



# 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*

*April 2017*

## *"Swiftling" Up High in Glacier Park*

*LCAS Program, April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017, 7 PM*

*Montana WILD, 2668 Broadwater Ave.*

***\*Please note this program is the FIRST Tuesday in April***

Searching for Black Swifts, or "swiftling", is not for the faint of heart. The sheer beauty of their waterfall habitat alone causes palpitations, not to mention bear country bush-whacking, miles of paddling, slippery creek bed navigation, and scree slope rock skiing. Amy Seaman will describe her search for the elusive Black Swift, a search that took her up high and under waterfalls in survey trips to Glacier National Park. She will discuss the Black Swift's distribution, unique nesting behavior, and its status here in Montana. The state's survey efforts include Montana Audubon efforts over the last three years in Glacier National Park, a home to the majority of swift colonies that we are aware of in Montana. Amy will share photos of beautiful waterfalls, interesting facts, what has been learned about how to survey in Montana's remote backcountry, and plenty of speculation about what we know about "the coolest bird."

Amy Seaman came to Montana Audubon in 2013 where she works on the Important Bird Area (IBA) Program and a myriad of other bird conservation projects including the annual Long-billed Curlew surveys in the Helena area. In 2015, Amy became the lead lobbyist at the Montana Legislative session in Helena. Amy earned her M.S in Biology in 2012 at the University of Nevada, Reno. Her teaching experiences are varied but include several semesters assisting field ornithology. Avian studies have been a focal point for Amy, taking her to Montana locations such as the Madison and Missouri Rivers, Charles M. Russell NWR, Bitterroot Valley, Glacier National Park, far eastern Montana, and the Bridger Mountains.

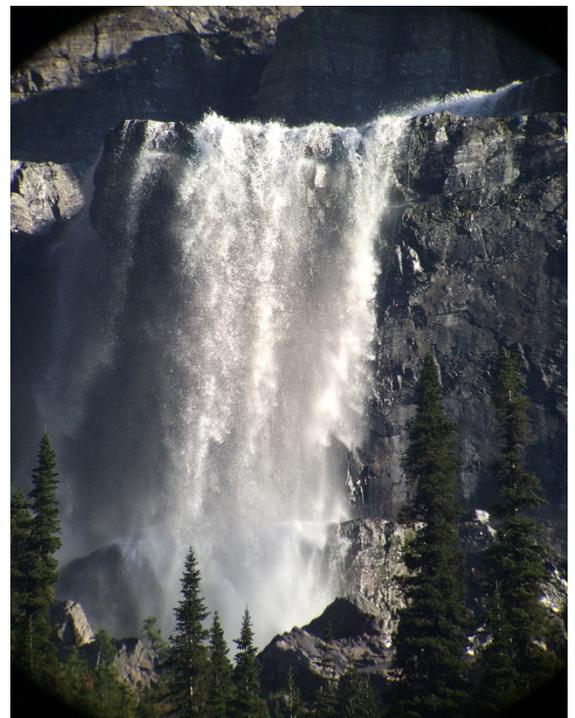
### *Birdathon 2017*

Spring migration is underway and our thoughts turn to Birdathon and a big day of birding. There are some teams in place, and we would welcome any and all new teams this year. As you may know, Birdathon is a fundraiser for our chapter; half of the money raised is given to Montana Audubon. Birders make a 24-hour effort to count as many bird species as possible and then ask friends, co-workers, family, etc. for a donation. Some donate a set amount and some give on a per species basis. Any donation is gladly accepted.

If you have interest in doing a Birdathon, please let me know. We generally try to do Birdathon sometime in late May through mid- June. The date is up to the team.

Think about the fun you could have spending a whole day looking at birds!

Contact Jo Lace: 443-6640 or [shoelace1049@gmail.com](mailto:shoelace1049@gmail.com)



*"Above Avalanche Creek," photo by Amy Seaman*

*President's Perch*  
*Conservation*

A local land trust is asking LCAS to do a bird census on a parcel of land near Helena, soon to undergo restoration.

