

Last
Chance
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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.

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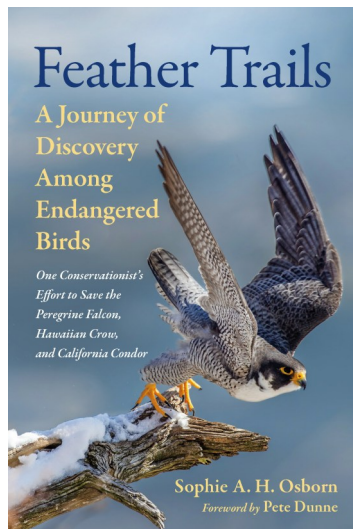
Feather Trails: A Journey of Discovery Among Endangered Birds

A Talk with Sophie A. H. Osborn

Tuesday, October 14, 2025 – Program begins 7:00PM

Montana Wild, 2668 Broadwater Ave.

Free – All Are Welcome



Join us for this month's program featuring award-winning writer and wildlife biologist Sophie A. H. Osborn as she shares powerful personal stories from the front lines of conservation. She will discuss what led to the endangerment of three captivating species—the Peregrine Falcon, Hawaiian Crow, and California Condor—and recount the heroic efforts to bring them back from the brink.

Drawing from her acclaimed book *Feather Trails: A Journey of Discovery Among Endangered Birds*, Sophie will immerse us in the triumphs and tribulations of a wildlife biologist, revealing that the threats which imperiled these birds threaten us, too. She will read excerpts that vividly describe what it is like to work closely with these magnificent birds, offering a rare glimpse into their world and the dedicated work to save them.

Sophie's deep experience includes serving as field manager for the California Condor Recovery Program. Her first book, *"Condors in Canyon Country,"* won the 2007 National Outdoor Book Award, and *"Feather Trails"* was recently chosen as the American Birding Association's favorite bird book of 2024. Sophie has written articles for *BirdWatching*, *Wyoming Wildlife*, and *Sojourns* magazines.

This is a captivating opportunity for anyone interested in birds, conservation, and the powerful stories of survival in our natural world. We hope to see you there for an inspiring evening.





Fall Migration!

October 1, 2025

We are partway through fall migration. It's an exciting time in the natural world and as a birder, many opportunities are available.

On my morning walks I see and hear flocks of birds that were only showing themselves as singles or pairs. Big flocks of robins, grackle, waxwings and others are taking advantage of the bounty of berries, crabapples, and other fruits timed perfectly to be ripe during migration time. I'm seeing

bigger groups of deer and more antlers. A friend heard an early morning elk bugle. Yesterday I heard sandhill cranes in flight. Wonderful! What a great time of year!



White-faced Ibis and Canada Geese. Photo by Sharon Dewart Hansen

My neighbors have a smorgasbord in their yard, especially designed for birds. There are perches, holes in trees, hiding places at many levels, water spots for drinking and bathing, feeders and fruit trees. This yard attracts birds year round but is especially active during migration. We watched a whole plague of grackles feeding in the fruit trees, drinking water and resting. The males' hoods were a beautiful iridescent blue in certain light. These neighbors go out of their way to create the perfect refueling station for birds in migration.

Here are some things we can do:

To help traveling birds, let's remember to turn off outside lights at night. Maybe you'd like to do a neighborhood campaign to lower lights. [Read suggestions from National Audubon](#)

Put out water stations in locations that are safe from predators (best if the water is close to an escape route like a bush that a bird can dash into quickly.) Put out high protein snacks (suet) and be sure to keep feeding and water stations fresh.

And start preparing for spring migration. The benefits to the birds and the rewards to you will be abundant!

Leslie Smith, LCAS Board President
406-431-4995 or leslie_smi@yahoo.com

Montana Audubon News!

Wrapping up Black Swift surveys



Morrell Falls, located in Lolo National Forest near Seeley Lake, was our last official Black Swift survey of the season, which ended in August. Although the lower falls (pictured here) were unoccupied, the Montana Audubon science team observed 13 Black Swifts using different waterfalls above Morrell Falls, so we're hoping to formally survey those upper falls in the future.

This season, the team surveyed a total of 35 waterfalls 84 times. Of those, Black Swifts were detected at 17 waterfalls!

Stay tuned for updates from the season in our Fall Newsletter, which should arrive in mailboxes by the end of October. If you'd like to receive a print copy in the mail, become a Montana Audubon member: [visit our website](#) or contact the Montana Audubon office for more information!

