickadees at my feeder. I am a bit chagrined by this. It's humbling to be "dissed" by a chickadee.

LCAS AND FAIRGROUNDS WETLANDS by Brian Shovers

In early 2002 LCAS joined with Helena Open Space Committee, Montana Audubon, Prickly Pear Land Trust, Mikel Kellnor, and Bob Kiesling to purchase a 2.5 acre wetland east of the Fairgrounds Duck Pond, known as the Picotte property, for \$25,000. The purchased property was then donated to the City of Helena and is managed by Parks & Recreation and is now known as the Charles Van Hook Wetlands.

Over the last six years several LCAS cleanups have been sponsored and a preliminary plant survey was done by Montana Native Plant Society, which discovered a number of weed species thriving. In 2007 Lewis & Clark County applied for and received a grant to connect the houses between Green Meadow Drive and the Fairgrounds to the city water/sewer system. Tying into the city system required disturbance of the land along the eastern edge of the duck pond. An unintended consequence of this activity has been the sale of a wetlands just south of the Charles Van Hook Wetland, which might be built upon in the near future, and which could have a negative impact on the city wetlands to the north. This summer the contractor installing the city water/sewer line, stubbed in 11 sewer and water connections, a fire hydrant, and piled a huge amount of fill material on the eastern edge of the 1.7 acre parcel (located between Reed and Willow, west of Green Meadow Drive). The new owner has notified the U.S. Corps of Engineers of her intention to build some storage units on the property which includes a certified wetland. Any disturbance of this wetland would have to be approved by the Corps of Engineers. Filling this wetland and building houses on it could have a negative impact on flow of water into the Charles Van Hook Wetland, which LCAS has a stake in, as does the city.

LCAS has alerted the new Helena City Parks & Recreation director, Amy Teagarden, about our concerns and she has promised to visit the site. We also filed a complaint with the Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality, and they contacted us to initiate a conversation with the Helena Corps of Engineers office. If the property owner makes petition to fill this wetland, the Corps will allow a 30 day comment period. We are monitoring the situation and hope to involve the city and county in this issue concerning the preservation of wetlands in the Helena valley. If you have an interest in this issue please contact Brian Shovers at 406-443-6640 or at sholace@juno.com.

JAN. 2009 MEMBERSHIP REPORT from Sara Toubman

The National Audubon Society (NAS) has completed their new membership database. Consequently, the Last Chance Audubon Society chapter has many new NAS members and renewals. The old NAS database was not functioning for several months.

The new totals are impressive: there are 330 listings in our database. Of these, 11 are comps, 240 are NAS members, 79 are LCAS members, and 40 are NAS and LCAS members. Thank you one and all for supporting Audubon in whatever way you choose. Enjoy the many benefits of belonging to such worthwhile organizations.

LCAS membership renewals for 2009 are due this month. If you have already renewed, thanks very much. If you want to renew, please fill out the form on the last page of the newsletter and mail it in.

WELCOME to these new and renewing members. NAS New: Martha Baker, Georgia Barker, Mary Beauchea, Mona Bracken, Elizabeth Carlson Thompson, Raymond Clum, Diana Connick, Tom Corbett, Mark & Dee Dee Cress, Sandra Donahue, Eric Eggen, Bart Ekren, Gregory Engellant, Jack Erb, Mary Fay, Mrs. Robert E.

