

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*

*February 2025*

## **Successful Restoration of Trumpeter Swans**

**Tuesday, Feb. 11, 2025 – Program begins 7:00PM**

**Montana Wild, 2668 Broadwater Ave.**

**Free – All Are Welcome**

In 2005, the Blackfoot Challenge, a nonprofit collaborative organization, partnered with the US Fish and Wildlife Service to restore Trumpeter Swans to the Blackfoot Watershed. Elaine Caton, their swan program coordinator, will describe the restoration of young, captive-raised swans which were released in the watershed every year through 2021, when the restoration goal was met. Releases were attended by students from watershed schools and members of the public, with extensive education and outreach to help make the project a success. The numbers and distribution of swans nesting in the watershed and beyond have risen slowly but steadily, with over 30 cygnets hatched in 2024. The Blackfoot Challenge also monitors a few other bird species, including through citizen science projects.

Elaine grew up on a family ranch in Missouri and received her bachelor's degree in Zoology from the University of Montana. She worked for ten years in Glacier National Park, first studying Bald Eagles and later the effects of fire on cavity-nesting birds. She received her PhD in Ecology from UM in 1997 and followed it with a National Science Foundation Postdoctoral project on Science Education. Elaine has held dual roles in the Blackfoot Challenge, as Education Coordinator and Swan Program Coordinator. In recent years she has taken on additional bird species monitoring, including organizing citizen science monitoring of Common Loons and Long-billed Curlews. Elaine enjoys hiking, cross country skiing, horseback riding, and generally enjoying the largely unspoiled beauty and nature in the Blackfoot watershed and beyond.



*Adult with cygnets. Photo by Alex Badyaev*



## Montana Legislative News

February 1, 2025

I thought we might pause to appreciate the uniqueness of Montana, its abundance of open spaces, low population density and diversity of wildlife. Not all parts of the US are like this. We have something precious and rare.

In addition to natural abundance, is the pride and “Ownership” of the land that so many Montanans feel and actively work to protect. Consider how quickly you can get into the outdoors from nearly everywhere in the state, even the largest cities. Consider how many parks, trails and protected areas are available for our use and study.

There are two significant court decisions that have occurred recently, and which should be appreciated:



*Greater Sage-Grouse. Photo by Bob Martinka*

December 2024: [The Montana Supreme Court upheld a district court ruling in the nation’s first constitutional climate change trial](#), affirming that the youth plaintiffs have a “fundamental constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment” and revoked two Montana statutes passed in 2023.

January 2025: [The Ninth Circuit Court upheld a 2020 decision in district court that struck down the Trump Administration sage grouse oil and gas leasing victory](#). The 2025 decision invalidates more than 158 oil and gas leases in key habitat for sage grouse and also paves the way for protection of many other species.

Larry Berrin, executive director of Montana Audubon: “We have always had a great interest in the conservation of the Greater Sage Grouse and sagebrush habitat, which is one of the most imperiled ecosystem types in the West. Our hope is that this decision will have significant and lasting conservation benefits for the Greater Sage Grouse and a host of other sagebrush-dependent species in the West.”

As members of Last Chance Audubon, we are invested in the conservation of our environment and the special place that is Montana. Let’s keep up the fight. Montana is worth it.

--- - Leslie Smith  
LCAS Board President

January 2025

Dear LCAS Members and Board,

It has been a joy and delight to be the President of LCAS for the past nine years. (“It just don’t seem possible!” my Mother would say about it being 9-years.)

We at LCAS have an outstanding Board, as each member steps-up and actively participates in supporting the organization in many different and responsible ways, which made being the organizer very gratifying.

At our May 2024 membership meeting, Board member, Bob Martinka, very kindly thanked me for my years of service and gave me a Gift Card from the Board to add to his words of gratitude.

Having now let go of the responsibilities at LCAS (my husband says I’m “semi-retired”), I have more time to devote to one of my passions: photography. I have therefore used a portion of the funds towards taking a Photography class to better learn how to use my camera, and the remainder of the funds have contributed to my purchase of a new computer on which to process my images.

Best of all, Leslie Smith stepped-up to lead LCAS forward and, I believe, is doing an outstanding job! BRAVO!!

A HEARTY LCAS “THANK YOU!” to all LCAS Members, Board members and Leslie for all you do for “birds and the natural world” in and around the Helena area, and for your kind generosity towards me as I step down.

