A Galapagos and Ecuador Birding Travelogue
Tuesday, December 3, 2019

***Note: Program is the First Tuesday!
Program begins 7:00 p.m.
Cookies and Conversation 6:30 – 7:00

Montana WILD
2668 Broadwater Ave.
FREE - All Are Welcome

Take a break from winter and join wildlife ecologist and photographer John Winnie, Jr. for an hour of exotic birds, wildlife, and wild places. We'll take a virtual, visual natural history tour of Galapagos National Park above and below the water. Then we'll head up into Ecuador's Andean Highlands, a region known worldwide for its outstanding birding and bird photography opportunities. Some of the species we'll encounter in the Galapagos include: Galapagos Tortoise, Iguana, Green Sea Turtle, Finches, Mockingbird, and Hawk; American Flamingo; Sally Lightfoot Crab, Blue-footed Booby, and Galapagos Penguin. In the Andean Highlands we'll see tanagers, trogons, barbets, toucanettes, over two dozen species of hummingbird, and more.

John Winnie, Jr. is an award-winning wildlife and landscape photographer whose work has been widely published – including in Smithsonian, Canadian Geographic, National Wildlife, Discover, Montana Outdoors, Wildlife Conservation, and American Birds. In addition, he authored High Life, Animals of the Alpine World, and was co-photographer for the book The Rockies: Canada's Magnificent Wilderness. His work can be seen at: http://www.johnwinniejr.com.

John is also a conservation ecologist and Associate Teaching Professor in the Ecology Department at Montana State University in Bozeman. His conservation work and research have taken him to diverse places: from the remote Wakhan Corridor in Afghanistan while working for USAID and the Wildlife Conservation Society, to Tajikistan working for Panthera, to the wilds of the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem. Nature photography allows John to merge his two passions, photography and gaining understanding of natural world, and lets him share these passions with us.
A Snapshot of our LCAS Board

Bob and Glenda are making the wheels turn to create the Jane Beasley Memorial Trail at Spring Meadow Lake in partnership with Montana Conservation Corps and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

Sue, our treasurer, and Stephen, our webmaster, have made electronic membership payments and donations a reality on our website.

Sharon and Jo coordinate and communicate with our members about their membership.

Brian, our secretary, records the minutes of our board meetings and writes letters representing LCAS to policy makers on current issues of conservation.

Coburn juggles Christmas Bird Count (CBC) details with section leaders and restaurants, and compiles the annual CBC results.

Sumner informs high school counselors and Carroll College staff about available LCAS scholarships and oversees the selection process.

Shane creates an intriguing LCAS Chat newsletter eight times per year, in addition to coordinating Sevenmile Creek surveys and data collection.

Liz and Sandy – while not officially on the LCAS Board – are indispensable members of our support team. Liz informs the public about our outstanding programs, which she coordinates with Sandy – who, through Birds & Beasleys, supports LCAS in many ways, including through the fall birdseed sale.

Me? I sit as the hub for information, coordinate agendas and announcements for meetings, and post photos and info on the LCAS Facebook page.

When we all come together, we have space and time to share our successes, air our challenges, and receive suggestions and assistance from others on the Board. Quite often there is humor and plenty of laughter. Nobody is “bored” at our board meetings.

During this time of giving thanks, we owe our LCAS Board members many, many “thanks!” for their dedication, time, and effort on behalf of Last Chance Audubon.

See you in 2020!

Janice Miller, President
Last Chance Audubon Society

Erratum

In the November newsletter, the bat photo on the front page was published without a credit to the photographer. The bat was a Long-eared Myotis, and the photographer was Tom Forwood. We regret the error.
January Program:
**Where Do Harlequin Ducks Go in the Winter?**

**Tuesday, January 14, 2020**

**Program begins 7:00 p.m.**

**Cookies and Conversation 6:30 – 7:00**

**Montana WILD**
**2668 Broadwater Ave.**

**FREE – All Are Welcome**

Harlequin Ducks are colorful sea ducks that winter on the coast and breed on fast-moving mountain streams, but little is known about the timing and movement between breeding, molting, and wintering areas. Kristina Smucker will tell us about an international Harlequin Duck research project. In 2016, Montana FWP and Glacier National Park joined this project to study habitat use, migration, and connectivity of Harlequin Ducks using satellite transmitters and geolocators. This talk will answer questions like: What makes a Harlequin Duck so special? How do you catch a duck? Where do “our” Montana harlequins spend the winter?

