Acclaimed author Sneed B. Collard III shares the stories behind his award-winning memoir *Warblers and Woodpeckers: A Father-Son Big Year of Birding* as well as other bird titles such as *Fire Birds: Valuing Natural Wildfires and Burned Forests* and his new picture book, *Birds of Every Color*. In this entertaining talk, he’ll recount how he and his son began their birding careers and share their adventures to Arizona, Texas, California, the Galapagos, South America, and beyond. He’ll recount how they accidentally stumbled into an Andean Cock-of-the-Rock, got caught up in a hundred-year flood, and had to make a life or death choice between pork dumplings and California Condors. Sneed’s books will be available for purchase and signing at this program.

Sneed B. Collard III graduated with Honors in biology from U.C. Berkeley and earned a masters in scientific instrumentation from U.C. Santa Barbara. He is the author of more than eighty books for children and adults including the beloved titles *Shep: Our Most Loyal Dog* and *The Governor’s Dog is Missing*. He has received the AAAS/Subaru Prize for Excellence in Science Books and the Washington Post-Children’s Book Guild Nonfiction Award for his body of work. *Warblers and Woodpeckers: A Father-Son Big Year of Birding* was recently named an Honor book for the Montana Book Award. Keep up with Sneed and his son Braden on their blog, [www.fathersonbirding.com](http://www.fathersonbirding.com).
“Homework” for Summer Vacation

Imagine being able to observe and perhaps photograph, up-close and unnoticed, some of the wonders of the bird world. Notice how spring migration brings the refreshing COLOR of finches, warblers and tanagers to our shrubs, along with Green-winged Teal, Red-necked Grebe and Great Blue Heron on our waterways. Discover the delicateness of feathers in the wind, water droplets glinting from the beak of a Mallard in the sun, and yellow ping-pong-ball-sized goslings bobbing after their mother goose, as adults feed and protect their young.

Envision a Bird Blind, (our dream) where, while you rest, you can watch waterfowl dabbling, chickadees hopping from branch to branch, and a bald eagle eyeing her next meal.

Witness NEW bird boxes at the K-mart Ponds to entice the Wood Ducks and swallows to stay through the breeding season.

Experience an area that may be NEW to you: sign-up for one of our Field Trips and stand in AWE of the world around us!

Recognize a new perspective and voice has offered to serve our board (thank you, Glenda Bradshaw!), enhancing a group of people who contribute enthusiastically towards the goals and mission of our Chapter.

And, anticipate another year of top-notch programs, beginning September 10.

Guilt-free. No quiz. Just get outside and revel in this fabulous place we call HOME! The rewards are all YOURS.

Embracing the return of birds and the warm seasons ahead,

-- Janice Miller, President, Last Chance Audubon Society

Upcoming Election

The 2019 LCAS election will be held at the May 14 meeting. We will be electing five board members, each to serve a two-year term. The slate of candidates includes Glenda Bradshaw, Sharon Dewart-Hansen, Jo Lace, Shane Sater, and Stephen Turner. Nominations remain open until the election. If you’d like to nominate someone to serve on the LCAS Board, just contact Sue Jackson (443-4486). All LCAS members attending the May meeting will be eligible to vote.
LCAS 2019 Field Trips

May 18: Upper Blackfoot Valley/Browns Lake
Leader: Bob Martinka
The group will do some birding along the way to Brown’s Lake (about 90 miles). The area is quite a birdy location and we can expect to see perhaps as many as 70+ species. Grassland birds along the way, cranes, marsh birds, waterfowl, grebes, swallows, terns, flycatchers, sparrows, warblers, possible orioles, perhaps Vaux’s Swifts, raptors, eagles, and others. Meet Bob Martinka at the west parking lot of Lundy Center on Euclid Ave. at 6:30 am. Carpooling at the meeting location will be requested. We will return to Helena about mid-afternoon, so bring lunches and drinks. To reserve a spot please contact Bob Martinka at 449-3313, or rmartink@aol.com.

May 19: Warm Springs Ponds
Leaders: Jo Lace & Brian Shovers, and Don & Andrea Stierle
The Warm Springs Ponds attract a wide variety of waterfowl, passerines, and raptors, especially during the spring. Gary Swant monitors the ponds on a regular basis and has recorded as many as 140 species over time. We will meet at the west end of the Lundy Center parking lot at 7:15 am and carpool to Warm Springs, where we will meet the Stierles. Bring a sack lunch. We will return to Helena no later than 3:30 pm. If you’re interested please contact Brian and Jo at 406-443-6640 or at sholace0848@gmail.com. Limit 10 people.

