

MAY MEMBERSHIP MEETING

**-- PLEASE NOTE DATE &
LOCATION--**

Last Chance Audubon Society will meet Monday, May 18, at 7:00 pm at St. Paul's Methodist Church.

The Program, *A Visual Tour of the Rocky Mountain Front*, will be presented by Judy Fettig and Maggie Olson, volunteers for the Montana Wilderness Association.

The slideshow highlights the magnificence of Montana's Rocky Mountain Front. Enjoy taking this photographic journey of over 110 miles from Marias Pass on Highway 2 to Rogers Pass on Highway 200.

The Coalition to Protect the Rocky Mountain Front is a diverse group of hunters, back-country outfitters, anglers, local ranchers, business people, conservationists, and wilderness advocates, including MWA. It is working on a legislative proposal for a conservation package designed to provide strong protection for this wondrous area.

In the face of rapid population growth and development all over the West in the last decades, the hope is to be pro-active and keep the Front the way it is today—the way many Montanans (and other Americans) want it to be. Part of the plan is to ask for some new wilderness protection for areas that are already roadless and to designate other adjacent areas for another level of conservation management that will continue to protect the wildlife, water, cultural, and ecological resources of this rich landscape.

This is an effort by Montanans and your input is welcomed. We all really love the Front. Find out how you can influence and support plans to save "The Crown of the Continent."

BIRD CLASS CANCELED: I regret to announce that the beginning bird class has been canceled due to lack of interest. We'll try again next year.

--Jo Lace

BIRDATHON ANON

I just came inside after shoveling snow and I'm trying to conjure up bobolinks, curlews and flocks of peeps scurrying along mud flats. Birdathon is coming soon. It seems like the stakes get higher with every passing year. Encroachments on habitat, water quality concerns, impacts of climate change, and the ever expanding demands of a growing human population on shrinking resources all collude to put increasing pressure on native and migrant bird communities. This is my annual plea for donors and for birders.

Birdathon is a fundraiser for LCAS and the pledges received are split with Montana Audubon. Much of the LCAS share is used in Habitat Protection projects. In the last year we gave \$500 to Montana Audubon for their forthcoming *Birds of Montana*, \$245 to promote passage of the Lewis & Clark County Land Conservation bond, and this spring, \$1,000 to the L&C County Water Quality Protection District for an ongoing re-vegetation project along Prickly Pear Creek.

During Birdathon last year we attempted to reach all of our members by phone in an effort to get more of the chapter involved. While the outcome was a financial success, the process proved difficult for

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our limited number of volunteers. Instead of phoning this year, letters will go out to those who pledged last year. If you do not receive a letter but would like to pledge to a team, you may send your donation to LCAS at PO Box 924, Helena 59624. Please earmark your check for Birdathon and the team of your choice. This year's teams are:
▶ Bigfoot & Baldy (aka Sara Toubman & Cedron Jones) ▶ 100 Birds/100 Miles – The Arizona Version (Janice Miller, Coburn Currier, Scott Story

& Karen) ▶ Brother Can You Sparrow Dime? (Brian Shovers & Jo Lace, Don & Andrea Stierle).

All of this snow will create some great bird habitat and before we know it the leaves will have popped and the trees will be filled with birdsong. I'm all set to get out and look for birds – how about you?

If you have questions or would like to form a team, please call me at 443-6640.

--Jo Lace

LAST CHANCE AUDUBON AWARDS HABITAT PROTECTION GRANT

by Brian Shovers

The LCAS Board recently agreed to award a \$1,000 habitat grant to the Lewis & Clark County Water Quality Protection District for restoration of a riparian area along Prickly Pear Creek. This year's grant is directed to the purchase of native shrub species to be planted on the Burnham Ranch during the last week of April. Previous problems with re-vegetation along Prickly Pear Creek have been resolved by the Burnham family's location of another source of irrigation water for ranchers along the creek, preventing the dewatering of Prickly Pear that has occurred historically during late summer, early autumn. In the past few years the Burnhams have also fenced the riparian area from cattle. The Water Quality District secured labor for the planting from an EPA grant to the Montana Conservation Corps. The planting will focus on the following native species: Sandbar willow, Red osier dogwood, Yellow currant, Buffaloberry, and Black cottonwood.