Janice Miller  
Past President, LCAS



“The Canyon Wren is an unsurpassed rock-creeper... At intervals it emerges and perching on the tip of some outstanding spur, only its white throat showing over the edge, it drops its clear staccato notes in rapid but unhurried succession. They bound and rebound from the rocky masses, echoing and re-echoing, and momentarily fill the valley with their liquid tones.” P.A. Taverner *Birds of Canada* 1934

# Last Chance Audubon News!

## January LCAS Board Meeting Summary

- LCAS’s fall fundraiser to support a spring 2025 vegetation management and cleanup project by a Montana Conservation Corps crew at the K-Mart ponds resulted in \$3974 of contributions, which LCAS will match, thereby making nearly \$8000 available for the project. The LCAS Board is coordinating with City of Helena staff, while also pursuing a potential contribution from the owner of the new apartment complex north of the property.
  - About 50 people participated in LCAS’ Christmas Bird Count (CBC) on Dec. 14, which produced a new record of 86 species seen (77 species being the previous high), and four new species. Full results of the CBC are posted on the LCAS website.
  - The Board is coordinating with the Prickly Pear Land Trust (PPLT) to place bird boxes being built by LCAS members on two of the newest PPLT land acquisitions in the Birds Eye and East Helena/Prickly Pear Creek areas, respectively.
  - The Board decided to pursue a new project in coordination with MT FWP to remove tangled fishing line and baling twine, as well as old oriole nests, from trees surrounding Spring Meadow Lake State Park, and to trim tree limbs sagging into the walking paths.
  - The Board decided to contribute to Montana Audubon’s work at the 2025 MT Legislature.
  - The Board’s next meeting will be at 7:00 pm on February 4 at Sumner Sharpe’s residence.
- 

## Fall Fundraiser Recap

The 2024 Fall Fundraiser, targeted to fund efforts to improve the habitat at K-Mart Ponds, was very successful. LCAS supporters donated a total of \$4,230 to the cause and with the chapter matching that amount, that makes more than \$8,400 available for the project. Thanks to everyone who made a donation:

|                              |                             |                        |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| Deborah Amesbury & John Love | Gail Kuntz & Terry Wheeling | Leroy Schramm          |
| Tim Baker                    | Jo Lace & Brian Shovers     | Clifford Sheets        |
| Cheryl Boid & Tom Woodall    | Bob Martinka                | Sandy Shull            |
| Glenda & Stan Bradshaw       | Janice Miller               | Sara Toubman           |
| Alan Davis                   | Sharon & Slim Miller        | Stephen & Patti Turner |
| Donna & Donald Eisenmenger   | John Moore                  | Larry Urban            |
| Roni Eisenmenger             | Gale Moser                  | Hugh Zackheim          |
| Eliza Frazer & Barry Hood    | David Mott                  |                        |
| Sue Jackson                  | Sue Near                    |                        |
| Justine Jam                  | Mary & Neal Ruedisili       |                        |

## News from Montana Audubon!

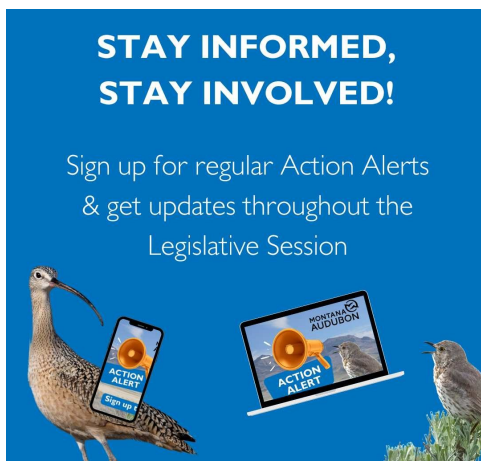
### Winter Climate Watch surveys start Jan. 15



It's that time again! Audubon's Winter Climate Watch program is back from January 15th to February 15th, 2025. Each survey includes 12 short point-counts, recording observations with three target species: Pygmy Nuthatch, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and White-breasted Nuthatch.

