

Last
Chance
Audubon
Society



Last Chance Chat

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

Published September to May

Helena, MT

November 2024



Big Sky Bison Ranch - Photo by Leaf Studios

Water Conservation Efforts in Montana

**Tuesday, November 12, 2024 -
Program begins 7:00 PM
Montana Wild,
2668 Broadwater Ave.
Free – All Are Welcome**

Amy Seaman has been with the Montana Watershed Coordination Council (MWCC) for just over a year. She will report on water conservation efforts across the state, including a shout out to the updated Drought Plan, bringing new awareness to the state's first Pesticide Stewardship Partnership Program, and showcasing local conservation efforts in the Sun River Watershed. Recent restoration efforts in the Sun River Watershed provided the focal point for site visits during the September 2024 MWCC Biennial Watershed Tour; a hallmark event that travelled around Montana to demonstrate conservation successes and provided networking opportunities for MT's watershed restoration communities. Similar to local projects, like the restoration of Prickly Pear Creek, Sun River Watershed projects are aiming to reduce the impacts of drought, manage the effects of siltation and irrigation, and reconnect waterways to their floodplains. When these projects succeed, habitat for wildlife, including birds, is greatly improved!

Amy Seaman has over 15 years of experience supporting bird, wildlife, and natural resource conservation efforts in Montana and the west. She brings a broad knowledge of our state's exceptional watershed resources and has seen many of Montana's vast spaces and working lands first hand. Raised in Pennsylvania along creeks and rivers, she received a B.S. in Environmental Science from Boston University and an M.Sc. in Biology from the University of Nevada, Reno. Amy is Executive Director of MWCC and is based out of Helena where she has lived since 2013.



Birding vs. Birdwatching!

November 1, 2024

There is a real difference in these two terms. Birding means being aware of and following the activity of birds. Birdwatching means using one's sight to be aware of and follow the activity of birds.

Not all of us have the ability to watch birds. But we should all have the ability to get out in nature or to a window near a birdfeeder where we can see or hear or feel the birds around us. Sometimes it takes a little help.

Step One for those of us who are not vision impaired, is to think about what it would be like to try to experience birds without our eyes. Put yourself in that position for a bit. What would happen if you tried to identify the birds in your backyard or in the park with your eyes covered? Chances are, your hearing would become sharper almost immediately.

Step Two is to consider the people right here in our community who are not able to experience birding because they have lost vision (or never had it to begin with.) What can we do to help them?

And lack of vision is not the only barrier to successful birding. We need to consider the types of paths and platforms that are provided such that folks in a wheelchair or using a walker or cane can safely maneuver. Guides should make themselves aware of positive language tweaks (birding vs birdwatching, for example) and accessible locations for more inclusive field trips.

BIRDABILITY is an organization whose mission is to provide accessible birding to everyone. Check them out at birdability.org

I'd like Last Chance Audubon to move forward to a more inclusive birding community. Let's think out how we can make this happen!

Leslie
LCAS Board President



Inclusive birding for all - Photo by Birdability.org

Montana Audubon 2024 Citizen Science Report

Thank you to everyone who volunteered to help with Montana Audubon's Citizen Science survey projects this year- you make this work possible!

This year, 53 volunteers took part in surveys for three different projects: the pilot year of Western & Eastern Screech-owl surveys; Long-billed Curlew surveys; and Chimney Swift surveys. Learn more about each project in Montana Audubon's 2024 Citizen Science overview report, which is now available on Montana Audubon's website: <https://mtaudubon.org/2024-citizen-science-report/>.

Questions? Email Gwynne at gwynne@mtaudubon.org.



2024 Citizen Science Report

Overview

- This year, Montana Audubon had 53 volunteers across 3 citizen science projects, resulting in 66 surveys conducted across Montana.
- We hosted trainings for Long-billed Curlew and screech-owl surveys, and we were able to host an in-person Chimney Swift training in Havre in collaboration with Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks. We were also able to host an in-person screech-owl training and survey demonstration as a Master Naturalist course at Montana Wild this past spring with the Montana Discovery Foundation.

2024 Citizen Science projects



Western and Eastern Screech-owl Surveys

These nocturnal cavity-nesting owls depend on old growth trees in riparian areas. This year, we started a pilot project to survey for these birds throughout the state to assess their conservation needs.



Long-billed Curlew Surveys

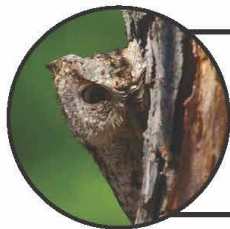
For 10 years, we've been working with many partners to learn more about Long-billed Curlews to protect the grasslands and agricultural lands they need for breeding.



Chimney Swift Surveys

We partnered with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks throughout eastern Montana to discover where Chimney Swifts are active and breeding, often in towns and near buildings with large chimneys.

