

NOVEMBER MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Last Chance Audubon Society will meet Monday, November 21, at 7 pm at the Montana Wild Center, 2668 Broadwater Ave.

The program -- *Antarctica, the Cold Continent, South Georgia, and the Falkland Islands* -- will be presented by Franci McMahon.

Antarctica is fascinating. It is the cold continent with the earth's coldest recorded temperature ever of -129.0 (deg F) in 1983. The coldest North American temp ever recorded was -81.4 (deg F) in the Yukon in 1947 – almost a 50 degree difference! Antarctica also holds 90% of the Earth's ice which is equal to 70% of all fresh water. And it has the unique status (1991 treaty signed by 39 countries) of having no territorial claims and is occupied only for peaceful, scientific projects.

Franci McMahon will introduce us to this amazing continent with a presentation about her tour and adventure aboard the National Geographic Explorer with Lindblad Expeditions. The trip began February 15th with a flight to Santiago, Chile. From there they flew over Patagonia to Ushuaia, Argentina, where they met other passengers and as many crew, naturalists, and support people. They crossed the Drake Passage escorted by Wandering Albatross.

Landings by Zodiac allowed a close-up view of wildlife. They hiked across windswept ice, pink and green with algae or with tuft grass sheltering fur seals. Their early morning landings at King Penguin colonies and at rocky outcrops with Wandering Albatross chicks were enriched by informed naturalists. The trip was 24 days long and definitely one to remember.

Franci is a published writer who lives south of Boulder. She has written two novels, children's short stories and a nonfiction piece for The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation's *Bugle* magazine. She also gave a show on Penguins to over 50 children this summer for the Boulder Library. Franci maintains a 65 Bluebird and Tree Swallow nest box route and has banded many of the bluebirds.

LCAS FALL SILENT AUCTION

The Silent Auction will be held at the November meeting. Please see page 2 for details.

DECEMBER MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Last Chance Audubon Society will meet Monday, December 12, same time and place as the Nov. meeting. Please note the meeting has been moved to the second Monday of the month in order to plan for the LCAS Christmas Bird Count, which will take place on Saturday, Dec. 17 (see page 3 for details).

The program -- *Winter Birds of the Helena Valley* -- will be presented by Coburn Currier.

This annual program is an enjoyable, informative way to prepare for the Bird Count. Using the photography of Bob Martinka, Coburn will focus on the birds we are most likely to see during the Count.

Coburn Currier is a Field Biologist/Project Specialist for the Montana Natural Heritage Program, and has worked in various fields including grassland birds, forest raptors, bats, and terrestrial mollusks. His personal and professional passion has always been with birds, bird distribution and conservation.

Bob Martinka worked for nearly 30 years with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. In his retirement years Bob has become an avid birder and photographer, traveling widely to pursue these interests.

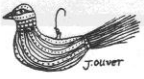
Please join Last Chance Audubon at the December meeting. You can sign up to participate in the Christmas Bird Count, hone your birding skills, and enjoy the photography.

Inside:

- **Volunteers Sought to Monitor IBAs ... p. 3**
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- **Coming Events & Reminders: Birdseed Sale . LCAS Membership Info . *Wings Across the Big Sky* - 2012 . & more ... p. 5**

LCAS FALL SILENT AUCTION

This year's Silent Auction will be held at the November membership meeting. There's a new twist in this year's auction: We're going GREEN. That means you'll have an opportunity to make a general donation and not have to take any auction



items home. In other words: *I want to support LCAS, but I don't need any more stuff, so here's my monetary donation.* Not to worry, there will still be some great items to bid on, just not as many as in the past.

We will also have two trips to bid on: One is a Dragonfly Fieldtrip for 1-3 people with Bob Martinka. The other is a Birding Fieldtrip with Coburn Currier for 4-6 people.

If you have questions or items to donate, contact Jo Lace, 443-6640, or Sandy Shull, 449-0904. And if you can't attend the November meeting, contact Jo or Sandy, and they'd be more than happy to proxy bid for you.

CBC NOTES

Prior to 1900, a popular holiday tradition was the Christmas "side hunt." Folks went afield with their guns and shot birds; the side with the biggest pile of feathers was the "winner." But thanks to the efforts of ornithologist Frank Chapman and the enthusiasm of other birders, a new tradition was begun--a Christmas Bird Census--that would count rather than shoot the birds. And so, on Christmas day 1900, 25 bird counts were held. Twenty-seven birders living in regions from Toronto, Ontario to Pacific Grove, California counted a total of 90 bird species.

