

Last  
Chance  
Audubon  
Society



# *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***

***Mar. 2024***

## **Black Swift Surveys Update**

**Tuesday, March 12, 2024 – Program begins 7:00PM**

**Montana WILD, 2668 Broadwater Ave.**

**Free – All Are Welcome**



*Black Swift—Photo by Boaz Crees*

The Black Swift is one the most unusual species that calls Montana home every summer. In this presentation Bo Crees will describe the Black Swift nest-searching and discoveries in the state, survey protocols, and some of the most common challenges dealt with while carrying out swift surveys in remote locations, including high waterfalls. The most recent survey season (summer 2023) will be the focus of this talk, including the challenges of each multi-day backpacking trip to known- or potential- Black Swift nesting areas. He will share the 2023 survey outcomes of 25+ swift nesting sites in Western MT. Plans for the upcoming 2024 season in-

clude making some significant changes to the sampling methods that will hopefully result in better understanding of Black Swift distribution and occupancy in Montana.

Boaz (Bo) Crees grew up in Israel, where he gained a deep appreciation of the natural world while traveling and going on frequent hikes with his father. After moving to Michigan with his family in 1995, and then pursuing outdoor adventures in the west, he graduated from the University of Montana in 2010 with a BS in Wildlife Biology. He has been involved in many bird research projects in academia, and with various agencies, NGOs, and consulting. Bo has worked as a wildlife technician in every western US state, British Columbia and Mexico. Moving to Helena in 2016, he has worked with the Montana Natural Heritage Program. He has also been working as an avian specialist for the Montana Natural Heritage Program and Montana Audubon since 2019.



## Ethical Birding

By Bob Martinka, LCAS Board Member

As some of you are aware, periodically a ***“Rare Bird”*** is sighted nearby, or some distance from Helena and attracts attention. Cornell's eBird program has designated several ***“sensitive species”*** in order to prevent birders and photographers from simultaneously flocking to an area to see them. The rationale for this designation is to protect these species from unnecessary stress due to disturbance. Without realizing it, even the most well-intentioned individual can inadvertently cause birds to become stressed. A good local example is driving on the flats east of Helena, spotting a Prairie Falcon or Rough-legged Hawk on a power pole, and stopping close to the pole to take a photo which flushes the bird from its perch causing unneeded wintertime stress.

In addition, eBird and social media posts regarding the location of sensitive species can also lead to illegal trapping or taking of some species. Thus birders should always exercise caution when creating posts, or commenting on social media outlets regarding these birds and their locations. For sensitive species, such as Great Gray Owls and American Goshawks, eBird automatically hides the location information. If you include a sensitive species in an eBird checklist please consider using a generalized geographic location such as a county name.

A link from eBird discussing the nature of ***“Sensitive Species”*** is included below. It defines protocols and practices for observing and reporting these birds. If you are planning to try to locate a known bird that meets the ***“sensitive species”*** definition, refer to the ***eBird Sensitive Species*** protocol, along with the ***ABA Birding Code of Ethics***, before heading out.



Northern Hawk Owl —  
Photo by Janice Miller

Remember - **ALL** birds are susceptible to stress, so birds depend on us to practice good birding behavior in the field. Thanks for giving the birds a break. Let's all practice good birding ethics!

**[The ABA Birding Code of Ethics](#)**: Practice and promote respectful, enjoyable, and thoughtful birding as defined in this code.

1. Respect and promote birds and their environment.
2. Respect and promote the birding community and its individual members.
3. Respect and promote the law and the rights of others. Birding should be fun and help build a better future for birds, for birders, and for all people.

In brief: **[Sensitive Species in eBird](#)** are those for which demonstrable harm could occur from public display of site-level records, including (but not limited to):

- 1) targeted capture for the caged-bird trade;
- 2) targeted hunting;
- 3) targeted disturbance of nests, roosts, or individual birds from birdwatchers/photographers.

## Wings Across the Big Sky Birding Festival Keynote Speaker



Montana Audubon and Last Chance Audubon are pleased to announce the keynote speaker for the 2024 Wings Across the Big Sky Birding Festival: Tiffany Kersten!

About her presentation: *Birdie Big Year: Elevating Women Birders*

Tiffany Kersten didn't set out to do a Big Year, but after a series of unanticipated and serendipitous events, she suddenly found herself amidst one. As a sexual assault survivor, she spent 2021 traveling to all corners of the Lower 48 States, tallying birds and gifting personal safety alarms to women she met along the way. Her goal was to see 700 species, and to raise awareness of women's safety in the outdoors. She ended up surpassing her goal and setting a new record of 726 species. In her presentation, Tiffany will lead us through the fear, empowerment, struggles, and healing that all played vital roles in the personal growth she experienced on this wild adventure.

Learn more about Tiffany and Nature Ninja Birding Tours on her website: <https://tiffanykersten.blogspot.com>.