Systematically counting the various bird species found in the area gives the project managers a way to evaluate the habitat they are restoring; the avian abundance and diversity is likely correlated with the overall quality of the habitat, since birds are often outstanding bio-indicators of the environmental health of an area.

Likewise, in the Golden Eagle Migration Survey (GEMS) in the Big Belt Mountains, raptor populations can be key indicators of ecosystem health. Long-term migration counts are the best way to measure raptor population status and trends at the landscape level as well as, indirectly, how well we humans are caring for and protecting our natural world.

We at LCAS also participate in the Long-billed Curlew Study, working with Montana Audubon's Amy Seaman, each spring. This, too, is a way of determining whether there is enough appropriate land and unbroken prairie vegetation in the Helena area being preserved to support this particular species.

LCAS is a conservation organization interested in doing our part for the preservation of our rare and incredible native animals, plants, and natural resources in our geographic area. We are here to be a voice for wildlife, and especially birds. Check our mission statement on the front of this newsletter, and you'll see that part of our mission includes "habitat protection and environmental advocacy." Our fundraisers, like Birdathon in the spring and "Not a Silent Auction" in the fall, financially support these efforts as well as our educational programs.

Take a look around when you're out birding this Spring and ask yourself: Are we doing enough? Is there more we should do? What can I do to help?

Janice Miller,  
President of Last Chance Audubon Society

**Our website:**

<http://www.lastchanceaudubon.or>

*Bird Festival*  
June 9-11, 2017  
Great Falls, Montana

wings   
across the big sky

The annual Bird Festival is fast approaching. You should have received your registration brochure by now, so please register early by mailing the registration page or go online at [www.mtaudubon.org](http://www.mtaudubon.org). Field trips are already filling up—while still plenty of options available, but you may not get your first choice. If you're registering online, you only choose one field trip per day as the system will not allow you to register for a trip that is full; if you are registering by mail, include 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> choices.

Rooms have been booked at the Best Western Plus Heritage Inn. Call 1-406-761-1900 or 1-800-548-8256 and mention you're with Montana Audubon to get the discounted rate.

Register soon and join us in Great Falls in June. Check out your brochure for Upper Missouri Breaks pre- and post-trips, email the chapter at [umbaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:umbaudubon@gmail.com), or call either of the following for more information: Candace Beery at 907-306-6320 or Kay Silk at 406-453-0545.



*Sandhill Crane and colt, photo by Bob Martinka*

## *Volunteers Needed!*

Are you ready to hear the ‘currleeee’ of the Long-billed Curlew? Well, grab your binoculars and get ready, because it’s almost curlew season! These charismatic shorebirds will be trickling back into the state in less than two months, and we need your help finding as many as possible in and around the Helena Valley!

Last year, you helped locate 117 curlews and 92 Sandhill Crane sightings, and these data are helping inform state-wide habitat models as well as helping highlight important tracts of intact grassland that need to be conserved.

Montana and the Helena Valley harbor the grassland and wetland habitat that curlews rely on during breeding and migration. Since 2014, citizen scientists like you have collected over 200 data points in local curlew hotspots with focused surveys. Please help us again in 2017 by choosing an available survey route and getting out into the field!

It’s easy. Survey routes consist of early morning road-side stops repeated every half mile. At each stop, you will get out of the car for five minutes and look and listen for curlews. Along the way, you will collect important data on the time, habitat, and presence or absence of curlews. And, the great thing is, you only need to look for one big, beautiful, bellowing bird. So all you have to do is choose a route, catch up on Curlew identification, and you are all set to go! Feel free to bring a partner, a new birder, do a route more than once, or do more than one route. The Curlews are just waiting to be found! Surveys can start as early as April 8<sup>th</sup>, so get those taxes done early!

To brush up on your Curlew identification before heading into the field, visit Montana Audubon’s webpage at <http://mtaudubon.org/birds-science/long-billed-curlew-initiative/> for a link to the Curlew’s call and much more. Also visit Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s page “All About Birds”: [https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Long-billed\\_Curlew/id](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Long-billed_Curlew/id).