Eastern Screechowl. Photo by Tyler Ricketts



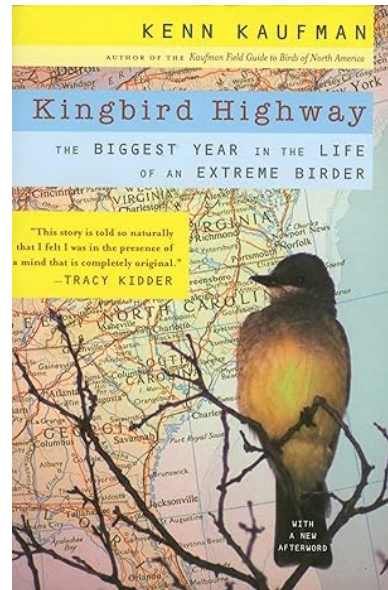
We would like to extend a sincere
THANK YOU
to all of our to all of our wonderful volunteers,
partners, and to the L.E.A.W Family Foundation, who
made these surveys possible!

BIRDING BOOKS - Nov 2024

Kingbird Highway by Kenn Kaufman

In the 1970's, sixteen year old Kenn Kaufman dropped out of high school (with the permission of his parents) and took a year to travel the United State in search of birds. He did a Big Year with little or no resources but loads of motivation. The year was hard. His primary mode of transportation was hitch-hiking with the occasional assist from friends. He was broke and worked sporadic jobs picking fruit or doing other labor in order to put together enough cash for a few weeks. He slept on the ground in all kinds of weather. He was always hungry.

Along the way, he met both people and birds in all kinds of environments. He was charming and determined enough to get help wherever he went. Folks just wanted him to succeed. Kenn Kaufman has gone on to become a noted author, naturalist, environmentalist, and artist. Kingbird Highway is a look into his beginnings as a birder.



This book is available at Lewis & Clark Library.

Would LCAS members be interested in a book club about birds, conservation and the environment? Let me know if you are! Leslie Smith 406-431-4995 or leslie_smi@yahoo.com

LCAS October Board Meeting Summary

- LCAS' Fall Fundraiser project will support vegetation management and clean-up at the "K-Mart ponds" during early Spring 2025. The Board decided to match all donations received through the end of this year and is coordinating with the City of Helena and the Montana Conservation Corps to prepare for next Spring's field work.
- Members of LCAS' Education Committee met with Carroll College professors to plan for future scholarships in support of student conservation projects. Decisions about the timing, amounts, and number of scholarships will be made at a future Board meeting.
- The Board selected Dec. 14th for this year's Christmas Bird Count and is exploring holding a late afternoon gathering at a local restaurant/brewery venue after groups finish their counts.
- The Board decided to solicit member interest in creating an LCAS book club to promote birding and conservation-related titles.
- The next Board meeting will be held November 5 (Election Day).

Membership Report

Please welcome **Last Chance Audubon Society new members:** Stephanie and Bryan Flynn
Please also welcome **National Audubon Society new members:** Vivian Hammill, Alan Thurman, and James Utterback.

Sincere thanks to **National Audubon Society renewing members:** Martha Haddock, William Gallea, Walter Ludlow, Peter Petek, Diane Dean, and The Lewis & Clark Library.

LCAS MEMBERSHIP: A new membership or renewal is \$15 per household and is current for one year, January 1st through December 31st. You can join and/or renew by using our website's online **MEMBERSHIP** button. Please be sure we receive all your correct contact information. If you do not want to pay online, you can join or renew by filling out a registration form located at www.lastchanceaudubon.org or at membership meetings. Please send a completed registration form and your \$15 check to: LCAS, PO Box 924, Helena, MT 59624. If you are not sure if you are up to date with your membership, please feel free to email the Membership Chair to verify.

ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTERS ONLY: We no longer send hardcopies. Those dollars saved will be spent for important bird habitat, education, and outreach. Thank you.

NAS MEMBERSHIP: If you would like National Audubon Society membership information or to renew with them, please direct an email to www.customerservice@audubon.org or contact them directly by phone at 1-844-428-3826. We are unable to forward memberships to National Audubon.

Sharon Dewart-Hansen,
Membership Chair,
smdewarthansen@charter.net

Meet the Corvids!

Of the many different families of birds that call the Helena area home, the family Corvidae may just be the most interesting...and intelligent group of them all. Corvid is derived from the Latin word "*Corvus*", and earlier to the proto Indo-European "*korhwos*". It most likely described the rough, harsh sounds made by ravens. Corvids include ravens, crows, jays, and magpies, along with a few others. In total, there are about 120 species of corvid around the world, with eight species found here in the Helena area — Common Raven, American Crow, Black-billed Magpie, Canada Jay, Steller's Jay, Pinyon Jay, Blue Jay, and Clark's Nutcracker!

Challenge yourself to find all the corvids in the Helena area! And... slow down to engage with them. They will definitely capture your heart and imagination!



*Steller's Jay — Photo by
Bob Martinka*

Last Chance Audubon Society
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membership today!**

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