May 26: Sevenmile Creek Breeding Birds
Leader: Shane Sater
Bird Prickly Pear Land Trust’s stream restoration project just a few miles from Helena! This is a rare opportunity, since the site is not yet open to public access due to continuing restoration work. By late May, most of the breeding bird contingent should be on territory, and some may even have nestlings. We will very likely see Western Meadowlarks, Red-winged Blackbirds, Gray Catbirds, Yellow Warblers, Barn Swallows, and Northern Rough-winged Swallows, as well as many other breeders and transients. Meet at 6:30 am at the west end of the Lundy Center to carpool. Back by 12:30 pm.

June 1: Mullan Road
Leader: Sharon Dewart-Hansen
Take a trip to Mullan Road on the west side of McDonald Pass. As many as 46 species can be seen. Possible birds in this area are: Veery, Northern Waterthrush, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Willow Flycatcher, Red-naped Sapsucker, and Lazuli Bunting. Contact Sharon Dewart-Hansen at smdewarthansen@charter.net by May 30 to reserve a spot. Meet at the west end of the Lundy Center (on Euclid) at 6:30 am and expect to return by around 12:00 pm.

June 18: Beck Hill Road
Leaders: Rich Wirak and Earl McCurley
Travel to the Beck Hill Road area near Garrison. Past sightings have included Wilson’s Snipes, Long-billed Curlews, Bobolinks, Sandhill Cranes, Lazuli Buntings, Red-naped Sapsuckers, and various warblers and sparrows. Nesting Swainson’s Hawks might also be seen. Be prepared for some moderate uphill hiking. Meet at the Vans-Hardee parking lot (on Euclid) at 7:00 am. Expect to return to Helena by 2:00 pm. Contact information for the trip is Rich 406-443-5189 and Earl 406-461-7352.
June 25: Elliott Pond/Marsh
Leaders: Rich Wirak and Earl McCurley
Visit the privately-owned Elliott Pond/Marsh located off York Road near Helena. Over 35 various species of birds can be seen on this easy walk around the pond-marsh complex including: various flycatchers, warblers, sparrows, kingbirds, Swainson’s Thrush, Marsh Wrens, House Wrens, Great-horned Owls, Great Blue Herons, Bullock’s Orioles, Belted Kingfishers, Blue-winged Teal, Wood Ducks, yellowlegs, Wilson’s Snipe etc. The trip will be limited to 20 people. Reserve a spot by calling Rich (406-443-5189) or Earl (406-461-7352). Meet at the Hardee-Vans parking lot (on Euclid) at 7:00 am. Expect to be back by 2:00 pm.

July 20: Sevenmile Creek Mid-summer Early Bird
Leader: Shane Sater
Get a pre-sunrise start to catch the activity of mid-summer at Sevenmile Creek. By now many birds have fledged young. The latest arrivals have been here for a while already: Common Nighthawks, Willow Flycatchers, Lazuli Buntings, and Cedar Waxwings. And as always, expect the unexpected. Surprises on previous July surveys have included Ferruginous Hawk, Long-eared Owl, Clay-colored Sparrow, and Grasshopper Sparrow. Meet at 5:30 am at the west end of the Lundy Center and come prepared for a streamside walk.

September 8: World Shorebird Day
Leader: Stephen Turner
LCAS will once again support the World Shorebird Day effort by surveying shorebirds and other bird species at the Canyon Ferry WMA. Meet at the northeast end of the Costco parking lot at 7:00 am. Please plan to arrive a few minutes early. The trip will leave the WMA no later than noon. This field trip is free to current LCAS members and space is limited. Members are encouraged to register for the field trip as soon as possible. For non-members, the cost of the field trip is $15, which includes a one-year membership to LCAS. Register by contacting Stephen Turner at turnstonest@gmail.com.

September (date TBA): Aquatic Insect Trip
Leader: Sara Owen
Join ecologist Sara Owen on an exploration of the world of aquatic insects, a vital part of the ecology of streams and wetlands. Look for details about this trip on the LCAS website and in the September newsletter.

Reminder: Wings Across the Big Sky
Is Montana Audubon’s bird festival on your calendar yet? The event takes place June 7-9 at the Cottonwood Inn in Glasgow. Go on field trips in the stunning prairie of northeastern Montana, listen to great speakers, and connect with other birders! Also, consider nominating someone for one of Montana Audubon’s conservation awards: nominations are due May 20. Find out more at mtaudubon.org.
Birding 101 Classes: For Adults & Kids!

