

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

Apr. 2024

Backroad Discoveries and Photography

Tues. April 9, 2024 – Program Begins 7:00PM

Montana WILD, 2668 Broadwater Ave.

Free – All Are Welcome

An avid bird and wildlife photographer, Ted Reichert has been working to improve his skills for the challenges of bird photography. As anyone who practices bird photography knows, he says this is probably one of the hardest photography genres to perfect. Finding most birds skittish and fast moving, he set out to find a location close to Helena that he could frequent and perfect his skills. He discovered Chevallier Drive, Duffy Lane and Little Prickly Pear Creek. Ted will describe his surprise at the amazing diversity of birds in the area and how he started to find several life birds as well as other wildlife. Using his exceptional photographs, many with images from the last two years, he will share his discoveries of many common and not so common birds and wildlife.



Black-headed Grosbeak —Photo by Ted Reichert

Ted Reichert has enjoyed wildlife photography most of his life, with birding photography becoming his dominant pastime for the last 10 years. He attended the Helena School of Aeronautics and joined the Montana National Guard in 1968, where he worked full time and retired after 40 years. He worked as a helicopter mechanic for 20 years and the last 20 years as a full-time computer programmer and systems analyst. Ted and his wife have been extensive hikers and outdoor enthusiasts most of their lives, hiking Mt. Helena and trails around the state. His outstanding wildlife photography is also posted on Facebook.



A Busy, Busy Chapter

April 1, 2024

By Janice Miller

We are an active Audubon Chapter:

We have put together **Birding Kits**, available for check-out at all five branches of the Lewis & Clark County Library, complete with binoculars, bird books, a brochure on Birding in the Helena Area, and a bird list;

We are working with FWP and MT WILD to install a pole for returning Osprey to nest and for us to install the Bill Rainey Memorial **Osprey-cam**;

We are offering up-to two **\$1000 High School Scholarships** to graduating seniors whose interests in higher education mesh with our LCAS Mission statement;

All of these projects have a cost. **Where do we get the funds?** Membership covers some of it, but certainly not all. If you'd like to help LCAS provide funding for worthy projects, consider participating in our **2024 BIRDATHON**. It's easy and fun!

- Find a Friend, or two or three, and decide on a *COOL* team name.
- Pick a Date to spend time birding together.
- Determine HOW you want to do it – ***tailor-make your very own Birdathon*** – some ideas:
 - Start at 6:00 a.m. and go ALL DAY – driving and walking in various habitats.
 - Start at 9:00 a.m. and walk around Spring Meadow Lake or the Regulating Reservoir, and call that your Count.
 - Create your own experience of finding multiple bird species to count.
- Ask friends to **Sponsor** you – either per bird species found, OR, a flat-rate donation of any amount. *If they know YOU, they will support YOU in this effort.* Circulate the information amongst your friends and family, near and far, via social media or in person.
- OPTIONAL -- Write an **Ask Letter**, telling what you're doing, when, and where the money will go.
 - Every year we split the funds raised with MT Audubon, 50/50.
- OPTIONAL -- When the day is over, write a **Report Letter** listing the birds sighted and the story that went with them, and distribute to your Sponsors.
- Collect the funds in person, or refer them to the LCAS Website "[DONATE NOW](#)" button.
- Our Birdathon Chair is Jo Lace, who can be reached at 406-443.6640 to sign-up and/or answer your questions.

ALL of us at LCAS will be most appreciative of your help in making our projects happen!



Sevenmile Update — LCAS Approves Habitat Grant for PPLT

Last Chance Audubon Society (LCAS) is pleased to announce a \$1000 grant to Prickly Pear Land Trust (PPLT) for ongoing restoration work at Sevenmile Creek. The award will help provide for the purchase of native seedlings that will assist with restoration of the riparian zone along Sevenmile. Additionally, funds from the grant will ensure that seedlings have appropriate care in early development through a maintenance evaluation plan developed by PPLT. Planting will occur in late April 2024 and the project will be overseen by a Big Sky Watershed Corps member.

The LCAS grant funds will be added to matching funds from PPLT, which will be used to support a larger grant from the Department of Defense (climate resiliency military funds) and will bolster the purchasing power for additional shrubs and trees. Plants will be purchased through Great Bear Native Plant Center (Hamilton, MT) and The Center for Native Plants (Whitefish, MT).

The timeline announced for the project is as follows:

Spring 2024

- Early April – Ground prep including auger rental, hole preparation and color-coded flagging
- Late April – Plants arrive and volunteer plant day scheduled

Summer 2024

- Monitor and manually water as needed

Fall 2024 forward

- Ongoing plant assessment
- Continue monitoring and manually watering as needed

PPLT will be announcing a workday in April and LCAS members will be notified via email as soon as the date is scheduled. Please plan to turn out and celebrate a day in the field as we support conservation in the Helena Valley!