Fifer, Michael Gottlieb, Charlotte Gumtow, Jennifer Hill, Stephanie Knisley, Christopher Korow, Paula Lais, Juanita Larson, Douglas Liston, Linda & John Madrid, Jana Maier, Jerry Matthews, Julia Meeks, Theresa Middagh, Maggie Olson, J. Pichette, Nancy Schwalm, S. Shapiro, C. Straub, Mat Uland, Virginia Walter, John Weida, Elisabeth Woert, Dennis Zeiler. NAS Renewals: Robert Adams, Joan Bishop, John & Carla Cronholm, William Dawe, Norm Doebel, Howard Ellis, Eric Feaver, Pat & Becky Foster, James Garrity, Gary Gingery, Art Gorov, Beverly Gregor, Barb Grimes, Janet Grinde, Rose Gunstone, Edward Hale, Pam Harris, John & Robin Hein, Arch & Gail Hewitt, John Hoffland, William Hubber, Shirley Hudson, Leonard John, Royal Johnson, Lorraine Kuntz, Tillie Lakner, Diana Longdon, Alice Lund. Isobelle Manley, Robert Martin, Bob Martinka, George & Janet Matheson, Mike & Helen Murray, Steve McEvoy, Larry McEvory, Sue Near, Alan Nicholson, Evelyn Norton, Rich Petaja, James & Lorca Pompati, Mrs. R.W. Putsch, Alicia Reber, Judy Scheier, Robert Schleicher, LeRoy & Diana Schramm, Tim Speyer, Charles Stalnaker, Pete Strazdas, Carol Taylor, Ellen Taylor, Wendy Thomi, Dolores Walter, Wendy

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Wheeler, Jan Williams, Jeannine Willison, John Wirth, R. Whitesitt, Elizabeth Vangenderen. LCAS New/Renewals: Amy Randall, Berma Saxton, Bill & Joyce Kronholm, Bill & Vicki FitzGerald, Bob Reinke, Bobbi Dancer, Ellen Feaver, Greg & Wendy Wheeler, Jerry Wozniak, Julie Adams, Leonard John, Loren Bahls, Lowell Anderson, Mary Anne Guggenheim & Jan Donaldson, Mike & Helen Murray, Sue & Bruce Newell, Bruce Hodess, Curt & Alice Lund, Jon Motl and Lorne Milne, Bruce Desonia, Les Pederson, Brad Harlow, Hugh Zackheim, Joan Bishop, Liz Hiltunen, Cindy Ward, Dave Slaughter, Sara Toubman.

**DEC. 31, 2008 BUDGET SUMMARY
from Dan Sullivan**

LCAS base expenditures for the current year are projected to be approximately \$2,500. We should expect revenue of approximately \$7,500, maybe more, if we have similar income as last year. That leaves us approximately \$5,000 to spend from this year's budget. Last year LCAS gave \$2,000 to MT Audubon and \$2,000 to the Spring Meadow Project. We have spent \$745 on contributions (\$500 to the Birds of Montana Book and \$245 on Open Space lobbying). We have a \$9,500 balance in the checking account, so we have sufficient funds to apply to other projects. (To see the detailed report, check the LCAS website at www.lastchanceaudubon.org.)

Last Chance Audubon Society promotes understanding, respect and enjoyment of birds and the natural world through education, habitat protection and environmental advocacy.

**TOP 10 FEEDER BIRDS – PACIFIC
NORTHWEST & ROCKY MOUNTAIN
REGIONS - 2007-2008**

1. Dark-eyed Junco
2. Black-capped Chickadee
3. Northern Flicker
4. House Finch
5. American Robin
6. Pine Siskin
7. Red-breasted Nuthatch
8. Downy Woodpecker
9. Spotted Towhee
10. Song Sparrow

--Winter Bird Highlights from Project FeederWatch, 2007-2008

**--COMING EVENTS
& REMINDERS--**

Kelsey Chapter of the Montana Native Plant Society: Tuesday, January 27, 7:00 p.m.
"Mountain Pine Beetle and its Impacts on our Surrounding Forest Landscape" with forester Gary Ellingson. What is happening in our local forests in regards to mountain pine beetle? Gary will start by putting the scope of the problem into context, i.e., what's happening in Canada and other states. He will discuss the life cycle of the beetle and talk about how landowners are dealing with the problem, including what the City of Helena is planning to do on its park lands. Associated issues such as increasing fire hazard and changes in plant communities will also be discussed. Free to the public at the Lewis and Clark Library.

LCAS Newsletter: Please submit February newsletter items by Monday, Feb. 2. Thanks.

