

## ***Brother Can You Sparrow Dime? 2017 Birdathon Report***

You might think that doing a birdathon on the same weekend and along the same route year after year would be tedious. But, no. It's always different. We started out Sunday afternoon, just as the big dark gray front approached the Helena Valley. Right off the bat we had Ring-necked ducks at K-Mart Ponds; Gold finches at Prickly Pear Fishing Access; and we watched an Osprey pick a good-sized fish out of the Regulating Reservoir. After an hour of howling wind and cooling temperatures the sun came out again—illuminating a Bobolink on Head Lane. Grizzly Gulch yielded thirteen more species including a drumming Ruffed grouse at the end of the day.

Monday morning as we drove to Great Falls all of the canyons along the Missouri were overflowing with a dense white fog. It was beautiful. Our first bird at Giant Springs was a Western wood pewee. A Red-tailed hawk called and called from the top of a Spruce tree. At Benton Lake we watched a Coot shepherding a clutch of fuzzball red-headed young. We also had a pair of Black-crowned night herons fly over.

Towering cumulus clouds rose above the Rocky Mountain Front as we neared Freezeout Lake. Freezeout was a hot spot for us, not due to large numbers of birds, but for the several treasures we found there: Long-eared owl, Great-horned owl, Willet, Foresters' tern, Black-bellied plover, Ruddy turnstone, Saye's phoebe, and a Clay-colored sparrow. Too good! Another reason to make this drive at this time of year is the splendor of the hills and mountains in their greenest moments.

We counted 120 species. We are grateful for your pledge. Thank you for your support and have a great summer! The birds thank you too.

Jo Lace, Brian Shovers, Don & Andrea Stierle