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). 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.

Wings Across the Big Sky Registration Open!

It's finally here - Registration for the 2024 Wings Across the Big Sky Birding Festival is NOW OPEN! Visit the Montana Audubon website to learn more and to register online. Along with Last Chance Audubon, we've put together a fantastic lineup of trips, speakers, and more - you won't want to miss it!

If you're on our mailing list, check your mail for the registration brochure, or visit our website to [view & download the brochure](#). Register online - and early! - for the best field trip availability. You can also register via mail. If you have any questions or issues, please email the Montana Audubon office (info@mtaudubon.org), or call us at 406-443-3949. See you in Helena this summer!



Long-billed Curlew Surveys



Spring is fast approaching, and with that comes the familiar "cur-leeeee" call of the Long-Billed Curlew, an icon of America's prairies. These birds depend on Montana's grasslands for breeding, and continue to decline across their range due to loss of this habitat due to development. With this decline, more research is needed to assess the health and conservation needs of the population - so we need your help!

Join Montana Audubon's Long-billed Curlew surveys this summer! There are two survey windows: April 8th - May 7th, and May 8th - May 31st. The training session is on March 26th at 6:30 pm on Zoom, and the recording will be

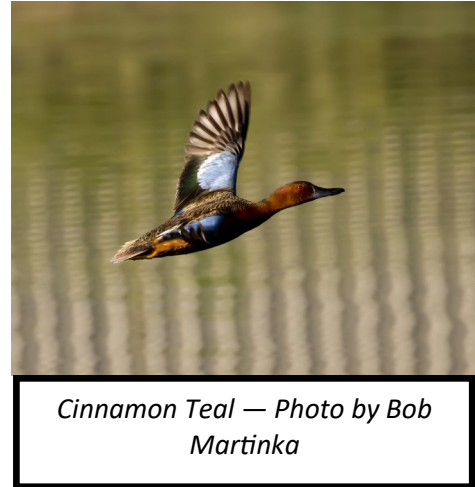
available online afterwards.

Interested in participating, or want more info? Email Gwynne at gwynne@mtaudubon.org and visit the [Long-Billed Curlew Survey page](#) on our website.

LCAS 2024 Field Trips Are Here - Join Us!

May 13: K-MART WETLANDS

Join Kyle Strode for a morning of birding at the K-Mart Wetlands – an urban ecotone site that includes a marsh, ponds, woody thickets, and small patches of open grassland. An impressive 188 species have been observed here over the years, including many waterfowl, sparrows, and warblers. Meet at 7:30 am at the intersection of Cole Ave and N Harris St. Most of this area has dry ground; footing is uneven in some spots. This meandering walk will last roughly two hours. Contact Kyle Strode to sign up - strode@carroll.edu.



Cinnamon Teal — Photo by Bob Martinka

May 18: NATURE JOURNALING FOR BIRDERS

Keeping an observational journal is a great way to add to and improve your birding skills. Nature journaling combines words, pictures, and numbers to help focus our observations, and can enrich the time we spend in the outdoors. There are many ways to journal, and artistic talent is definitely not a prerequisite! The most important skill is simple curiosity, which birders have in abundance. This field trip will provide some ideas and resources to help you start your own journaling practice. Cindy Greiman will share information, resources, and tips on some different ways to approach journaling, and then we'll find a good spot to sit and make some observations. Bring something to sketch on, a pencil, an eraser, binoculars, and water. If you'd like, you can also bring colored pencils or ink pens, and a blanket or camp chair to sit on. Meet at the fishing access at the west end of the Helena Regulating Reservoir at 7:30 am. This trip will last until around 11:00 am. Contact Cindy Greiman by May 16 to sign up - cgreiman3@gmail.com or call 406-422-7033.

May 25: CANYON FERRY WMA

Leaders: Bob Martinka and Stephen Turner. Meet at Albertson's Parking lot on Prospect Ave at 6:30 am for carpooling. We should arrive back in Helena shortly after noon, so bring lunch and drinks if you wish. Species we will likely see include a good variety of waterfowl, gulls, pelicans, warblers, and other small birds. We may make several other stops to view grassland birds and riparian-associated species. Possible species list of 65+. Contact Bob by email or phone: rmartink@aol.com or 406-449-3313.

May 31-June 2: WINGS ACROSS THE BIG SKY

The premier birding event in Montana will be held in Helena this year at Carroll College. Visit the [Montana Audubon website](#) for more information and to register.