This is not the first grant awarded by LCAS to the Water Quality District. Last year LCAS contributed \$2,000 to the re-vegetation effort at Spring Meadow State Park to repair damage from the devastating fire of 2007. I'm happy to report that Spring Meadow is on the road to recovery due to natural regeneration from roots of willow and cottonwood, and the planting that LCAS members and other community groups undertook last spring.

The Board requested photo monitoring (before, during, and after) of the planting this spring on the Burnham Ranch. Look for a program in the future by the Water Quality District on the re-vegetation project.

DESIGN OF NEW LCAS WEBSITE by Brian Shovers

Many of you might not even be aware that the chapter has a website, where we post our newsletter, field trips, and program announcements. The Board felt we needed a new, more attractive, user-friendly site, and so we've met with a local web designer, Dave Ratz, who works days at the Montana Heritage Program managing their website, and we've asked him to come up with a new design that we can manage ourselves. Keep your eyes on our site at www.lastchanceaudubon.org; we expect a new look sometime this summer.

THE FAIRGROUNDS DUCK POND

Two years ago Bob Martinka met with other community groups in a series of meetings to try to resolve the problem with domestic birds at the Fairgrounds Duck Pond. As noted in the following April 24th letter from Brian Shovers to Keith Hatch of the Lewis & Clark Fairgrounds, a compromise was reached, but no action has been taken by the committee on that decision

Over two years ago Last Chance Audubon participated in a series of meetings with other interested members of the community to discuss problems with and future management of the Fairgrounds Duck Pond. During those sessions a consensus was reached providing for the removal of all domestic waterfowl except six breeding pairs of geese. Last Chance Audubon and other local groups and individuals devoted a considerable amount of time to this lengthy process. To date, it appears that no action has been taken to implement any of the aspects of the resulting plan. Our representative, Bob Martinka, periodically monitors birds at the duck pond and just last week he counted over 70 domestic geese. Needless to say, we are disappointed, as I'm sure are the other community members who devoted their valuable time to this effort. Is there a timeframe for when the county and Fairgrounds are going to act upon the recommendations of the advisory group? We feel it is important to follow through on decisions developed by community members volunteering their time to civic projects.