Last Chance Audubon's 2010 Christmas Bird Count was held on December 18. On a chilly day with light snow falling, 51 observers counted 59 species and a total of 8,794 birds. One new species, Wild Turkey, was seen, and a new coot record of 588 shattered the old record of 192.

In his book, *Kingbird Highway*, Kenn Kaufman wrote about participating in a Christmas Bird Count that was begun by Victor Emanuel in Freeport, Texas. Kaufman's assignment on count day was to stand at the end of the Freeport jetty with a telescope and count pelagic birds.

The weather on count day was stormy; big waves battered the jetty and eventually a very large wave swept Kaufman into the water. But just before that happened, he spotted a Black-legged Kittiwake, a rare bird for Texas, and then, he spotted a jaeger, but before he was able to figure out what kind it was, he was washed off the jetty.

Kaufman struggled back onto the jetty and made his way to shore and a nearby restaurant where he was revived by hot soup and sympathetic waitresses. He left with bandages on his skinned-up hands. The telescope was lost to the waves, but he returned to the jetty with binoculars to continue looking for the jaeger.

He wrote: *Now, when I look back many years later, as though from a great distance, I can still see that young man standing out on the jetty. And at least on my better days, I can see myself standing there with him: shaken by experience, perhaps, but still confident that the light will be better, that the birds will come in closer, that we will see everything more clearly at last, before the day is over.*



Bald Eagle - Photo by Bob Martinka

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THE LAST CHANCE AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2011

All members and friends of Last Chance Audubon are invited to participate in the annual Christmas Bird Count. You need not be an expert birder to take part in this event. The Bird Count is an excellent learning opportunity for beginners, who will be matched up with more experienced birders.

Bird counters will meet at Jorgenson's Restaurant on 11th Ave. Please be there by 6:45 a.m. if you plan on having breakfast, or show up no later than 7:15 if you don't plan on eating at the restaurant. Groups like to depart by 7:30 in order to reach their counting areas by sun-up. Please bring \$5 cash or a check made out to Last Chance Audubon **not** National Audubon Society. Participants 18-years-old or under are free and welcome.

Wear warm clothes and bring binoculars, field guides, and a spotting scope if you have one. Pack a lunch and drinks as most parties stay out all day. If you want to be out for only a half day, please specify this when you sign up. Also indicate if you want to be in an area that mostly birds from a car or on foot.

Drivers and 4-wheel drive vehicles, especially those that hold four or more counters, are always in demand. Drivers need not be experienced birders. Contributions of gas money from riders are always appreciated.

The post-Count potluck dinner will be held at 6 p.m. in the fellowship hall of St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 512 Logan Street. St. Paul's is down the hill from the cathedral. For more information on the bird count, please contact Lorna Milne, 443-7162, and be sure to attend the December meeting to sign up



IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS

by **Brian Shovers**

At the October meeting, Montana Audubon director Steve Hoffman talked about the origins of the national program of Important Bird Areas and its importance to monitoring bird populations and habitat. The Helena area has three areas designated as Important Bird Areas (IBAs): Canyon Ferry Reservoir, Lake Helena, and the Blackfoot River corridor near Ovando. I am looking for chapter members who might be interested in adopting one of these areas, with the intent of conducting regular monitoring of species. If you are interested, give me a call at 443-6640 or contact me at sholace@bresnan.net. I would like to meet at our house, 201 S. California, on the evening of November 28 at 7 p.m., to talk about this effort.

TREASURER'S REPORT

from **Dan Sullivan**

LCAS made its annual donation to Montana Audubon of half our donations gathered during Birdathon; this year the donation amounted to \$1,350. We also donated \$150 to Montana Audubon for a brick at the Montana Audubon Conservation Education Center in Billings along the Yellowstone River. Our donations help support the activities of Montana Audubon across the state.

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



Gyrfalcon on power pole - photo by Bob Martinka

*A MAGICAL TALE OF SWIRLING WATER,
MIGHTY WIND AND MAGNIFICENT MOUNTAINS
BIGFOOT and BALDY'S 2011 BIRDATHON*

Once upon a time, long, long ago in the far North Country at the base of the mountains, lived an elderly couple called Bigfoot and Baldy. For many years near the end of the season called Spring, they would venture far and wide to record what birds they could see. People in their village would give them gifts of money for this quest, money that would be used to protect the birds and their homes.