JUNE 16: ELLIOTT'S EDEN

Elliott's Eden, formerly known as Stansfield Lane, is adjacent to Upper Prickly Pear Creek, and as such has cottonwood trees with warblers and flycatchers, and a pond full of waterbirds. In the trees we'll look for Lazuli Buntings, Bullock's Orioles, and Western Wood-Pewees. On the pond we hope to find Wood Ducks, Sora, Spotted Sandpiper, Northern Waterthrush, and Great Blue Heron. Overhead and nearby, we'll keep our eyes open for Bald Eagles and Sandhill Cranes. Thanks to Kim and Pete Elliott for allowing us to visit their bird-rich 'Eden'. Meet Janice Miller and Dan Ellison at the northeast corner of the Costco Parking lot at 6:30 a.m. and expect to return by noon. We will walk a distance of just under a mile. Bring binoculars, light rain parka, insect repellent, and footwear for swampy ground. To reserve a place, email Janice at jan2854@gmail.com. Trip limit: 10 participants.



Lazuli Bunting — Photo by Janice Miller

June 22: AQUATIC INSECTS

Join *Seth and Mattie's Big River Adventure* author and ecologist, Sara Owen for an afternoon trip to Ten Mile Creek Park to learn about aquatic insects and the hidden world in the stream bed. Participants have the option to get their feet wet or participate from the bank. Participants will also have a chance to look for emerging insects and predatory spiders. Wear shoes or boots for getting wet (or not). Sara will have bug guides, a few hand lenses for magnifying bugs, and a few shallow containers for viewing bugs up close. Meet at 3:30pm at the shady picnic table near the kiosk at the bridge between Ten Mile Park and Spring Meadow Lake. Email Sara at sara.owen@swbell.net to register.



*Broad-tailed Hummingbird —
Photo by Sharon Dewart-
Hansen*

June 30: BIRDING AT VISTA DA SERRA/Vigilante Campground

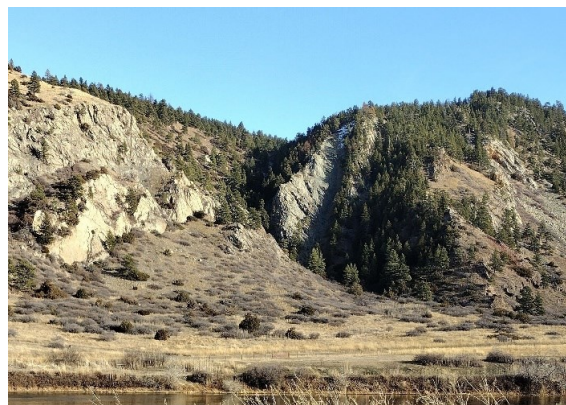
Welcome to the Ranch on Trout Creek! Belted Kingfishers, Great Blue Herons, and Osprey regularly fish the creek. Watch for Golden and Bald Eagles soaring overhead. The songbird residents include Mountain Bluebirds, Lazuli Buntings, and Common Yellowthroats. A pair of Sandhill Cranes inhabit the wetlands. Let's not forget the Hummingbirds, Broad-tailed, Black-chinned, and Calliope. Nearby at Vigilante Campground we'll find Ovenbirds, Western Flycatchers, warblers, thrushes and swifts. Thanks to Tia and Derek Nelson for inviting us to their ranch. Meet Sharon Dewart-Hansen and Janice Miller in the northeastern corner of the Costco parking lot at 6:30 am. We'll return by 12:00 pm. Contact Janice to RSVP: jan2854@gmail.com.

July 13: LITTLE PRICKLY PEAR CREEK

Coburn Currier will lead a trip to one of our favorite areas. Birding will be primarily through the Little Prickly Pear Canyon from the Chevallier Ranch to the Sieben Ranch at the I-15 interchange. Riparian habitat along with dry, rocky hillsides should produce species such as Lark Sparrows, Green-tailed Towhee, House Wren, and maybe Yellow-breasted Chat. To register contact Coburn at clcurrier@hotmail.com. Meet at the west end of the Lundy Center at 7 am and expect to return by 12 or 1 pm.

August 3: HOLTER DAM GEOLOGY AND BIRDS

Join Don Skaar and Ray Breuninger for a combined trip looking at the fascinating big picture geology between Wolf Creek and Holter Dam. We'll drive from the Helena Valley to Holter Dam. We'll see typical basin and range topography, and the Rocky Mountain fold and overthrust belt. We'll collect fossil clams in Wolf Creek. We will look at birds along the way too, which should include grassland birds above the Missouri River, waterbirds on the river, and birds along the canyon walls (hopefully swifts and wrens). Contact Don Skaar to register: skaar.fcs@gmail.com. Meet at the east side of the Albertson's (11th Ave) parking lot at 7 am. Return by 1-2pm.