The best way to get involved is to visit our favorite Birds & Beasleys store in Helena’s Downtown Walking Mall **starting April 1<sup>st</sup>**, where you can find the available survey routes and details such as the protocol, data sheets, and maps. Otherwise, Amy Seaman will happily answer any questions you may have! She can be reached at [aseaman@mtaudubon.org](mailto:aseaman@mtaudubon.org) or 406.210.9449.



Bobolink, photo by Bob Martinka



*Bird Festival Award Ceremony*

**wings**   
*across the big sky*

Each year, Montana Audubon recognizes outstanding individuals who work for the conservation and protection of birds and other wildlife by presenting awards at the Saturday evening banquet. We are currently seeking nominations in the following categories: Lifetime Achievement Award; Educator of the Year; Conservationist of the Year; Citizen Scientist of the Year; and Special Achievement Award. To proffer a nomination, download a nomination form at <http://mtaudubon.org/about/award/>. Nominations are due at the office by May 19, 2017. Mail completed forms to Montana Audubon, PO Box 595, Helena MT 59624.



----- *Clip and save!* -----

## ***2017 Last Chance Audubon Society Field Trips and More***

**PLEASE CALL LEADERS TO MAKE RESERVATIONS. BRING BINOCULARS, SCOPE IF APPROPRIATE, FIELD GUIDE, SNACKS & WATER. DRESS FOR THE WEATHER**

**Every Saturday, May 13 - August 26 BIRDS & BEASLEYS SATURDAY MORNING BIRD WALKS**  
Meet at Birds & Beasleys, 2 S. Last Chance Gulch at 7:30am to enjoy two hours of local bird fun. Locations rotate throughout the summer but include Spring Meadow Lake, Fairgrounds Pond, the Cement Plant trail along Prickly Pear Creek, and anywhere the group decides to go. Trips are led by staff or experienced local birders. Families and beginning birders welcome. Call 449-0904 for more information.

**April 1-2, Saturday and Sunday - FREEZEOUT LAKE NWR Leader: Janice Miller**

Meet Janice Miller at Albertson's on Fee Ave. at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday. This fieldtrip is an overnight trip with hotel options in Choteau and Fairfield.

"Freezeout Lake is Montana's primary snow goose staging area, a place where up to 300,000 Snow Geese and 10,000 Tundra Swans gather and rest before flying onward to Saskatchewan and Alberta, Canada." (*From Visit MT.com*). We will meet with Michael Schwitters, FWP, who can answer our questions about the Refuge. We will plan to be at the Lake at sundown and again at sunrise to witness the hundreds of geese arriving or leaving under beautiful lighting. Other potential bird species: Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Ring-necked Pheasant, and Canada Geese, among others. For more information, contact Janice Miller at [jan2854@gmail.com](mailto:jan2854@gmail.com).

**May 13, Saturday - WARM SPRINGS PONDS Leaders: Brian Shovers & Jo Lace Meet: 7:30 AM**

During last year's tour of the ponds at Warm Springs, we counted 65 species, including a nesting Bald Eagle and nesting Great Horned Owls as well as a wide array of ducks and shorebirds. The group counted 13 duck species as well as a Sora, Black-necked Stilts, and a Long-billed Curlew. One of the day's highlights was a Lewis's Woodpecker. Over the years, Gary Swant, a retired Deerlodge teacher, has documented the ponds and produced an impressive list of migrating birds. We will meet at the west end of the Lundy Center parking lot at 7:30 am and return to Helena about 3:30 to 4 pm. Don and Andrea Stierle will join us at Warm Springs as co-leaders. Bring a lunch and binoculars and dress for the weather. For more information, contact Brian Shovers or Jo Lace at 443-6640 or at [sholace1049@gmail.com](mailto:sholace1049@gmail.com). If you intend to join us, let us know by May 10<sup>th</sup>.