Kristina Smucker is a wildlife biologist for Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks in Great Falls, where she works to conserve nongame species including birds, bats, reptiles, amphibians, and small mammals. Prior to that, she worked for 10 years at the Avian Science Center at the University of Montana, where she directed bird research and monitoring programs. She obtained her MS in Wildlife Biology from the University of Montana and her BA in Biology from Earlham College in Indiana, where she took ornithology and fell in love with birds during spring migration.

**LCAS Annual Fall Fundraiser: Jane Beasley Memorial Trail**

At the November membership program meeting, Last Chance Audubon kicked off their annual Fall Fundraiser. This is LCAS’s effort to generate funds each year in order to support bird and habitat conservation projects in the Helena area. This year, LCAS has partnered with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Montana State Parks, and Montana Conservation Corps to develop a short trail at Spring Meadow Lake State Park. The trail will be a memorial to the late Jane Beasley: artist, friend, and longtime member of Last Chance Audubon. Jane was an educator and conservationist whose vision matched the mission of LCAS. Her donated American Kestrel artwork is the logo which appears on all LCAS publications and the website.

Please consider supporting this project and help us remember Jane Beasley and continue her legacy. All funds raised during the Fall Fundraiser campaign will be directed to this project. Donations can be made by visiting our website (lastchanceaudubon.org) and clicking on

[Donate Now](lastchanceaudubon.org)

or by mailing a check to Last Chance Audubon, PO Box 924, Helena, MT 59624. Checks can also be dropped off at the next program meeting at Montana WILD on December 3. Thank you in advance for your support.
Thanksgiving weekend is commonly known as the kickoff to the holiday shopping season. Black Friday, Small Business Saturday, and Cyber Monday have become synonymous with markdowns, deals, and discounts for “shopping early, shopping locally, or shopping online.”

In an effort to “Give Back” or just to “do something good,” #Giving Tuesday organizers created a website of charity organizations (typically non-profit) that benefit from end of the year donations of time or money. Last Chance Audubon has joined this movement to encourage donors to support birds and conservation by donating time as a volunteer, or simply by making a year end tax deductible donation. Join us by supporting LCAS on Tuesday, December 3. Contact us at lastchanceaudubonsociety@gmail.com to sign up as a volunteer or support LCAS’s mission by donating to Last Chance Audubon on #GIVINGTUESDAY.

**Helena Christmas Bird Count:**
**December 14, 2019**

The annual Helena Christmas Bird Count is only weeks away! Everyone, from experienced to novice, is invited to participate in the largest and longest-running citizen science project in our region. The Christmas Bird Count is a fun social event and an important way to “keep tabs” on winter bird populations in our area. Interested individuals can still sign up at the December membership meeting, or email Coburn Currier (clcurrier@hotmail.com).

Plan to meet at Jorgenson’s Restaurant at 7:00 am for an early breakfast before heading out for a great day of birding fun! Contact Coburn Currier with any questions.

**Scholarships for High Schoolers**

LCAS is pleased to announce our annual college scholarships for high school seniors. Applications are available on our website, lastchanceaudubon.org, or through a school counselor. **The application deadline is April 15, 2020**, with selection by April 30. Awards will be disbursed in August.

High school seniors with documented college acceptance and an intended study related to the mission statement of LCAS and/or National Audubon are encouraged to apply.

**Board Meeting**

The next meeting of the Last Chance Audubon Board of Directors will be **Thursday evening, January 9**. Location to be announced. LCAS members are welcome to attend – contact any board member for details.
**Audubon Report: Survival by Degrees**

In October, the National Audubon Society released a report predicting how birds will shift their range in response to climate change. Some of our local birds expected to be “Highly Vulnerable” under a 2°C average warming include Trumpeter Swan, Great Gray Owl, Clark’s Nutcracker, Townsend’s Solitaire, White-crowned Sparrow, and Green-tailed Towhee. Find the full report and species-level maps at https://www.audubon.org/climate/survivalbydegrees.

**Bobcat Birders at Helena Middle School**

For several years, LCAS has supported Sara Grotbo, Physical Science teacher at Helena Middle School (HMS), in the formation and oversight of the Bobcat Birders club. This is a brief report of activities for the 2018-2019 year and planned events for 2019-2020. In addition to students, family members have also participated in some of these events.