To learn more about the program, and for a step-by-step to signing up, visit the Montana Audubon website: <https://mtaudubon.org/winter-climate-watch-jan-15-2025/>

### Sign up for Action Alerts



The Montana legislative session is in full swing! Sign up for Montana Audubon's Action Alert emails to stay informed and engaged. Throughout the session, you'll receive regular emails that share:

- Updates on priority bills
- Resources for testifying and reaching lawmakers
- Information to help you make an impact

To read the most recent Action Alert and to sign up, visit the Montana Audubon website: <https://mtaudubon.org/conservation-policy/action-alert/>

### Save the Date: 2025 Wings Across the Big Sky Birding Festival



Join us in Missoula, May 30–June 1, 2025, for Montana Audubon's Wings Across the Big Sky Festival, hosted with Five Valleys Audubon Society. Enjoy local field trips, inspiring speakers, and engaging presentations. Registration opens in March 2025!

## A Brief History of Christmas Bird Counts in Helena

Long before Last Chance Audubon Society (LCAS) became an Audubon Chapter, Helena had avid birders who were savvy enough to participate in the National Audubon Society (NAS) Christmas Bird Count (CBC) as early as 1954, when Billings, Bozeman, and Helena counted all the birds they could find on a day in December. In Helena, a count has been conducted every year since, except for 1958, for reasons unknown to this writer.

LCAS became a NAS Chapter on January 19, 1971. "In those early days the officers pledged to hold monthly meetings between September to May, to organize field trips, to conduct a Christmas bird count, to educate the public on the need to protect wild birds, animals, trees and other plants, and to promote a better public understanding of the inter-dependence of these natural resources." For more information, visit the LCAS website: <https://www.lastchanceaudubon.org/about/history/>

With the 2024 LCAS CBC in the books, we in the Helena area have conducted 70 Counts, creating valuable data to show how populations of birds have ebbed and flowed in our geographic area. Thank YOU for participating. --- Janice Miller

---

### 2024 LCAS CBC

In 2024, Last Chance Audubon Society completed the 70th Christmas Bird Count. We had a very successful count with the highest species total ever—86! We also had four species seen for the first time!

*All photos by Bob Mariinka*



*Great Black-backed Gull*



*Northern House Wren*



*Yellow-headed Blackbird*



*Common Yellowthroat*

The results of the 2024 LCAS CBC is presented in the following pages. Take a look!