☀️ LAST CHANCE AUDUBON SOCIETY SPRING 2009 FIELD TRIPS 🌸

- ▶ **Saturday Morning Birdwalks - Birds & Beasleys** will lead a birdwalk every Saturday from April 25th to Oct 3rd. Meet Bill Rainey or Coburn Currier at 7:30 am at Birds & Beasleys, 70 S. Park Ave. Bring binoculars if you have them and dress for the weather. Walks will be about 2 hours in length and destinations will be to local birding areas, i.e., Helena Reservoir, Spring Meadow, Lake Helena, etc. Location of the week's walk will be known by Thursday, so call 449-0940 to learn the location, or just show up Saturday morning ready to have fun.
- ▶ **May 13, Wednesday - Evening Last Chance Gulch Bird Walk** - Meet Cary Lund at the Lewis and Clark Library at 5:30 p.m. for an easy stroll around the neighborhood close to the library, looking for a variety of local species. Call Cary at 449-3180 to sign up.
- ▶ **May 16, Saturday - Beaver Creek and Environs** - Join Jim Greene and Martha Vogt in exploring a new, intriguing birding area. Jerry and Nancy Bodmer, of Winston, have offered to share their 100 acres of very diverse habitat--from Beaver Creek wetlands and beaver dams to dry, 4400' foothills. They have observed 110 species of birds on the property over time. Contact Jim and Martha at 495-9270 or email them at greenevogt@imt.net to book a spot for this tour.
- ▶ **May 23, Saturday - Benton Lake National Wildlife Refuge** - Jo Lace and Brian Shovers will lead a group to Benton Lake near Great Falls. This is an excellent opportunity to see waterfowl and burrowing owls. Meet at the DOT parking lot at 7:15 a.m., return about 4 p.m. Bring a lunch, water, binoculars, spotting scope and dress for any weather. Call to reserve a spot, 12 people maximum, 443-6640.
- ▶ **May 27, Wednesday - "Blue Light Special"** - You won't believe all the birds Bob Martinka has seen over the past few years at this unknown, unexpected urban birding hotspot! Likely sightings are migratory and nesting waterfowl, as well as migratory passerine species. Meet at the west side of the K-Mart parking lot at 6:30 p.m. for a two hour outing. Call Bob to reserve a spot at 449-3313.
- ▶ **May 30, Saturday - Stanfield Pond - Helena Valley** - Stanfield Pond is an area adjacent to Prickly Pear Creek in the Helena Valley. The pond was created to produce ice in the days before refrigeration. This wetland area, on private property, has long been known by Helena birders for its diversity of birds. Birds expected in the marsh include teal, mallards, sora, marsh wren, common yellowthroat, red-winged and yellow-headed blackbird; in the cottonwood riparian area: wood duck, sapsuckers, orioles, vireos, black-headed grosbeak, western flycatcher are likely; savannah sparrow, bobolink and meadowlark may be found in the hayfields and pasture areas. Meet at 7:00 a.m. in the parking lot of the Good Samaritan Thrift Store at 3607 N Montana. Expect to walk 1.5 miles on mostly level terrain. Return by 12:00 p.m. Call Dan Sullivan to make reservations at 443-4229 or dsullivan01@bresnan.net
- ▶ **June 5-7, Friday though Sunday - Montana Audubon Bird Festival** - This weekend is the state Audubon Birding Festival. There will be no Helena area trips scheduled, so sign up to hear David Allen Sibley, Vince Yannon and go birding in the Great Falls area. www.mtaudubon.org/birdwatching/festival or call the Montana Audubon office at 406-443-3949.
- ▶ **June 13, Saturday - Silver City-Canyon Creek** - Explore grassland-sagebrush habitats and wetland riparian areas. Long billed curlew, sage thrasher, vesper and Brewer's sparrow and red-tailed hawk can be expected in the grassland/sagebrush areas. Little Prickly Pear Creek and Canyon Creek riparian and wetland habitats will include sightings of sandhill crane, bobolink, western and eastern flycatcher, common snipe, common yellowthroat, yellow warbler, house wren, warbling vireo, song sparrow and swallows. Dan Sullivan is the leader--reserve a spot with him at 443-4229 or dsullivan01@bresnan.net.
- ▶ **June 20, Saturday - McClellan Creek** - This trip will be a loop from Montana City to East Helena, exploring a variety of habitats in the McClellan Creek area. Expect to see birds inhabiting both mountain riparian habitats, mountain grassland habitats and the areas in between. Meet at the north Montana Department of Transportation parking lot at 6:30. Call Don Skaar to make a reservation: 442-3254.
- ▶ **June 20, Saturday - Nevada Valley Trumpeter Swan Release** - Del Straub has worked with the Blackfoot Challenge Program in the Nevada Valley to arrange for 20 chapter members to attend this special occasion once again. You'll be meeting with him at Trixi's Bar and Family Restaurant, on Highway 200, just outside Ovando, on Saturday morning. The release should conclude by around noon. Attendance is first come, first serve, so call or email Del to learn the details and make a reservation: 457-9336 or straub59601@yahoo.com.

NANCY TUNNICLIFF'S GIFT

Nancy Tunnicliff, a long time member of Last Chance Audubon, died in January. Reflecting Nancy's foresight, generosity and commitment to community, she included Last Chance Audubon in her estate. Recently, LCAS received approximately \$13,000 from her estate. These funds were unrestricted which permits the Board of Directors to use the funds to fulfill the mission of LCAS – *"Promote understanding, respect and enjoyment of birds and the natural world through education, habitat protection and environmental advocacy."*

Nancy had a great interest and support for the effort to reintroduce trumpeter swans to the Blackfoot Valley. She had arranged local presentations on the project and organized field trips surrounding trumpeter swan releases. In recognition of Nancy's interest in this project, the LCAS Board voted to sponsor a swan in Nancy's name for the swan release in June 2009. (See following information.) You are encouraged to match a portion of the Board's sponsorship by buying a chance to release Nancy's swan.