**2018-2019**
- October: Bird silhouette school-wide ID competition
- November: Birding around HMS
- December: Christmas Bird Count
- MT Wild: raptor course
- April: Birding while walking to and from Carroll College – Dr. Hokit shared bird skins

**2019-2020 Planned Events**

*Note: Sara will be on maternity leave from mid-March to the end of the school year.*
- October: Bird silhouette school wide ID competition
- November: Birding around HMS
- December: Christmas Bird Count

**Birding Supplies (provided by LCAS):**

In addition to the Bobcat Birders, LCAS has offered supplies to elementary schools through the District Science Committee. A check-out system has been prepared and all supplies have been labeled. The field guides each contain an acknowledgement to Last Chance Audubon Society. So far, Pam Murnion at Rossiter Elementary has expressed interest in using them.

-- Sara D. Grotbo
The View from Sevenmile Creek

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.

The sun breaks through a blue patch in the decreasing layer of stratus clouds, lighting up the Scratchgravel Hills and the tan expanse of grasses around us. The temperature is in the high 40s on this mid-November day, but the birds are quiet. I know that November through February is the quiet season out here – but still I find it hard to accept. The meadowlarks that filled this field with song and activity this spring are gone. The Bank Swallow colony is empty holes in a bank above the stream. I find myself wishing for an abundance of winter birds. Why isn’t the field full of Rough-legged Hawks and Northern Harriers? Why aren’t Pine Siskins and American Goldfinches feeding on the alder seeds? Why aren’t there Song Sparrows and American Tree Sparrows everywhere along the stream, Black-capped Chickadees in the bushes?

All of these birds are plausible at this time of year – but two years of winter observation suggest that finding lots of them at once would be quite unlikely. Why? Is it food shortage? Insect abundance has been decreasing for the last month or two, though a few are still active. The 2019 chokecherry crop – which was slim here – is all gone. A few rosehips remain, and the fruits of a Russian-olive or two. For seeds there are the alder cones, and perhaps some grasses and goldenrods. For the raptors and shrikes, there are voles in the grasses.

The few winter birds we do see here seem to move around a lot. A Black-capped Chickadee or two feed in the shrubs one week, are gone the next. Last week Common Redpolls stopped to feed in the alders – none this week. Rough-legged Hawks, Prairie Falcons, harriers, shrikes: all seem to move around considerably.

Mid-morning on this day and quiet still fills the landscape. Then, faintly but distinctly, we hear something singing along the creek. Cheerful phrases, blending in with the rush of the water. Could it be – an American Dipper? Sure enough, there it is, feeding near a small cascade in the new stream channel. Its dips and submerges in typical dipper style, stopping occasionally to sing.

We have wondered about dippers for at least a year now. Why not here? We have speculated that food may be the answer. Much of the stream is muddy pools, not the fast, cobbly runs where dippers often seem to find aquatic insects.
Is stream restoration changing that, or is this dipper – the first we’ve documented here – just an anomaly? There’s no way to know yet, but this is exciting news.

The next afternoon I’m back, scattering seeds of native plants on the disturbed floodplain. Three Mallards lift off from the creek as I plant evening primrose, goldenrod, and milkweed. The landscape is quiet and cloudy as I push golden currant cuttings into the mud, broadcast yarrow and horsemint seeds.

But as I cross the creek to scatter water horehound, stinging nettle, and bur-reed near the ponds, a compact gray bird flies downstream. Rapid, fluttering wingbeats. From a level glide it drops into a nearly vertical plunge. A wiry “dze-dze-dzeet” carries across the floodplain as it lands on the stream – the American Dipper is still here.

-- Shane Sater

**Membership Report**

Please welcome Last Chance Audubon Society new members: Kyle Strode.

Sincere thanks to Last Chance renewing members: William Fairbank, George Blyman, Steve & Judy Bayless, Leonard John, Bob Martinka, Sandy & Gary Barker, Paulette Hutcheon, Ann Lauer, and Helen Fee.

Please also welcome National Audubon Society new members: Paul Ferry and Joyce Krings.


**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 (or $25 check if you wish to get the newsletter in hardcopy) to: LCAS, PO Box 924, Helena, MT 59624. If you are not sure if you are up to date with your membership, please feel free to email the Membership Chair to verify.

**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. Due to increased printing costs, we will be asking for an additional $10 for processing. See above. 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
**LCAS COMMITTEE CHAIRS/CONTACTS**

**Birdseed Sale:** Sue Jackson & Sandy Shull, 443-4486 or 449-0904  
**Christmas Bird Count:** Coburn Currier, clcurrier@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@q.com  
**Meeting Set-up:** Doug Hansen, mthusker@charter.net  
**Field Trips:** open  
**Habitat:** open  
**MT Audubon State Office:** 443-3949

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**LCAS BOARD**

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Clip and mail to:  
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