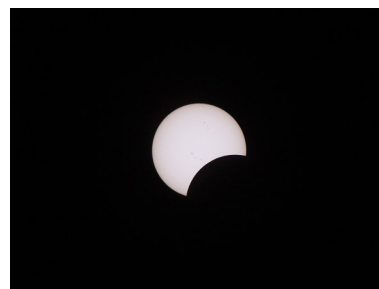
Missouri River — Photo by Nan Breuninger

September 8: WORLD SHOREBIRD DAY

Stephen Turner will lead a trip to Canyon Ferry WMA to survey for migrating shorebirds. Several shorebird ID experts will be on hand. Meet at the northeast end of the Costco parking lot at 7:00 am (please arrive a few minutes early). Return no later than 1:00 pm. This trip has limited space. Expect a 1.5-mile round-trip walk on dirt roads. Contact Stephen to register: turnstonest@gmail.com.

Total Solar Eclipse is Coming!

On April 8th, a total solar eclipse will travel across much of the United States, although Montana will only see a 30-50% effect. Scientists will be in the field watching, recording, and learning about the eclipse as it works its way from Texas to Maine. However, Ornithologists will also be busy as they observe how the eclipse will affect birds and their behavior. Although there is anecdotal evidence from previous eclipses, they occur very infrequently and the opportunity to study their affect on birds is rare. Here is an interesting article from the National Audubon Society discussing what we know about an eclipses' affect on bird behavior and what scientists hope to learn from the upcoming eclipse—[A Total Solar Eclipse Is Coming. How Will Birds and Other Wildlife React?](#)



Membership Report

Please welcome **Last Chance Audubon Society new members:** Pamela Mavrolas, Jennifer Glowienka, Bradley Jones, and Nancy Mayer.

Sincere thanks to **Last Chance renewing members:** Sharon Dewart-Hansen, Nathan Phillips, Susan Epstein, Cathy Maunu, John Sarti, Murray Strong, and Mary Jane Bradbury.

Please also welcome **National Audubon Society new members:** Jane Hauck, Miley Solich, and Wendy Thomi.

Sincere thanks to **National Audubon Society renewing members:** Roger Bacon, Joyce Bate-man, Beverly Fox, Michael Gottlieb, Ann Kendall, William Meade, Linda Michael, Dave Mott, Montana Outdoors, Patricia Peterson, Nathan Phillips, Charles Stalnaker, Victoria Wolfe, Heidi Youmans, Liese Zebrun-Gero, Patricia Ayers, Kristin Bakula, Ann Bauchman, Mary Kelley, Cary Lund, and Tim Speyer.

LCAS MEMBERSHIP: A new membership or renewal is \$15 per household and is current for one year, January 1st through December 31st. 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 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 will no longer send hardcopies. 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 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

Helena Area Hotspot Highlight! - Grizzly and Orofino Gulches

These gulches are characterized by brushy creek bottoms with some cottonwoods and tall shrubs flanked by slopes covered with Douglas-fir, ponderosa pine, and dry grassland. Look for Spotted and Green-tailed Towhee, Rock Wren, Warbling Vireo, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Dark-eyed Junco, Yellow-rumped and Orange-crowned Warbler, Dusky Flycatcher, and Calliope and Rufous Hummingbird.



Green-tailed Towhee — Photo by Bob Martinka

Last Chance Audubon Society
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Support LCAS through a donation or membership today!

Membership

Donate Now

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

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

LCAS BOARD

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SECRETARY: Brian Shovers, 443-6640,
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TREASURER: Sue Jackson, 443-4486,
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WEBSITE/BOARD: Don Skaar, tedradon@gmail.com

EDUCATION/BOARD: Sumner Sharpe, mtnutmeg@gmail.com

NEWSLETTER/BOARD: Coburn Currier, clcurrier@hotmail.com

MEMBERSHIP/BOARD: Sharon Dewart-Hansen,
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BOARD AT LARGE: Stephen Turner, 521-0000,
turnstonest@gmail.com

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Sandy Shull, 443-4486 or 449-0904

Christmas Bird Count: Coburn
Currier, clcurrier@hotmail.com

Conservation: Brian Shovers, 443-
6640, sholace0848@gmail.com

Education: Sumner Sharpe,
mtnutmeg@gmail.com

Field Trips: open

Habitat: open

Meeting Set-up: Doug Hansen,
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Monthly Program: Sandy Shull,
449-0904

Publicity: Liz Hiltunen, 227-5492,
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