2024 CBC - December 14, 2024 - Summary of 70 counts, 1954-2024 (no count in 1958)

| Species                         | 2024 Count  | Times Seen | Prev. High<br>Count | Year(s)          | Freq.      |
|---------------------------------|-------------|------------|---------------------|------------------|------------|
| <b>Snow Goose</b>               | <b>41</b>   | 15         | 40                  | <b>24</b>        | 21%        |
| <b>Canada Goose</b>             | <b>6757</b> | 56         | 3,656               | <b>24</b>        | 80%        |
| <b>Cackling Goose</b>           | <b>18</b>   | 3          | 3                   | <b>24</b>        | 4%         |
| Trumpeter Swan                  | 25          | 16         | 40                  | 19               | 23%        |
| Tundra Swan                     |             | 21         | 35                  | 88               | 30%        |
| Wood Duck                       | 58          | 36         | 36                  | 04, 20           | 51%        |
| Gadwall                         | 4           | 30         | 61                  | 95               | 43%        |
| American Wigeon                 | 10          | 22         | 26                  | 90               | 31%        |
| Mallard                         | 4200        | 66         | 10,216              | 80               | 94%        |
| Blue-winged Teal                |             | 6          | 5                   | 11               | 9%         |
| Cinnamon Teal                   |             | 3          | 7                   | 93               | 4%         |
| Northern Shoveler               |             | 9          | 13                  | 03               | 13%        |
| Northern Pintail                | 2           | 27         | 11                  | 90               | 39%        |
| <b>Green-winged Teal</b>        | <b>49</b>   | 33         | 23                  | <b>24</b>        | 47%        |
| Canvasback                      | 4           | 6          | 10                  | 06               | 9%         |
| Redhead                         | 15          | 14         | 35                  | 20               | 20%        |
| <b>Ring-necked Duck</b>         | <b>350</b>  | 44         | 140                 | <b>24</b>        | 63%        |
| Greater Scaup                   |             | 4          | 4                   | 23               | 6%         |
| <b>Lesser Scaup</b>             | <b>34</b>   | 17         | 10                  | <b>24</b>        | 24%        |
| White-winged Scoter             |             | 2          | 1                   | 87, 17           | 3%         |
| Long-tailed Duck                |             | 1          | 4                   | 03               | 1%         |
| Bufflehead                      | 18          | 29         | 32                  | 20               | 41%        |
| <b>Common Goldeneye</b>         | <b>683</b>  | 68         | 377                 | <b>24</b>        | 97%        |
| Barrow's Goldeneye              | 2           | 51         | 305                 | 09               | 73%        |
| Hooded Merganser                | 2           | 20         | 9                   | 91               | 29%        |
| Common Merganser                | 16          | 56         | 214                 | 73               | 80%        |
| Red-breasted Merganser          |             | 4          | 12                  | 99               | 6%         |
| <b>Ruddy Duck</b>               | <b>3</b>    | 13         | 3                   | <b>23, 24</b>    | 19%        |
| Chukar                          |             | 1          | 1                   | 98               | 1%         |
| Gray Partridge                  | 9           | 50         | 137                 | 78               | 71%        |
| Ring-necked Pheasant            | 5           | 36         | 60                  | 62               | 51%        |
| Ruffed Grouse                   |             | 1          | 6                   | 86               | 1%         |
| Dusky Grouse                    |             | 1          | 1                   | 95               | 1%         |
| Sharp-tailed Grouse             |             | 13         | 12                  | 81               | 19%        |
| <b>Wild Turkey</b>              | <b>29</b>   | 6          | 11                  | <b>24</b>        | 9%         |
| Common Loon                     | 1           | 10         | 7                   | 91               | 14%        |
| Pacific Loon                    |             | 0          | 0                   | 18               | 0% CW only |
| Pied-billed Grebe               |             | 9          | 4                   | 92               | 13%        |
| Horned Grebe                    |             | 5          | 2                   | 89               | 7%         |
| <b>Eared Grebe</b>              | <b>1</b>    | 3          | 1                   | <b>88,12, 24</b> | 4%         |
| Western Grebe                   | 1           | 16         | 5                   | 12               | 23%        |
| American White Pelican          |             | 10         | 6                   | 04               | 14%        |
| <b>Double-crested Cormorant</b> | <b>1</b>    | 2          | 1                   | <b>04, 24</b>    | 3%         |
| Great Blue Heron                | 2           | 32         | 5                   | 88               | 46%        |
| Turkey Vulture                  |             | 1          | 1                   | 66               | 1%         |
| Bald Eagle                      | 28          | 62         | 36                  | 94               | 89%        |
| Northern Harrier                | 24          | 62         | 28                  | 13               | 89%        |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk              | 4           | 42         | 7                   | 03,22            | 60%        |
| Cooper's Hawk                   |             | 27         | 3                   | 77,03            | 39%        |