**May 20, Saturday - BROWN'S LAKE / BLACKFOOT VALLEY Leader: Bob Martinka Meet: 6:30 AM**

Meet Bob Martinka at west parking lot of Lundy Center on Euclid Ave. at 6:30 AM. Carpooling at the meeting location will be requested. The group will do some birding along the way to Brown's Lake (about 90 miles). We will return to Helena about mid-afternoon, so bring lunches and drinks. The Upper Blackfoot Valley area is quite a birdy location, and we can expect to see as many as 70+ species, from grassland birds along the way to cranes, marsh birds, waterfowl, grebes, swallows, terns, flycatchers, sparrows, warblers, possible orioles, perhaps Vaux's Swifts, raptors, eagles, and others. For more info contact Bob Martinka at 449-3313 or [rmartink@aol.com](mailto:rmartink@aol.com)

**June 4, Sunday - BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY: TIPS & TRICKS Leader: Gail Moser Meet: 5:30 PM**

Meet Gail Moser, enthusiastic and award-winning photographer, at the small shelter at the north end of the Fairgrounds Pond at 5:30pm for an evening of 'Bird Photography: Tips & Tricks'. No matter your skill level or your camera gear, this will be a fun evening learning and sharing techniques for photographing birds. Be familiar with your camera and its ISO, shutter speed, and aperture settings. Students are welcomed to this class. Stephen Turner, an experienced birder, will join us and contribute to bird identification. Please call Gail at 406-202-2300 or email [gmoser@mt.net](mailto:gmoser@mt.net) for more information and to reserve a spot.

**June 17, Saturday - BIRDING 101 *for Adults* Leader: Stephen Turner Meet: 8 AM to 11 AM**

Last Chance Audubon, in cooperation with Montana WILD Education Center, is pleased to announce an *adult* education class **for the birds!** Get hands-on experience identifying birds through observation, both in the classroom and in the field. Learn about feathers and flight, bird song, migration, and conservation. Best of all, start your own life list of feathered friends! Adults wishing to learn about birds through identification and natural history are welcome to this workshop. Class size will be limited to 12 participants. Everyone must register in advance to attend. There is no cost for the workshop, and coffee and a snack will be provided. Binoculars will be provided for those who do not have them. All registrants should have the ability to navigate a one-mile walk around Spring Meadow Lake. We will meet, rain or shine; please dress for the weather. Meet at MT WILD, 2668 Broadwater Ave. To register, contact Stephen Turner at [stepturner@yahoo.com](mailto:stepturner@yahoo.com) or Ryan Schmaltz at [rschmaltz@mt.gov](mailto:rschmaltz@mt.gov).

**June 20, Tuesday - BIRDING 101 *for Kids* Leader: Stephen Turner Meet: 6 PM to 9 PM**

Last Chance Audubon, in cooperation with Montana WILD Education Center, is pleased to announce a unique opportunity for students to learn about *birds!* Get hands-on experience identifying birds through observation, both in the classroom and in the field. Learn about feathers and flight, bird song, migration, and conservation. Best of all, take an evening walk and start your own life list of feathered friends! Students entering grades 5-8 during the 2017-2018 school year are welcome to this workshop. Class size will be limited to 12 participants. Students must register in advance to attend. There is no cost for the workshop. Binoculars will be provided by Montana WILD. All registrants should have the ability to navigate a one-mile walk around Spring Meadow Lake. We will meet, rain or shine; please dress for the weather. Meet at MT WILD, 2668 Broadwater Ave. To register, contact Stephen Turner at [stepturner@yahoo.com](mailto:stepturner@yahoo.com) or Ryan Schmaltz at [rschmaltz@mt.gov](mailto:rschmaltz@mt.gov).

**September 9, Saturday - WORLD SHOREBIRDS DAY Leader: Coburn Currier**

Last Chance Audubon is, once again, hosting a fieldtrip to the south end of CANYON FERRY LAKE WMA in support of World Shorebirds Day (WSD). WSD is celebrated each year on September 6<sup>th</sup>. **This year, the count will take place on Saturday, September 9<sup>th</sup>.** An alternate date for inclement weather will be **Sunday Sept 10<sup>th</sup>.** We will meet in Helena to carpool to the southeast end of the reservoir and will walk into the area. Shore birding is best done by spotting scope, although many birds can be identified using binoculars. Participants are asked to bring a scope if they have one. Data from the census will be submitted through [eBird](http://eBird). Information about World Shorebirds Day is available at <https://worldshorebirdsday.wordpress.com/>. To participate, please email Coburn Currier [clcurrier@hotmail.com](mailto:clcurrier@hotmail.com). Group size will be limited. Check our website at <http://www.lastchanceaudubon.org/> for meeting time and place. Contact Coburn Currier at 449-2574 to check for a weather-related date change.