As spring birds arrive to their Montana homes for the season, it is an amazing gift to be able to recognize them and give them names. Last Chance Audubon Society, in cooperation with Montana WILD Education Center, is again offering Birding 101 classes! These classes are designed for entry level birders who want to improve their bird identification skills. Each class will explore bird identification through observation, both in the classroom and in the field. Discussion will focus on feathers and flight, bird song, migration, and conservation. Two classes will be offered: one for adults and one for students (grades 5-8). Enrollment is limited. Full details are listed below under each class announcement. The courses fill up very quickly so don't delay, sign up today – and tell your friends! It's free! Details below.

June 1: Birding 101 for Adults (8:00 AM)  
Leader: Stephen Turner
This is a workshop for adults wishing to learn about birds through identification and natural history. The workshop will run from 8 am – 11 am. 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, please contact Stephen Turner turnstonest@gmail.com.

*Registrants for this workshop are invited to attend a follow-up field trip on Sunday, June 2. The field trip will be held at K-Mart Wetlands beginning at 7:00 am. Additional information will be provided during Saturday’s workshop.

June 15: Birding 101 for Kids (8:00 AM)  
Leader: Stephen Turner
Last Chance Audubon Society, in cooperation with Montana WILD Education Center, is pleased to host a workshop for kids wishing to learn about birds through identification and natural history. Students entering grades 5-8 during the 2019-2020 school year are welcome to this workshop. The workshop will run from 8 am – 11 am. 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, please contact Stephen Turner, turnstonest@gmail.com.
Lewis & Clark County Landfill Birding Guidelines

Many LCAS members, friends, and statewide birders enjoy the birding opportunities at the Lewis & Clark County Landfill. A surprising assortment of elusive migratory gulls pass through, most generally in the fall. Gulls such as Lesser Black-backed, Glaucous, Iceland (Thayer’s), Bonaparte’s, and Sabine’s have all been found at the landfill over the last three years. Not to mention numbers of our regularly occurring valley gulls (Ring-billed, California, and Herring).

The landfill has been very supportive of visits by birders to view the conflagration of birds that gather to feed. They have even posted a number of pictures that were taken by locals of gulls found at the landfill. Supportive doesn’t even begin to describe how generous these folks have been.

Recently, the Lewis & Clark County Landfill reached out to LCAS. With their usual enthusiasm they thanked us for sharing the bird pictures and thanked birders for always checking in at the office prior to visiting. They shared their concern for the safety of birders while at the landfill and asked that all visitors follow a few simple rules when birding there.

So please, if you are planning a trip to the Lewis & Clark County Landfill at any time of year, always follow these guidelines. The guidelines are for the safety of the general public and will ensure that this site continues to be available to birders wishing to view gulls as they, well, do what gulls do!

1. If there is inclement weather (rain, snow etc.) please call the Lewis & Clark County Landfill at 406-457-8521 to see if the site can accommodate visitors. The landfill will shut down as roads become impassable due to mud and ice.

2. Upon arrival please check in at the office. There should be a sign in sheet. Please record your name, date, and time of arrival.

3. If you plan to exit your vehicle at any point during your visit, check out a high visibility safety vest from the office. They will have spares on hand.

4. Please ask where it is okay to view birds. This is new. The landfill is a dynamic landscape and heavy equipment moves around continually. The office will know where the birds can be viewed safely. They will have good directions to ensure the best (and safest) birding opportunity.

5. Upon departure please check out at the office. On the sign in sheet, list the time that you are leaving the landfill. Please share information with the employees and thank them for allowing us to visit.

Please remember: “guests at the Lewis & Clark County Landfill acting inappropriately or not following the site guidelines will be asked to leave the facility. Landfilling is the fourth most dangerous operation in the world and we want everybody on site to be as safe as possible.”

Thanks for following these guidelines and for helping to ensure that this opportunity continues for years to come.
Sign Up For Curlew Surveys!
As the grass greens up and the days get nicer, it’s high time to help out with Long-billed Curlew surveys! Surveys are straightforward and take place April 8 to May 31, so there is still almost a month to participate. Route sign-ups and survey packets are available at Birds and Beasleys, 2 S. Last Chance Gulch, in Helena.

You can also find more information at montanabirdsurveys.com.