Great Backyard Bird Count: This year's GBBC will be held on President's Day Weekend, Feb. 13-16. We need folks to participate. It's Free. It's Simple. It's Fast and Fun.

Go to www.birdcount.org and see how easy it is to be a citizen scientist. If you don't have a computer available, call Sandy at Birds & Beasleys, 449-0904, and she'll help you record your bird sightings.

This is an important program that gives Cornell Lab of Ornithology a snapshot of the bird population in the United States and Canada. The minimum commitment is 15 minutes a day for 4 days.



**AUDUBON AT THE 2009 MONTANA LEGISLATURE
YOUR HELP IS NEEDED!**

Montana Audubon has made the following list of bills a priority for the 2009 Montana Legislature:

- **Montana River Legacy Act** – As Montana continues to grow, it makes sense to protect its clean water and rivers. Legislation for a “River Legacy Act” will be introduced. This bill will require new homes and commercial buildings to be set back at least 250 ft from the ordinary high water mark on up to 12 legacy rivers. Additionally, the legislation will outline a process that local governments can use—at the local government level—to protect other rivers and/or streams.
- **Wind Farms and Wildlife** ~ Legislation will be introduced to certify new wind projects that have implemented measures to minimize impacts to wildlife, critical wildlife habitat, and other areas of special concern. Wind farms can “opt in” or “opt out” of this certification program, but incentives will be established to encourage wind companies to be a “good neighbor” to Montana’s wildlife.
- **Protecting Prairie Dogs** ~ Prairie dogs play an important role in the prairie ecosystem, with bird species like Mountain Plover and Burrowing Owl highly dependent on ‘dog’ towns. In Montana, prairie dogs are currently regulated by the Department of Agriculture as rodent “pests.” In order to allow Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks to manage these declining animals, legislation needs to be passed by the Montana Legislature.

If you are interested in helping with our legislative work, an important role that local Audubon members play during the legislature is to participate in statewide legislative alerts. When crucial issues are at stake, Montana Audubon will contact interested members by phone or email, explain the issue and why we need action taken on it, and then ask members to contact their legislators. Alerts will be sent out only a handful of times during the session, but they provide a powerful way to lobby legislators on crucial bills and issues.

To sign up for alerts, you can sign up at your local chapter meeting, email lobbyist Janet Ellis (jellis@mtaudubon.org), sign up on our website (www.mtaudubon.org), or call Montana Audubon (443-3949). Please provide your name, home address, phone number, and email address. Even if you were signed up for our 2007 Legislative alerts, you should sign up again for this session so that Montana Audubon lists can be updated. THANKS for your interest and involvement!

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We can find happiness in protecting the world around us not only because we cherish it for its awesome beauty, power and mystery, but because we cherish our fellow humans, those who live today, and those who will live tomorrow.

--Jacques-Yves Cousteau





**Last Chance Audubon Society
Membership Form**

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Please send your \$15 check and form to Last Chance
Audubon Society, PO Box 924, Helena, MT 59624.
All contributions are tax deductible.

LAST CHANCE AUDUBON SOCIETY

Officers:		Christmas Count	Sue Newell-442-8142/Cedron Jones 442-1271
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Treasurer	Dan Sullivan 443-4229	Conservation	Brian Shovers 443-6640
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Birdathon	Jo Lace 443-6640	Publicity	Jim Greene 495-9270 - greenevogt@imt.net
Birdseed Sale	Sue Jackson-443-4486/Sandy Shull-449-0904	Silent Auction	Sandy Shull-449-0904/Jo Lace-443-6640
LCAS Website: www.lastchanceaudubon.org . Contacts: Birdseed – Birds & Beasleys, 449-0904. Montana Audubon – 443-3949 / www.mtaudubon.org . Newsletter - 458-8170, 8982 Jackpine Dr, Helena 59602, samsper@mt.net . Non-members may receive the newsletter for \$5.50 per year. Send check to LCAS, PO Box 924, Helena 59624.			
		Website	Christian Frazza

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White-faced Monkey