2024 CBC - December 14, 2024 - Summary of 70 counts, 1954-2024 (no count in 1958)

| Species                        | 2024 Count  | Times Seen | Prev. High<br>Count | Year(s)       | Freq.      |
|--------------------------------|-------------|------------|---------------------|---------------|------------|
| American Goshawk               |             | 19         | 4                   | 83            | 27%        |
| <b>Red-tailed Hawk</b>         | <b>19</b>   | 28         | 18                  | <b>24</b>     | 40%        |
| <b>Ferruginous Hawk</b>        | 1 - CW      | 1          | 1                   | 76, <b>24</b> | 1%         |
| Rough-legged Hawk              | 22          | 61         | 62                  | 17            | 87%        |
| Golden Eagle                   |             | 43         | 7                   | 64            | 61%        |
| American Kestrel               | 1           | 23         | 4                   | 17            | 33%        |
| Merlin                         | 6           | 53         | 11                  | 22            | 76%        |
| Gyr Falcon                     |             | 9          | 2                   | 90,93         | 13%        |
| Peregrine Falcon               |             | 8          | 2                   | 70            | 11%        |
| Prairie Falcon                 | 3           | 37         | 4                   | 87            | 53%        |
| Sora                           |             | 1          | 1                   | 23            | 1%         |
| American Coot                  | 40          | 41         | 588                 | 10            | 59%        |
| Sandhill Crane                 |             | 0          | 0                   | 18            | 0% CW only |
| Killdeer                       | 1           | 30         | 12                  | 66            | 43%        |
| Spotted Sandpiper              |             | 1          | 1                   | 97            | 1%         |
| Wilson's Snipe                 |             | 53         | 11                  | 78            | 76%        |
| <b>Ring-billed Gull</b>        | <b>1078</b> | 26         | 803                 | <b>24</b>     | 37%        |
| <b>California Gull</b>         | <b>93</b>   | 12         | 57                  | <b>24</b>     | 17%        |
| American Herring Gull          | 14          | 15         | 15                  | 01            | 21%        |
| Glaucous Gull                  |             | 1          | 1                   | 97            | 1%         |
| Lesser Black-backed Gull       |             | 1          | 1                   | 21            | 1%         |
| <b>Great Black-backed Gull</b> | <b>1</b>    | 1          |                     | <b>24</b>     | 1%         |
| Rock Pigeon                    | 1193        | 51         | 1,306               | 05            | 73%        |
| Eurasian Collared-Dove         | 447         | 18         | 607                 | 17            | 26%        |
| Mourning Dove                  |             | 10         | 12                  | 16            | 14%        |
| Western Screech Owl            |             | 1          | 1                   | 69            | 1%         |
| Great Horned Owl               | 2           | 49         | 7                   | 87            | 70%        |
| Snowy Owl                      |             | 3          | 1                   | 80,84,96      | 4%         |
| Northern Pygmy Owl             |             | 8          | 4                   | 85            | 11%        |
| Long Eared Owl                 |             | 1          | 1                   | 80            | 1%         |
| Short-eared Owl                | 3 - CW      | 18         | 11                  | 68            | 26%        |
| Northern Saw-whet Owl          |             | 1          | 1                   | 86            | 1%         |
| Belted Kingfisher              | 3           | 40         | 6                   | 88,12         | 57%        |
| Downy Woodpecker               | 16          | 65         | 18                  | 00            | 93%        |
| Hairy Woodpecker               | 7           | 55         | 16                  | 12            | 79%        |
| American Three-toed Woodpecker |             | 2          | 1                   | 12            | 3%         |
| Northern Flicker (Red-shafted) | 89          | 67         | 112                 | 21            | 96%        |
| Yellow Shafted Flicker (race)  |             | 6          | 2                   | 05            | 9%         |
| Pileated Woodpecker            |             | 1          | 1                   | 09            | 1%         |
| Loggerhead Shrike              |             | 2          | 1                   | 65,83         | 3%         |
| Northern Shrike                | 8           | 61         | 17                  | 19            | 87%        |
| Canada Jay                     |             | 6          | 24                  | 90            | 9%         |
| Steller's Jay                  | 1           | 12         | 4                   | 81,86         | 17%        |
| Blue Jay                       |             | 23         | 23                  | 19            | 33%        |
| Pinyon Jay                     | 40          | 32         | 156                 | 60            | 46%        |
| Clark's Nutcracker             | 41          | 63         | 220                 | 91            | 90%        |
| Black-billed Magpie            | 282         | 70         | 453                 | 77            | 100%       |
| American Crow                  | 54          | 38         | 169                 | 13            | 54%        |
| Common Raven                   | 256         | 57         | 470                 | 10            | 81%        |
| Horned Lark                    |             | 51         | 5,329               | 72            | 73%        |
| Black-capped Chickadee         | 134         | 68         | 156                 | 00            | 97%        |
| Mountain Chickadee             | 59          | 69         | 225                 | 94            | 99%        |
| Red-breasted Nuthatch          | 16          | 64         | 273                 | 94            | 91%        |