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## 2024 Montana Audubon Citizen Science Projects

Help contribute valuable observations to science - and have a great time doing it! Montana Audubon is recruiting volunteers to help with four different surveys this year, including a new project surveying for Screech-owls.

2024 Montana Audubon Citizen Science Projects:

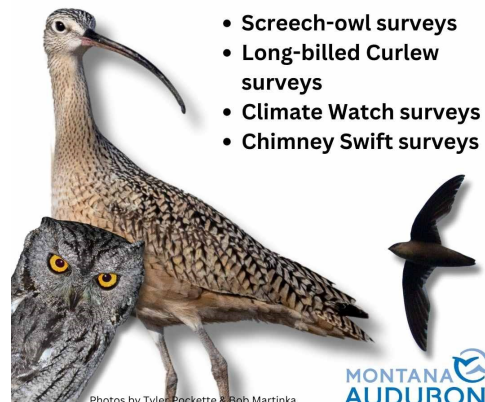
- Western and Eastern Screech-owl surveys | March - April
- Long-billed Curlew surveys | April – May
- Climate Watch surveys | May 15-June 15
- Chimney Swift surveys | June - July

Screech-owl survey training is on Feb. 27, 6:30 pm via Zoom. Curlew training is scheduled for March 26, 6:30 pm, via Zoom. To sign up, or for more information about any of the projects, email Gwynne at [gwynne@mtaudubon.org](mailto:gwynne@mtaudubon.org).

Learn more about each of these projects on our Citizen Science website: <http://www.montanabirdsurveys.com/>

### 2024 Citizen Science projects

- Screech-owl surveys
- Long-billed Curlew surveys
- Climate Watch surveys
- Chimney Swift surveys



Photos by Tyler Pockette & Bob Martinka

## Birding Kits Now Available at L&C Library

By Barbara Pepper-Rotness



Have you seen the birding kits (two for each county library branch) that the Last Chance Audubon Society donated to the Lewis and Clark Library yet? They look pretty snazzy in their containers and they have everything you need to get started on your birding journey, with one pair of binoculars and two bird identification guides. Also, be sure to install the Merlin app on your phone before you start your adventure - it allows you to record bird sounds and/or upload your bird photos to better identify what you're hearing and seeing.

Happy birding!

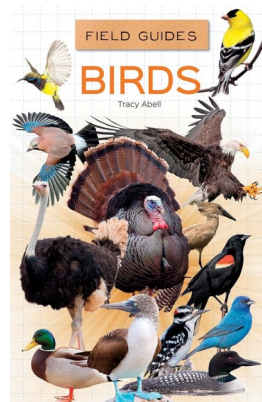


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## New Resources for Students

By Barbara Pepper-Rotness

The Last Chance Audubon Society has been working with local elementary school libraries in supplying birding resources for their students. We recently purchased an owl pellet kit with dissecting tools for Warren School, and two birding books - Birds by Tracy Abell and National Geographic Kids Bird Guide of North America - to Kessler School. If these are resources (they look excellent!) you'd like for your school library, let us know!



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## Thank You Fencecrafters!

By Berta Nason



A Big Thank You to Fencecrafters for their generous donation of cedar boards that will be used to build new nesting boxes. Another Thank You to Joyce Bateman and Greg Rice for storing the boards and reaching out to LCAS. This spring the boards will be used to build new boxes to replace the old, worn out ones at the Regulating Reservoir. Future nesting box projects will include Kmart Ponds, Nature Park, and other areas around Helena. Thanks again Fencecrafters and Joyce and Greg!

## 2024 Reservations for the “Grouse House” at Benton Lake NWR

Benton Lake NWR has announced its dates for the 2024 Sharp-tailed Grouse lek viewing from the “Grouse House” blind. The Refuge Manager says to send to [BentonLake@fws.gov](mailto:BentonLake@fws.gov) your top three dates (Thursday through Sunday) from March 29 - May 15. The drawing will be held on Monday, March 25 and only successful applicants will be notified by email.

For more information, contact:

Benton Lake NWR  
922 Bootlegger Trail  
Great Falls, MT 59404  
406-727-7400  
[BentonLake@fws.gov](mailto:BentonLake@fws.gov)



*Sharp-tailed Grouse —  
Photo by Bob Martkina*

Additional info:

<https://www.fws.gov/refuge/benton-lake>

<https://www.fws.gov/refuge/benton-lake/species> (some what out of date)

In the past, this [webcam](#) has functioned in April and May.