One year Baldy desired to go far, far away on a different quest called peakbagging. He would not be in their village near the end of the season called Spring. And though the winter had been cold and wet and many birds had not yet arrived from the far south, they still wanted to do their quest for the birds, so they did. Here is a telling of some of the wonderful birds and sights they saw:

◆ Little Prickly Pear Creek was very full--fast, turbulent and loud. There were hardly any birds; but the canyon was beautiful with the sun shining on the newly green hills. A Red-naped Sapsucker landed in a tree right where they halted. Bigfoot had requested they stop at this aspen grove to see such birds. The nearby willow trees were spectacular--glowing yellow-green in the sunlight.

◆ The big river called the Missouri was raging, spilling over its banks in many low places. There were white waves going up the river because of the mighty wind. The windmills were "going to beat hell." The Dunes Fishing Access Site along the river was spectacular, with huge cottonwoods and large, grass-covered sand dunes. There were no little birds but the frogs were singing. Glowing on the far horizon, Big Baldy Mountain in the Little Belts was totally white. It looked like a squished marshmallow.

◆ At Giant Springs a Downy Woodpecker was excavating a hole in a branch right over their heads. Franklin's Gulls were riding the current down the Missouri and then flying back up.

◆ At Benton Lake NWR a rabbit was hunkered down next to the boardwalk and when they walked back it was still there, only it was lying down. Did it have a nest there? They also deduced that they had seen a Sharp-tailed Grouse since the view Baldy had of the of the bird was very poor, but he could tell it was a grouse and that is the only grouse at the refuge. Thank heavens for bird lists!

◆ They traveled many miles on a flat, straight dirt road between Benton and Freezeout Lakes. They saw one bird, a huge Golden Eagle on a fence post next to the road. It was holding on with all its might in the howling wind.

◆ At Freezeout Lake as they went to bed, they requested a wakeup call from a Meadowlark in the morning. The request was granted. During the night Baldy heard the elusive and secretive Bittern and the next morning one flew over the road as they started birding. They also saw the rare Great Egret and a few Black-crowned Night-herons. They did not see the very Common Great Blue Heron anywhere.

◆ They drove into the mountains of the Rocky Mountain Front uttering words like phenomenal, incredible, inspirational, spectacular, holy moley. They felt very lucky to be able to do a birdathon in this country. There were few birds in the mountains, but the drive was breathtaking and totally worth it.

And so, "once upon a time" with all its magical implications lives still. We love our once a year twenty-four hours of birding. The purpose and motivation for this annual expedition are provided by all of you wonderful bird lovers and your generosity. Your contributions support Montana Audubon and habitat protection in our area. The birds thank you and so do we.

Til next year ... we remain yours truly,

Bigfoot and Baldy

(aka Sara Toubman and Cedron Jones)



COMING EVENTS AND REMINDERS

ANNUAL BIRDSEED SALE

Last Chance Audubon, in partnership with Birds & Beasleys, will take orders for birdseed until Nov. 15. Here's a chance to stock up on seed for your feathered winter guests and at the same time help our chapter raise money for educational and conservation projects. All profits from this sale go to LCAS.

- 25# black oil sunflower seed, unshelled - \$30.00
- 25# med chips – \$43.00
- 10# nyjer thistle - \$20.00
- 20# nyjer thistle - \$39.00
- 25# millet - \$19.00

Place your order with Birds & Beasleys, 449-0904, or with Sue Jackson, 443-4486.

Pick up birdseed at Birds & Beasleys, 70 S. Park Ave., Nov. 1 - Nov. 15.

LCAS MEMBERSHIP: Last Chance Audubon membership renewals are due in January. (If you joined the chapter this fall, you need not renew until Jan. 2013.) LCAS membership assures your receipt of the newsletter, which keeps you posted on monthly membership meetings and chapter events. LCAS membership is good from January through December and should be renewed each January. Joining LCAS does not preclude membership in National Audubon. (There's an LCAS membership form on the back page of this newsletter; please mail it and a check to the address provided.)

- **Kelsey Chapter, Montana Native Plant Society - Saturday, December 3, 6:00 p.m.:** Our annual holiday potluck and show-and-tell will be hosted by Bob and Toni Person at their home located at 223 S. Rodney in Helena. Bring your own table service, a dish to share, and a native plant show-and-tell item.
- **LCAS Jan. Newsletter:** Please submit Jan. newsletter items by Monday, Jan. 2, 2012. Thanks!
- **Project FeederWatch** is a winter-long survey of birds that visit feeders at backyards, nature centers, community areas, and other locales in North America. Participants registered for the 2011-2012 season of Project FeederWatch, which begins November 12, will be able to log in after November

1st. For more information, see <http://www.birds.cornell.edu.pfw>.

- **Great Backyard Bird Count: The GBBC will take place Feb. 17-20, 2012.** More info in the Jan. newsletter, or see www.birdcount.org.