Another project the LCAS Board is committed to is enhancement of the LCAS web site. We hope in the near future to have an internet web site that will be more useful and informative for members and the general public. The Board intends to use a portion of Nancy's gift for this purpose.

The LCAS Board is very appreciative of Nancy's gift and humbled by her confidence that we would use the funds in a manner appropriate to her interests and commitment to the Helena community.

--Dan Sullivan, Treasurer

RELEASE A SWAN IN THE NEVADA VALLEY

Buy a chance to release a swan and support the Blackfoot Challenge Swan Program. These swans will be released on Saturday June 20, 2009 in the Nevada Valley. If your ticket is the winner it guarantees you a spot and a swan. There are two ways to participate with different odds of winning.

• **Nancy Tunnicliff Memorial Swan - \$50 tickets - 1 in 20 chance to win** - for tickets call Del Straub, 457-9336, or stop in to buy a ticket at Birds & Beasleys, 449-0904.

• **Last Chance Audubon Swan - \$20 tickets - 1 in 50 chance to win** – contact Bob Martinka, 449-3313, or buy tickets at Birds & Beasleys.

There is a small chance that there will be another swan release in August.

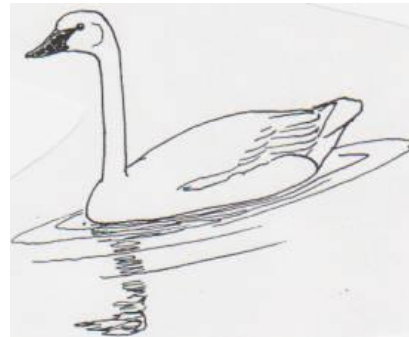
If you don't win one of the swan raffle birds, there will be another chance to bid for a swan on the LCAS field trip on June 20th. This field trip has limited space, so sign up with Del, 457-9336, to reserve your spot (see field trip info, page 3).

RESERVE YOUR SIGNED COPY NOW

David Sibley will be at Montana Audubon's Festival in Great Falls June 5-7 and he's planning on signing books. Think of gifts for the birders in your life.

- ◆ The Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior - \$45
- ◆ The Sibley Guide to Birds - \$ 35.00, flexibound
- ◆ The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America - \$19.95
- ◆ The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Western North America - \$19.95
- ◆ Sibley's Birding Basics - \$15.95
- ◆ Hawks in Flight - \$14.00

Call Birds & Beasleys, 449-0904, to reserve a copy or two by May 12. Pre-ordering will help us figure out the number of books we need to order. This is a fundraiser for Montana Audubon.



WHERE'S BOB? OR WHAT IS BOB SEEING? OR ?????

Bob Martinka and Birds & Beasleys are working on a birding blog for the Helena Valley. We are still setting it up and figuring out all the details - so check in with Birds & Beasleys for the blog address at the end of May. 449-0904 or email info@birdsandbeasleys.com and we'll contact you when it is up and running.

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

FLAMMULATED OWLS & CITIZEN MONITORING 2009 – HELENA NATIONAL FOREST:

The Flammulated Owl, *Otus flammeolus*, is considered a sensitive species for the U.S. Forest Service Northern Region and is a Montana Species of Concern. Because Flammulated Owls do not arrive on their breeding grounds until early to mid-May, they have historically been missed in nocturnal owl surveys. They also seldom vocalize except at night and are rarely seen.

The Avian Science Center at The University of Montana and the Helena National Forest are planning a citizen science monitoring effort for Flammulated Owls around the Helena area again this summer. This will be similar to the successful pilot program initiated last year in Helena! With financial support from MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks, we are building upon our 2005 study of these owls and developing long-term monitoring trends in this region. And we need the help of a handful of volunteers!

As volunteers, you can "adopt" a survey route which you complete twice sometime during May through mid-July. You will work in pairs and can hike or drive to survey your route. You'll stop at established points and play an owl caller. Plan to be out from 10 pm until ~ 1 or 2 am). The Avian Science Center and the Helena NF will provide training, equipment, and protocols.