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## Helena Area Hotspot Highlight! - Canyon Ferry WMA

The 5,000-acre, state-owned area at the south end of Canyon Ferry Lake has a rich diversity of habitats. Dikes have created four 400 to 500-acre ponds which have some 350 small artificial islands for nesting Canada Goose, several species of duck, Double-crested Cormorant, American White Pelican, California and Ring-billed Gull, Caspian Tern, and several grebe species. The river bottom and upland plant communities provide habitat for raptors and songbirds. Nesting species include Osprey, Bullock’s Oriole, Least Flycatcher, Clay-colored and Lark Sparrow, and Western Kingbird. To reach the wildlife management area, take W.S. Hwy 12 toward Townsend. West shore access, including Pond #4, is reached from several gravel roads off U.S. Hwy 12 beginning 4 miles north of Townsend. Access to the east shore is reached by going through Townsend on U.S. Hwy 12 and turning north on Hwy 284. Ponds #1, #2, and #3 are reached by road going west from Hwy 284: Lower Dry Gulch Road goes to Pond #1 (the farthest north); and Lower Ray Creek



*American White Pelican —Photo by  
Bob Martkina*

Road goes to portions of Ponds #2 and #3. Going west on Delger Road and north on Canton Lane leads to a parking area and trail going to the south end of Pond #3.

## Membership Report

Please welcome **Last Chance Audubon Society new members:** Neal & Mary Ruedisili and Anna Schmidt.

Sincere thanks to **Last Chance renewing members:** Lea Frye, Kathryn Bramer, Patricia Bik, Berna Nason, David Slaughter, Eric & Ellen Feaver, Birds & Beasleys, Sandy Shull, Marilyn Hayes, Debbie Cargile, Deborah Massett, David Gans, Maryalice Chester, Thomas & Marilyn Pearson, and Joyce Bateman.

Please also welcome **National Audubon Society new members:** Mary Craigle, Clark Spranget, and Michelle Money.

Sincere thanks to **National Audubon Society renewing members:** Bonnie Bowler, Robert Caldwell, Susan Capdeville, Janet Ellis, Jennifer Frazer, B. Hall-Munger, Richard Juhnke, John Lambing, Marjorie Levine, Jacob Martin, Charles McCarthy, Michael Opar, Becky Piske, Thomas Ryan, Pete Strazdas, Lucas Thomi, Lisa Upson, Lucy Zarr, Dennis Zeiler, and Catherine Wright.

**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>. You can join and/or renew by using our website's online **MEMBERSHIP** button. Please be sure we receive all your correct contact information. If you do not want to pay online, you can join or renew by filling out a registration form located at [www.lastchanceaudubon.org](http://www.lastchanceaudubon.org) or at membership meetings. Please send a completed registration form and your \$15 check 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.

**ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTERS:** Due to increasing costs, we no longer send hardcopies. The 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 [www.customerservice@audubon.org](mailto:www.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](mailto:smdewarthansen@charter.net)

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## JOIN THE LCAS BOARD

The annual election is scheduled for our May meeting with positions open for President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and three Board members. All positions are for two-year terms. If you have questions about the role and duties of Board members, or if you have ideas about someone who could help lead the chapter, please contact Sue Jackson at ([suejacksonmt@gmail.com](mailto:suejacksonmt@gmail.com)). And don't be shy - it's fine to nominate yourself.

Nominations remain open until the May membership meeting. All LCAS members are eligible to vote at that time.

Last Chance Audubon Society  
PO Box 924  
Helena, MT 59624

First-Class  
Postage  
Required  
Helena MT 59601

***Support LCAS through a donation or  
membership today!***

**Membership**

**Donate Now**

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

Website: <https://www.lastchanceaudubon.org/>

#### **LCAS BOARD**

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

**SECRETARY:** Brian Shovers, 443-6640,  
[sholace0848@gmail.com](mailto:sholace0848@gmail.com)

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

**WEBSITE/BOARD:** Don Skaar, [tedradon@gmail.com](mailto:tedradon@gmail.com)

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

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

**MEMBERSHIP/BOARD:** Sharon Dewart-Hansen,  
422-4546, [smdewarthansen@charter.net](mailto:smdewarthansen@charter.net)

**BOARD AT LARGE:** Nan Breuninger, 442-2526

**BOARD AT LARGE:** Barbara Pepper-Rotness, 431-3809,  
[bpepperrotness@yahoo.com](mailto:bpepperrotness@yahoo.com)

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

**BOARD AT LARGE:** Glenda Bradshaw, [bradshaw@mt.net](mailto:bradshaw@mt.net)

**BOARD AT LARGE:** Stephen Turner, 521-0000,  
[turnstonest@gmail.com](mailto:turnstonest@gmail.com)

#### **LCAS COMMITTEE CHAIRS/ CONTACTS**

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

**Christmas Bird Count:** Coburn  
Currier, [clcurrier@hotmail.com](mailto:clcurrier@hotmail.com)

**Conservation:** Brian Shovers, 443-  
6640, [sholace0848@gmail.com](mailto:sholace0848@gmail.com)

**Education:** Sumner Sharpe,  
[mtnutmeg@gmail.com](mailto:mtnutmeg@gmail.com)

**Field Trips:** open

**Habitat:** open

**Meeting Set-up:** Doug Hansen,  
[mthusker@charter.net](mailto:mthusker@charter.net)

**Monthly Program:** Sandy Shull,  
449-0904

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

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