**September 15 & 16, Saturday & Sunday - RAPTOR ID CLASS AND FIELD TRIP**

Steve Hoffman, raptor expert and retired Executive Director of MT Audubon, will teach a raptor ID class for all skill levels from 6:30 – 8:30 PM on Friday, September 15<sup>th</sup>, at St Paul's United Methodist Church, Cruse Ave entrance. The Saturday Field Trip will meet at 8:00 AM at Costco, north parking lot (near auto bays). We will go to the Golden Eagle Migration Survey (GEMS) site near Duck Creek Pass in the Big Belts. Carpooling strongly recommended. High clearance and/or 4WD vehicles recommended. Home by 5 PM. Birders will practice identifying raptors all day. Raptors likely to be encountered include the Golden Eagle, American Kestrel, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Northern Goshawk, Red-tailed Hawk, and possibly Bald Eagle. Other species we may see include the Wild Turkey, Dusky Grouse, Red Crossbills, Clark's Nutcrackers, and Gray Jay. Field trip participants can choose either to hike for 1.4 miles, 900 vertical feet or to stroll 150 yards! Dress for hiking and for the high mountain weather conditions at 8,000ft elevation. Bring lunch, water, snacks, daypack, binoculars, camera, and, if desired, a walking stick.

Cost of \$50/person for classroom and field trip is tax deductible. All funds raised go to benefit the GEMS project. 30 person limit. Registration is required. Early reservations are advised. To reserve your place, send your \$50 check payable to LCAS to Janice Miller, 815 11<sup>th</sup> Ave, Helena, MT 59601. For more information, contact Janice Miller at [jan2854@gmail.com](mailto:jan2854@gmail.com).

## *LCAS Board Highlights*

March 7, 2017 Meeting

### **Conservation**

- GEMS Project. Proposed budget discussed; Board committed a minimum of \$2500 in support of GEMS 2017.
- Bird census along Seven Mile Creek near Birdseye Rd planned to fulfill request from Prickly Pear Land Trust.
- LCAS taking part in International Migratory Bird Day on May 6
- LCAS volunteers are offering two entry level bird identification classes at MT Wild this summer. One class is for students entering grades 5-8, and the second is an adult birding class (details on page 5).
- Six field trips scheduled for April-June
- Four 2017 Birdathon teams identified
- In June, Gail Moser will be offering a “Tips and Tricks” bird photography class (details on page 5).

### **Education**

- Interest in 2017 LCAS scholarships – April 15 submission deadline approaching. If you know a high school student who might be interested, have them contact Nancy Oliviera at Helena High or Lisa Richards at Capital High
- Communication with HMS Bobcat Birders Club – assistance with speakers and field trips offered
- Agreed to have a display and volunteers at the Earth Action Day Environmental Fair on April 21
- Follow-up planned with Kessler School to promote involvement of teachers and students in a Missoula Audubon Chapter-sponsored Osprey project

### **Other**

- Membership report: LCAS has 417 members
- **LCAS leadership transitions: Looking for leaders to continue LCAS’s efforts. If interested, contact Janice Miller. Opportunities include: Membership Chair, Newsletter Editor, and Setup Coordinator for membership meetings at MT WILD.**



*Sandhill Crane in flight, photo by Bob Martinka*

## *2017 LCAS Scholarship for High School Seniors*

### **APPLICATION DEADLINE APPROACHING**

If you know of a high school senior who might be interested in applying for a 2017 LCAS scholarship, the April 15 submission deadline is approaching. If you do, have them contact teachers Nancy Oliveira at Helena High or Lisa Richards at Capital High to get application information. LCAS offers up to two \$1000 scholarships each year. Students must have an interest in pursuing college/university studies related to ornithology, habitat protection/restoration, land conservation, and/or protection/restoration of avian and other wildlife species. Areas of study interest could include the sciences, environmental studies, public policy, journalism/communications, geography, or other related areas of study.