K-Mart Wetlands Bird Boxes
In mid-April, LCAS volunteers donned waders and strapped on tool belts to help place some new homes for the birds that call the K-Mart Ponds home. Larry Urban, MDT wetlands mitigation specialist, donated six small boxes for cavity nesters (bluebirds, swallows, and chickadees) and two larger boxes designed for Wood Ducks and Hooded Mergansers. The new additions bring the total count to twelve small and four large boxes.

At least two pairs of Wood Ducks and two pairs of Hooded Mergansers have been visiting the ponds this spring. Swallows are just beginning to arrive and chickadees have been seen and heard around the wetland. LCAS will follow the breeding season and provide an updated report in the fall. Thanks to all who helped with this project!

Helena Regulating Reservoir Birding Blind
Late last fall, LCAS met with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) at the south end of the Helena Regulating Reservoir to propose construction of a viewing/photography blind. LCAS members discussed a location and approximate footprint for a structure. A representative of FWP, Vicki Robinson, agreed that the proposal would greatly enhance the recreational opportunities at the reservoir. FWP gave a green light and plans are underway.

In April a committee of LCAS members met to discuss the need for a structure design, funding possibilities, and the logistics of building the blind. Committee members are reaching out to members and community supporters for assistance with funding, materials, and labor. If you wish to contribute any of these resources to the project, please contact Stephen Turner at turnstonest@gmail.com. All offers of assistance are welcome. Donations for the project can be sent directly to LCAS, PO Box 924, Helena, MT 59624. LCAS hopes to have the site available for use by the beginning of 2020.
Highlights: April LCAS Board of Directors Meeting

- **Birdathons** will be taking place in May and June. To join a Birdathon group or to donate to this cause please contact Jo Lace at sholace0848@gmail.com. Proceeds will be split between LCAS and Montana Audubon.

- Due to waning attendance, the March **Natural History Lecture Series** will be discontinued for now. Brian Shovers also reported on bills from the legislative session and his discussions with local groups regarding conservation easements and trail use.

- Scholarship award announcements will take place at the May meeting.

- **Sevenmile Creek** work is ongoing and Shane Sater has worked with Prickly Pear Land Trust to apply for a grant from Cornell to continue restoration work and bird surveys.

- The board discussed the problem of invasive and noxious weeds at the K-Mart Ponds. Burdock removal is on hold pending some research about more effective methods. The board proposed communication with the City of Helena about Russian-olive removal and finding a new name for the area now that K-Mart is gone.

- Plans to construct a **birding blind** along the south end of the Helena Regulating Reservoir are progressing. A “task force” of LCAS members is developing plans and raising additional funds for the project.

- Montana Audubon proposes a scientific conference in Helena in 2020 as an alternative to the annual “Wings Across the Big Sky” bird festival. LCAS will be monitoring these developments.

LCAS board meetings are open to all members: just contact a board member to find out when and where. The next meeting will be in late summer.

The View from Sevenmile Creek: March/April

*Note: The surveys on Sevenmile Creek are a collaboration between LCAS and Prickly Pear Land Trust (PPLT). PPLT acquired the Sevenmile property in 2016 for open space and habitat purposes. Stream restoration activities in the area are ongoing, and public access is not permitted at this time. PPLT provides access to LCAS volunteers specifically to conduct these bird surveys. Questions? Contact Nate Kopp, nate@pricklypearlt.org.*

*March 31.* The first hawk of the morning was a Red-tail, an unusual light morph with a white eyebrow. It perched in a chokecherry thicket near where the irrigation ditch leaves the creek. It was a sunny morning with patchy snow. The meadowlarks were spaced out across the grassland, not yet at mid-spring densities or singing levels. Lots of robins perched along the creek, at least 35 festooning the still-gray alders. High-pitched, quiet "see" alarm calls from the robins clued us in to the morning's second raptor: a Cooper's Hawk.
riding a thermal, broad banded tail spread wide.

Around 11:47, a barely audible, high-pitched chorus had me looking around wildly. Janice Miller spotted them first: 44 Snow Geese, passing north in a high, shifting flock. Just a few minutes later, we heard the distant bugling of a Sandhill Crane, getting louder as the lone vocalist began to circle overhead. The crane was still airborne when we spotted a Red-tail and another Buteo off to our west. Then I heard a “zeet” call from a nearby thicket – an early Lincoln’s Sparrow! I set up my sound recorder and managed to capture a few diagnostic calls, then got a fleeting glimpse of it.

