

Brother Can You Sparrow Dime? Twenty-fifth Birdathon Report **May 24-25, 2019**

We rendezvoused with Don and Andrea at Freezeout Lake to begin our Birdathon. Freezeout was very productive. A pair of Black-crowned night heron flew in a wide arc and landed at the edge of the cattails in front of us as a Bittern sounded nearby. Yellow-headed blackbirds creaking all around. Grebes, Canvasbacks, Pintails, and Ruddies—fifty-two species at Freezeout. We left feeling happy and lucky. On to Benton Lake NWR where we encountered Franklins and Bonaparte's gulls, Curlew, Golden Eagle, and a few Chestnut-collared longspurs. It was pleasant and sunny in the late afternoon. Giant Springs State Park provided us with many little birds—Downy woodpecker, Yellow warbler, Ruby-crowned kinglet, Goldfinch, and Cliff swallow. We loaded up and headed for Little Prickly Pear Canyon. All the drive down I-15 from Great Falls to the Sieben exit was a dramatic mixture of tremendous clouds and intermittent rain showers shot through with late afternoon sun. The glorious greenness that can only happen in May, covering and off-setting the remarkable canyon walls along the Missouri and Little Prickly Pear Creek. Spectacular! As dusk deepened on Duffy Lane a Bobolink sailed across the meadow, alighting on a wire.

Saturday a.m. We were in no hurry. We ended the previous day with 100 species and we had six hours to scour the Helena area for more. We rounded out our waterfowl count with Wood duck, Hooded and Common mergansers, and Ring-necked ducks at Spring Meadow State Park and K-Mart Ponds. Bullocks oriole, Gray catbird, and finally, a Mountain bluebird, near their nest box on Mount Helena, ended our day. It was a low key, but pleasant Birdathon sandwiched between rain showers. Just the way we like it.

We want to thank everyone for your generous pledge. Please make your check to Last Chance Audubon and mail it to Brian & Jo, 210 S. California, Helena, MT. 59601. Donations are tax-deductible.