*Long-Billed Curlew, photo by Bob Martinka*

### *Membership Report*

Please welcome to **Last Chance Audubon Society new chapter members** Marilyn Atkins, Dan & Linda Elliott, Christian Frazza, and Stephenie Tubbs.

Many thanks to **Last Chance Audubon Society renewing chapter members** Nancy & David Ewer, Roberta Guderian, Patricia Helvey, Bruce Hodess, John Hoffland, Gary Lyons, John Moore, Kathy Van Hook, and Carla Wambach.

Please also welcome **National Audubon Society new members** Brooke Hunter and Suzanne Thweatt.

Sincere thanks to **National Audubon Society renewing members** George Blyman, Kathryn Bramer, James & Diann Fradette, and Margaret Hubber.

**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>. Please be sure we receive all your correct contact information by filling out a registration form located either in this newsletter or printed from [www.lastchanceaudubon.org](http://www.lastchanceaudubon.org). Send a completed registration form and your \$15 check to: LCAS, PO Box 924, Helena, MT 59624.

**PRINTED and ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTERS:** We want all of our members to stay informed about chapter news and happenings. If you do not have access to email, staying current with your chapter membership to Last Chance Audubon Society guarantees that you will continue to receive a printed version of our newsletter. If you do have email access, please help us keep printing costs to a minimum and opt to receive our newsletter electronically. Those dollars we save will be spent for important bird habitat, education, and outreach. Thank you.

**NAS MEMBERSHIP:** If you would like National Audubon Society membership information, please direct an email to [www.customerservice@audubon.org](mailto:www.customerservice@audubon.org) or contact them by phone at 1-844-428-3828. We are unable to forward memberships to National Audubon.

- Sharon Miller, Membership Chair, [12sharmil95@gmail.com](mailto:12sharmil95@gmail.com) or 513-1152

Last Chance Audubon Society  
PO Box 924  
Helena MT 59624



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

Website:  
[www.lastchanceaudubon.org](http://www.lastchanceaudubon.org)

### MEMBERSHIP FORM

*Clip and mail to: PO Box 924,  
Helena MT 59624 with check  
for \$15. All contributions are  
tax deductible.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

### LCAS BOARD

**LCAS BOARD PRESIDENT:** Janice Miller, 439-5762,  
[jan2854@gmail.com](mailto:jan2854@gmail.com)

**SECRETARY:** Brian Shovers, 443-6640, [sholace1049@gmail.com](mailto:sholace1049@gmail.com)

**TREASURER:** Sue Jackson, [suejacksonmt@gmail.com](mailto:suejacksonmt@gmail.com), 406-443-4486

**WEBSITE/BOARD:** Stephen Turner, 521-0000, [stepturner@yahoo.com](mailto:stepturner@yahoo.com)

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

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

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

**BOARD AT LARGE:** Jo Lace, 443-6640

**BOARD AT LARGE:** Don Skaar, 442-3254, [tedradon@gmail.com](mailto:tedradon@gmail.com)

### LCAS COMMITTEE CHAIRS/CONTACTS

**Birdathon:** Jo Lace 443-6640, [sholace1049@gmail.com](mailto:sholace1049@gmail.com)

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

**Christmas Bird Count:** Cedron Jones, 442-1271

**Conservation:** Brian Shovers, 443-6640

**Membership:** Sharon Miller, 513-1152

**Monthly Program:** Sandy Shull & Liz Hiltunen, 449-0904 or 227-5492

**Newsletter:** Meta Downhour, [meta.downhour@live.com](mailto:meta.downhour@live.com)

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

**Silent Auction:** Sandy Shull & Jo Lace, 449-0904 or 443-6640

**Field Trips:** open

**Habitat Protection:** open

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