2024 CBC - December 14, 2024 - Summary of 70 counts, 1954-2024 (no count in 1958)

| Species                        | 2024 Count | Times Seen | Prev. High<br>Count | Year(s)               | Freq. |         |
|--------------------------------|------------|------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-------|---------|
| White-breasted Nuthatch        | 10         | 53         | 22                  | 97                    | 76%   |         |
| Pygmy Nuthatch                 | 12         | 35         | 45                  | 14                    | 50%   |         |
| Brown Creeper                  |            | 23         | 7                   | 81,04                 | 33%   |         |
| Canyon Wren                    |            | 3          | 1                   | 95,01                 | 4%    |         |
| <b>Northern House Wren</b>     | <b>1</b>   | 1          |                     | <b>24</b>             | 1%    |         |
| Pacific Wren                   |            | 1          | 1                   | 97                    | 1%    |         |
| Marsh Wren                     |            | 9          | 4                   | 88                    | 13%   |         |
| American Dipper                | 2          | 62         | 9                   | 87                    | 89%   |         |
| Golden-crowned Kinglet         |            | 5          | 6                   | 85,01                 | 7%    |         |
| <b>Ruby-crowned Kinglet</b>    | <b>1</b>   | 2          | 1                   | <b>22, 24</b>         | 3%    |         |
| Western Bluebird               | 5          | 4          | 8                   | 18                    | 6%    |         |
| <b>Mountain Bluebird</b>       | <b>1</b>   | 3          | 1                   | <b>97, 20, 24</b>     | 4%    |         |
| Townsend's Solitaire           | 100        | 69         | 142                 | 07                    | 99%   |         |
| <b>American Robin</b>          | <b>428</b> | 54         | 227                 | <b>24</b>             | 77%   |         |
| Varied Thrush                  |            | 2          | 1                   | 81                    | 3%    |         |
| Northern Mockingbird           |            | 1          | 1                   | 87                    | 1%    |         |
| Brown Thrasher                 |            | 0          | 0                   | 19                    | 0%    | CW only |
| European Starling              | 509        | 66         | 722                 | 18                    | 94%   |         |
| Bohemian Waxwing               |            | 59         | 16,101              | 05                    | 84%   |         |
| Cedar Waxwing                  | 25         | 35         | 132                 | 08                    | 50%   |         |
| <b>Common Yellowthroat</b>     | <b>1</b>   | 1          |                     | <b>24</b>             | 1%    |         |
| Spotted Towhee                 |            | 1          | 1                   | 11                    | 1%    |         |
| American Tree Sparrow          | 8          | 70         | 145                 | 86                    | 100%  |         |
| Song Sparrow                   | 21         | 64         | 44                  | 66                    | 91%   |         |
| <b>White-throated Sparrow</b>  | <b>1</b>   | 4          | 1                   | <b>87, 91, 11, 24</b> | 6%    |         |
| Harris's Sparrow               | 1          | 8          | 2                   | 63, 90, 21            | 11%   |         |
| White-crowned Sparrow          |            | 6          | 12                  | 18                    | 9%    |         |
| Dark-eyed Junco                | 35         | 53         | 147                 | 21                    | 76%   |         |
| Lapland Longspur               |            | 7          | 40                  | 70                    | 10%   |         |
| Snow Bunting                   |            | 12         | 80                  | 96                    | 17%   |         |
| <b>Yellow-headed Blackbird</b> | <b>1</b>   | 1          |                     | <b>24</b>             | 1%    |         |
| Red-winged Blackbird           | 18         | 39         | 161                 | 65                    | 56%   |         |
| Western Meadowlark             | 8          | 13         | 51                  | 79                    | 19%   |         |
| Rusty Blackbird                |            | 6          | 9                   | 17                    | 9%    |         |
| Brewer's Blackbird             |            | 13         | 17                  | 67                    | 19%   |         |
| Brown-headed Cowbird           |            | 1          | 1                   | 75                    | 1%    |         |
| <b>Common Grackle</b>          | <b>3</b>   | 5          | 1                   | <b>24</b>             | 7%    |         |
| Gray-crowned Rosy-finch        |            | 14         | 75                  | 77                    | 20%   |         |
| Pine Grosbeak                  |            | 24         | 253                 | 77                    | 34%   |         |
| Purple Finch                   |            | 1          | 1                   | 95                    | 1%    |         |
| Cassin's Finch                 |            | 29         | 100                 | 64                    | 41%   |         |
| House Finch                    | 445        | 45         | 946                 | 00                    | 64%   |         |
| Red Crossbill                  | 15         | 40         | 351                 | 95                    | 57%   |         |
| White-winged Crossbill         |            | 3          | 30                  | 84                    | 4%    |         |
| Common Redpoll                 |            | 48         | 979                 | 01                    | 69%   |         |
| Pine Siskin                    | 7          | 42         | 388                 | 95                    | 60%   |         |
| American Goldfinch             | 7          | 22         | 26                  | 79                    | 31%   |         |
| Evening Grosbeak               | 20         | 33         | 141                 | 84                    | 47%   |         |
| House Sparrow                  | 621        | 70         | 2,826               | 08                    | 100%  |         |
| <b>TOTAL SPECIES</b>           | <b>86</b>  |            |                     |                       |       |         |
| TOTAL BIRDS                    | 18,628     |            |                     |                       |       |         |

## Great Backyard Bird Count – February 14-17, 2025

Each February, for four days, the world comes together for the love of birds. Over these four days birders are invited to spend time in their favorite places watching and counting as many birds as they can find and reporting them. These observations help scientists better understand global bird populations before they begin their annual migrations.

Launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) was the first online participatory-science project (also referred to as community science or citizen science) to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real time. Birds Canada joined the project in 2009 to provide an expanded capacity to support participation in Canada. In 2013, we became a global project when we began entering data into eBird, the world's largest biodiversity-related participatory science (community science or citizen science) project. Each year our participation grows as more people of all ages around the world spend their weekend counting, learning about, and celebrating birds.



### HOW DO I PARTICIPATE?

Whether you count one bird or hundreds, participating is easy and fun for all ages! Let birds bring you closer to nature and to each other by spending four days in February with us! Participating is easy, fun to do **alone or with others**, and **can be done anywhere** you find birds – even in your own backyard!

**Step 1:** Decide where you will watch birds.

**Step 2:** Watch birds for **15 minutes or more, at least once in the four days**, Feb.14-17, 2025.

**Step 3:** Identify all the birds you **see or hear** within your planned time/location and use the best tool for sharing your bird sightings:

- If you are a **beginning bird admirer and new to bird identification**, try using the Merlin Bird ID app to report what birds you are seeing or hearing.
- If you have **participated** in the count **before** and want to record **numbers of birds**, try the eBird Mobile app or enter your bird list on the eBird website (desktop/laptop).

That's it! Please take 15 minutes for the birds this February! Help our community science effort to census bird populations as they prepare to make their spring journey north!

Reprinted from <https://www.birdcount.org/>

## The Best Birding in Montana

Where is the “Grass” the greenest – for Birding – in Montana? That is a question that likely enters the mind of many birders, especially newbies! First, the definition of “best birding” likely differs among different folks. Is it qualitative or quantitative? For many, it is probably a combination of these broad factors. A qualitative methodology would be difficult to document without a broad survey of birders. But a quantitative approach can be easily employed by taking a detailed look at eBird. This Worldwide database of birds and birding developed and maintained by the Cornell University Lab of Ornithology is a goldmine of data that is rather easy to explore.

There are several quantitative approaches to seeking an answer to the question: Best Birding in Montana? The first is to look at each of Montana’s 56 counties to see which has recorded the most species. This analysis would be biased by the differential in birding effort in our counties. The second, and I think best approach, is to analyze the data relating to individual birders’ efforts and success.

The eBird Database records 446 bird species in Montana, although many of these have only been recorded one or just a few times. On a county-by-county basis, seven have had over 320 species observed, with Lewis & Clark tied for 4<sup>th</sup> at 323. Lake County is the highest at 330. Based on a review of these statistics, and others such as total eBird checklists submitted in the respective counties, it appears that the species numbers may be related more to the number of birders and their time spent birding than on species numbers and habitat diversity. More specifically, looking at the all-time high number of species that individual birders have recorded for specific counties, five birders have recorded 290 or more for a county, with 308 the highest statewide in Lewis & Clark. In Flathead and Gallatin, the highs are 298 and 294, respectively. Digging deeper into the data, for specific years and individuals, would most likely be the best method to answer the initial question regarding “Best Birding”, although that would be prejudicial to counties without higher population centers.

Now for the yearly high tallies by county: In 2024, one individual in Lewis & Clark County notched 264 species. The previous high year count in any county was 257 in 2020, also in L&C County. Also in 2024, five other birders in this county recorded over 250 species. In Flathead County in 2024, one dedicated, high-energy birding “prodigy” recorded 252 species. Other than on rare occasions, yearly individual bird counts of over 200 in a county are quite uncommon. So.....Helena/Lewis & Clark County birders, the “verdict” is in!!!

**WE ARE NUMBER ONE!!!**



Can you name these species seen in Lewis and Clark County?

## Membership Report

Please welcome **Last Chance Audubon Society new members:** Walter Ludlow, Jacquie Maughan, and Scott Bare.

Sincere thanks to **Last Chance renewing members:** Tim Baker, Sandy Shull, Justine Jam, CD Avery, Teresa Green, Mike and Shelley Pasichnyk, Grant Hokit, Connie Fiske, Carolyn Fox, Stephen and Patty Turner, Lee Harrison, Betsy Hamann, Fran Penner-Ray, Janice Miller, Sue Jackson, Alan Davis, Berta Nason, Hugh and Karen Zackheim, Larry Urban, Sandra Micken, Jim and Leslie Smith, Dave and Patty Mott, Cathy Leach, Connie Herzig, Gail Kuntz and Terry Wheeling, Don and Donna Eisenmenger, Teresa Kaiserski, Murray Strong, Sharon Liederman, Mary Vandebosch, Pete Strazdas, Carol and Rod Bischoff, Mary and Neal Ruedisili, Cedron Jones and Sara Toubman, and Deborah Amesbury and John Love.