FOR YOUR CALENDAR, MARK IN INK:

Wings Across the Big Sky

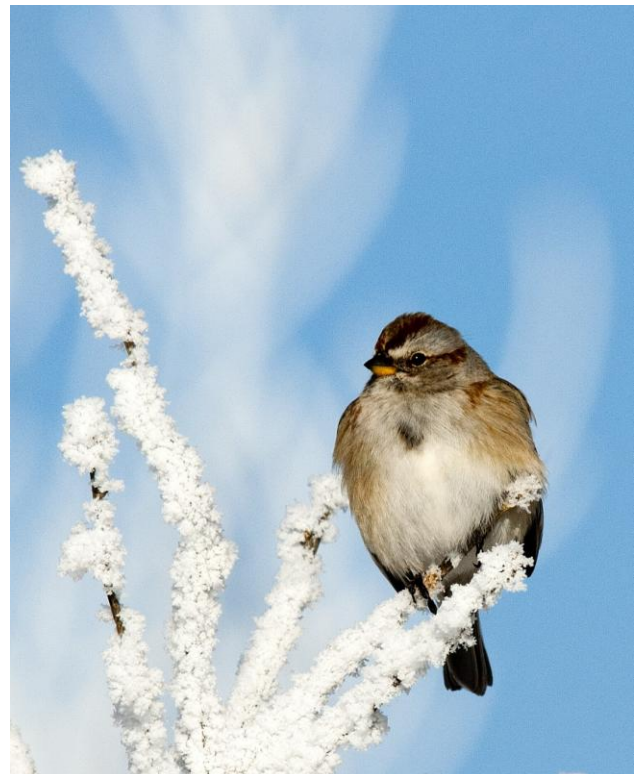
June 8–10, 2012, Kalispell, Montana

The time has arrived to begin planning and spreading the word that **Montana Audubon's Annual Bird Festival *Wings Across the Big Sky*, co-hosted by Flathead Audubon Society**, is June 8–10 in Kalispell.

Our theme this year, "*Birding and Conservation: The Crown of the Continent*" will bring in top-notch experts and speakers from all around the state for the Saturday afternoon presentations and new and ever-popular guided field trips.

Festival headquarters is located at the the Hilton Garden Inn on the south edge of Kalispell off of US Highway 93.

Each month we will feature developing news on Bird Festival 2012. For more information contact Bird Festival Coordinator, Larissa Berry at lberry@mtaudubon.org or 406-443-3949.



American Tree Sparrow - photo by Bob Martinka

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LAST CHANCE AUDUBON SOCIETY

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Secretary Brian Shovers 443-6640/sholace@bresnan.net
Treasurer Dan Sullivan 443-4229

Board of Directors:

Bob Martinka 449-3313
Don Skaar 442-3254
Coburn Currier ccurrier@mt.gov
Lorna Milne-Motl 443-7162
Nancy Silver

Committee Chairs/Contacts

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

Website: www.lastchanceaudubon.org; Contacts: Birdseed - Birds & Beasleys, 449-0904; Montana Audubon - 443-3949/
www.mtaudubon.org. Non-members may receive the newsletter for \$5.50 per year. Send check to LCAS, PO Box 924, Helena 59624.

Christmas Count	Sue Newell/Cedron Jones	442-8142/442-1271
Circulation	Sam Sperry/Joyce Beckes	458-8170
Conservation	Brian Shovers	443-6640
Education	vacant	
Field Trip	Jim Greene 495-9270/ greenevogt@imt.net	
Habitat Protection	Drake Barton	449-6586
Membership	Sara Toubman	442-1271
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
Silent Auction	Sandy Shull/Jo Lace	449-0904/443-6640
Website	Dan Sullivan	443-4229

MEMBERSHIP FROM SARA TOUBMAN:

Please welcome the following new and renewing National Audubon Society members. New: Lore Fulton, Jean Eickmeyer, Ruth Raihl, Becky Piske, Kevin/Brenda Bokovoy, Callie Gross. NAS Renewals: James Driggers, Sandi Johansen, F. Ekren, John Weida, Elizabeth Carlson Thompson, Denise Pennington, Dolores Walter, William Dawe, Carol Taylor, Sara Toubman, Shawnann Dunkin. LCAS New/Renewals: Berma Saxton, Fred/Joyce Naehar, William Donaldson, E. Hempleman.



**Last Chance Audubon Society
Membership Form**

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

**Send your \$15 check with this form to Last Chance
Audubon Society, PO Box 924, Helena, MT 59624.
All contributions are tax deductible.**