If you are interested, please contact Denise Pengeroth (Helena National Forest) at dpengeroth@fs.fed.us or 406-495-3736. A training session will be scheduled soon! Read more at: http://avian.science.dbs.umt.edu/research/landbird_flam.htm.

NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY: Monday, May 18, 5:30 p.m. Wildflower Preview on Mount Helena. Come and see what's blooming on Mount Helena. If you are involved in the event on May 19, this is a good chance to bone-up on your wildflower ID. Everyone welcome. Meet at the Mount Helena parking lot.

Tuesday, May 19. This will be the 13th Annual Wildflower Hike to celebrate National Wildflower Week. We will have 12 groups in the morning and 12 groups in the afternoon, each group containing approximately 120 kids. We will need approximately 16 volunteers for both morning and afternoon. Please volunteer to help with Kathy Martin at 443-1712, katbrim@peoplepc.com.

Saturday, May 30, 10:00 a.m. Hike to Lewis & Clark Pass. Meet at the trailhead west of Lincoln at

10 a.m. for a 4 hour stroll to the top of Lewis & Clark Pass and back. Total distance is 3 miles on an easy grade. The change in elevation provides for a great diversity of plant zones from riparian at the trailhead to whitebark/limber pine stands at the pass. Reservations at 495-3718. Total group size of 20. Sponsored by the Montana Discovery Foundation.

FOREVER WILD: A CELEBRATION OF WILDERNESS

Walkin' Jim Stoltz will bring his powerful multi-media show to the Myrna Loy Center on Friday, May 15th at 7:30 pm.

Walkin' Jim has walked over 27,000 miles through the wild country of North America, carrying a guitar and writing songs along the way.

**Buy tickets at the Myrna Loy Center or from members of the Big Sky Unitarian Universalist Fellowship.
\$16 adults - \$12 students - \$8 children**

For more information, call Virginia Niccolucci, 443-1397, or the Myrna Loy Center, 443-0287. There will also be a reception and silent auction of art items at 5:30 pm in the Myrna Loy Center lobby.

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Birds & Beasleys
70 S. Park Ave.,
Helena, MT 59601
406-449-0904
www.birdsandbeasleys.com

MEMBERSHIP from Sara Toubman

Welcome and thanks to the following new and renewing members. NAS New: Steven Blaricom, Deborah Rockenbaugh, Judy Harris, Jean Johnson, Thomas Pearson, Dave Books, Lynda Saul. NAS Renewals: Miley Solich, Patricia Schauf. LCAS New/Renewals: Evelyn Norton, John Moore, Jane Anthony, Brenda Grasmick, Howard Johnson, Janice Miller, Robert Bird, Jeff & Libby Goldes, Stephen & Patty Turner, Martha Baker, Rich Petaja, Marge Levine, Kathryn Phillips, Beda Lovitt, Carolyn Clemens.

No more newsletters until September. Thanks and Happy Summer, everyone!



**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		
Secretary	Brian Shovers 443-6640	Circulation	Sam Sperry/Joyce Beckes 458-8170
Treasurer	Dan Sullivan 443-4229	Conservation	Brian Shovers 443-6640

Board of Directors:

Bob Martinka	449-3313	Education	vacant
Don Skaar	442-3254	Field Trip	Jim Greene 495-9270 - greenevogt@imt.net
Coburn Currier	ccurrier@mt.gov	Habitat Protection	vacant
Lorna Milne	443-7162	Membership	Sara Toubman 442-1271
Martha Vogt	495-9270	Nat. Hist. Series	Don Skaar 442-3254
		Newsletter	Joyce Beckes 458-8170 - samsper@mt.net
		Program	Sara Toubman 442-1271
		Publicity	Jim Greene 495-9270 - greenevogt@imt.net
		Silent Auction	Sandy Shull-449-0904/Jo Lace-443-6640
		Website	Christian Frazza

Committee Chairs/Contacts:

Birdathon	Jo Lace 443-6640
Birdseed Sale	Sue Jackson-443-4486/Sandy Shull-449-0904

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.

LAST CHANCE AUDUBON SOCIETY

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photo by Vernon Carroll