Please also welcome **National Audubon Society new members:** Cathy Caruso, Linda Conti, Kyle Hopstad, Ginny Wilshire, David Brown, and Tammy Jacobson.

Sincere thanks to **National Audubon Society renewing members:** Kali Armstrong, Kristin Bakula, Mary Carparelli, Constance Fiske, Kathy Gessaman, Bradley Heil, Margaret Hubber, Darlene Jatkowski, Lawrence McEvoy, Susan Near, Jeanne Perkins, Robert Putsch, William Ritts, Jusy Scheier, Jay Simons, Shawn Watts, Van Bass, Mary Bradbury, William Carrigan, Mary Craigle, Kurt Cunningham, Joan Daoust, Susan DeBree, Christine Deveny, Vicki Downhour, S. Eriksen, Robert Filipovich, Ronald Herman, Joy Holloway, Robin LeNeve, Jacob Martin, Angela McDannel, Gail Moser, Anne Perkins, Jorge Ramirez, Sandra Renner, Tedra Skaar, Catherine Wright, and Heather Zaluski.

**LCAS MEMBERSHIP:** A new membership or renewal is \$15 per household and is current for one year, January 1<sup>st</sup> through December 31<sup>st</sup>. 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](http://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.

**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](mailto: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](mailto:smdewarthansen@charter.net)

Last Chance Audubon Society  
PO Box 924  
Helena, MT 59624

First-Class  
Postage  
Required  
Helena MT 59601

*Support LCAS through a donation or membership today!*

**Membership**

**Donate Now**

<https://www.facebook.com/lastchanceaudubon>

Website: <https://www.lastchanceaudubon.org/>

#### LCAS BOARD

**PRESIDENT:** Leslie Smith, [leslie\\_smi@yahoo.com](mailto:leslie_smi@yahoo.com)

**SECRETARY:** Gail Kuntz, [tdw59601@aol.com](mailto:tdw59601@aol.com)

**TREASURER:** Sue Jackson, 443-4486,  
[suejacksonmt@gmail.com](mailto:suejacksonmt@gmail.com)

**WEBSITE/BOARD:** Don Skaar, [tedradon@gmail.com](mailto:tedradon@gmail.com)

**EDUCATION/BOARD:** Sumner Sharpe, [mtnutmeg@gmail.com](mailto:mtnutmeg@gmail.com)

**NEWSLETTER/BOARD:** Coburn Currier, [clcurrier@hotmail.com](mailto:clcurrier@hotmail.com)

**MEMBERSHIP/BOARD:** Sharon Dewart-Hansen,  
422-4546, [smdewarthansen@charter.net](mailto:smdewarthansen@charter.net)

**BOARD AT LARGE:** Nan Breuninger, 442-2526

**BOARD AT LARGE:** Barbara Pepper-Rotness, 431-3809,  
[bpepperrotness@yahoo.com](mailto:bpepperrotness@yahoo.com)

**BOARD AT LARGE:** Bob Martinka, 449-3313,  
[rmartink@aol.com](mailto:rmartink@aol.com)

**BOARD AT LARGE:** Glenda Bradshaw, [bradshaw@mt.net](mailto:bradshaw@mt.net)

**BOARD AT LARGE:** Stephen Turner, 521-0000,  
[turnstonest@gmail.com](mailto:turnstonest@gmail.com)

#### LCAS COMMITTEE CHAIRS/ CONTACTS

**Birdseed Sale:** Sue Jackson &  
Sandy Shull, 443-4486 or 449-0904

**Christmas Bird Count:** Coburn  
Currier, [clcurrier@hotmail.com](mailto:clcurrier@hotmail.com)

**Conservation:** open

**Education:** Sumner Sharpe,  
[mtnutmeg@gmail.com](mailto:mtnutmeg@gmail.com)

**Field Trips:** Don Skaar  
[tedradon@gmail.com](mailto:tedradon@gmail.com)

**Habitat:** open

**Meeting Set-up:** Doug Hansen,  
[mthusker@charter.net](mailto:mthusker@charter.net)

**Monthly Program:** Sandy Shull,  
449-0904

**Publicity:** Liz Hiltunen, 227-5492,  
[lhiltunen@g.com](mailto:lhiltunen@g.com)

**MT Audubon State Office:** 443-  
3949