Around 1:00 pm the raptor activity began to pick up. We spotted an adult Bald Eagle riding a thermal southwest of us. A raven and an immature Bald joined it. We snapped photos and called out positions, trying to keep track of everything as we spotted a fourth bird on the thermal - an adult Golden Eagle! I think it was then that I stepped on my lunch in the excitement.

Only minutes later, I heard the unmistakable braying of Trumpeter Swans. We scanned rapidly and spotted a snow-white “V” high above us, a hundred massive birds flapping steadily north.

The raptors kept coming. We watched a courting pair of adult Red-tails circling and diving. They were acting as if they might be locals: we saw them several times more during the survey.

We kept scanning the skies and were amply rewarded. A single Rough-legged Hawk, more typical Red-tails and a dark-morph Harlan's Hawk, more Bald and Golden Eagles, a pair of Northern Harriers. Most were using thermals, on the move. There seemed to be two general patterns. They'd either glide off northwest up the Sevenmile Creek drainage, or head north over the Scratchgraves.

What a day. Nine Red-tailed Hawks, 1 Rough-legged Hawk, 1 Cooper's Hawk, 2 Northern Harriers, 6 Bald Eagles, and 3 Golden Eagles. Four raptors in the air at once several times.

There's something incredible about scanning the sky for raptors on an active day like this. It's the magic of an Easter egg hunt - except these eggs have hatched. These birds have survived up to now, against the odds. Some of them, like the adult eagles, have made this journey at least eight times before, northbound or southbound. Spending the day in awe of these amazing creatures, alert to spot them, patiently documenting: I couldn't think of a better way to share a day with fellow birders.

To join us on a survey, contact me at shsater@gmail.com.

-- Shane Sater
Membership Report

Please welcome Last Chance Audubon Society new members: Joyce Saunders and Joan Higgins-Smith.

Sincere thanks to Last Chance renewing members: Marilyn Kelly Clark, Susan Jackson, Kathy Lloyd, Kurt Olofson, Brad Robinson, Liz Ganz & Rick Newby, Jill Downing, JoAnne Thun, Sandra & Dennis Zeiler, and Jim & Jean Mehrens.

Please also welcome National Audubon Society new members: Betsy Griffing, Kimberly Dale, Michele McAlister, Raleigh Hartmus, Peggy Holwick, Erik Rodriguez, Alton Beaver, Helen Hoffman, and Lois Bottemley.


LCAS MEMBERSHIP: A new membership or renewal is $15 per household and is current for one year, January 1 through December 31. 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. Please send completed registration form and your $15 check to: LCAS, PO Box 924, Helena, MT 59624.

PRINTED and ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTERS: We want all 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 or to renew with them, please direct an email to 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
Last Chance Audubon Society  
PO Box 924  
Helena, MT 59624  

LCAS BOARD  
PRESIDENT: Janice Miller,  
439-5762, jan2854@gmail.com  
SECRETARY: Brian Shovers, 443-6640, sholace0848@gmail.com  
TREASURER: Sue Jackson, 443-4486, suejacksonmt@gmail.com  
WEBSITE/BOARD: Stephen Turner, 521-0000, turnstonest@gmail.com  
EDUCATION/BOARD: Sumner Sharpe, mtmutmeg@gmail.com  
NEWSLETTER/BOARD: Shane Sater, 208-597-0488, shsater@gmail.com  
MEMBERSHIP/BOARD: Sharon Dewart-Hansen, 422-4546, smdewarthansen@charter.net  
BOARD AT LARGE: Coburn Currier, clocurrier@hotmail.com  
BOARD AT LARGE: Bob Martinka, 449-3313, rmartink@aol.com  
BOARD AT LARGE: Jo Lace, 443-6640  

LCAS COMMITTEE CHAIRS/CONTACTS  
Birdathon: Jo Lace 443-6640, sholace0848@gmail.com  
Birdseed Sale: Sue Jackson & Sandy Shull, 443-4486 or 449-0904  
Christmas Bird Count: Coburn Currier, clocurrier@hotmail.com  
Conservation: Brian Shovers, 443-6640, sholace0848@gmail.com  
Monthly Program: Sandy Shull & Liz Hiltunen, 449-0904 or 227-5492  
Publicity: Liz Hiltunen, 227-5492, lhiltunen@yahoo.com  
Silent Auction: Sandy Shull & Jo Lace, 449-0904 or 443-6640  
Meeting Set-up: Doug Hansen, mthusker@charter.net  
Field Trips: open  
Habitat: open  
MT Audubon State Office: 443-3949

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