Birds as bioindicators on rangelands

Last fall, Montana Audubon's Director of Conservation Christian Meny gave a presentation for Buzz on the Range, a project testing innovative grazing practices to support both cattle production and pollinator habitat on working Montana ranches.

In this video, he discusses the Audubon Conservation Ranching Program. This national initiative, facilitated by Montana Audubon in the state, aims to halt alarming declines in grassland bird populations, which have suffered over a 50% decline since the 1970s. The program works with private land ranchers to promote regenerative grazing practices that benefit both bird habitats and land stewardship. Christian highlights the benefits of certification, including marketing advantages, bird monitoring, and grant opportunities. He also details the positive impacts observed through the program, such as increased bird diversity, abundance, and overall ecosystem resilience.

Visit the [Buzz on the Range website](#) to read a summary, and watch the full video on YouTube.



LCAS Board Meeting Highlights

- LCAS will invite organizations affiliated with the Helena Community Foundation whose purposes align with our objectives to apply for LCAS mini grants to support student education concerning birds and their habitat. These new partnerships are meant to broaden LCAS' educational reach in the Helena community.
- The Board will be evaluating two new potential projects for the LCAS fall fundraiser: reconstruction of a historic trail on Archie Bray Foundation property and partnering with MTDFWP on installation of new towers for monitoring specially tagged birds migrating through the Helena Valley.
- LCAS will be purchasing and installing a camera at the new Osprey nesting platform east of Spring Meadow Lake, using funds initially raised in 2023 and carried forward while waiting to see if Ospreys would successfully nest at the new site. This has happened!
- LCAS will be partnering with Prickly Pear Land Trust on placement of nesting boxes for kestrels and bluebirds on their and affiliated landowner properties as well as on the Bray Foundation's property. LCAS volunteers are always welcome to assist with box placement and maintenance.
- The Board's next meeting is October 7, 2025.



Birds & Beasleys Saturday Bird Walk

Thank you! Another season of Saturday bird walks has wrapped up. Birds & Beasleys would like to thank the leaders of their summer Saturday bird walks; Stephen Turner, Rich Wirak, Dan Ellison, Jane Fournier, Cathy Maunu, and Joyce Bateman and the birdwatchers who joined them. Happy Birding!



Here's a great article about Aeroecology, the study of airborne organisms and their utilization of the lower atmosphere. Why do we care? Because this is the zone where birds (and bats and insects) spend much of their time. Read and learn!

[The New Science of Aeroecology Reveals So Much About the Amazing Creatures That Populate the Skies and How Humans Can Ensure Their Survival](#)

Birding Book Reviews

***FEATHER TRAILS* by Sophie Osborn**

Imagine you are sitting in an uncomfortable folding chair, perched in the Wyoming mountains, binoculars at hand and notebook ready. It's 6 am and you've already had the challenging walk to this location where you will spend a good part of the day watching the activity of 5 young Peregrine Falcons to see if they are brave enough to venture out of their hack box. Will this be a low activity day (boring!) or an exciting day with almost too much happening to write it all down?

Next, picture yourself trying to follow Hawaiian Crows (-Alala) as they take their first flying forays out across the side of Mauna Loa. As their confidence and skills increase, they are traveling as, well, as the crow flies! In other words, with no relationship to roads or trails. You are scrambling through damp, warm, sometimes socked-in cloud banks, in an effort to keep track of them. Luckily they have transmitters and you have a receiver, but they are moving a lot faster than you are. It's tough to keep them in range.

And how about trying to track California Condors in the Vermillion Cliffs, AZ? There is no real ability to track by foot or by road so sometimes you use offroad vehicles and sometimes you get help in a plane. Or one of those combined with a strenuous hike? These birds may fly many miles in their explorations. Combine that with the Condor's natural curiosity about people; people who are there specifically to see them. Your job is to haze them away from the people. They have to learn that interacting with humans is not in their best interest. Some condors learn quickly and some...well, not so much!

This is the life of wildlife biologist Sophie Osborn as described in her book, ***Feather Trails***. The dedication that she and other team members must give to each and every individual endangered bird, in difficult conditions and through heartbreaking setbacks, makes for gripping reading.

I strongly recommend this book!

Sophie is our speaker for the Oct 14 program. Her book is available at **Birds & Beasley's** and it can be ordered at **Montana Book Company**. Sophie will have books for sale at her presentation. This book is also available at **Lewis & Clark Library**.



Sophie Osborn weighing a California Condor. Photo by Sophie Osborn

Membership Report

Please welcome **Last Chance Audubon Society new members:** Linda Galloway, Anne Langdji, Randy Stephens, and Ann Gilkey.

Please also welcome **National Audubon Society new members:** Jan Bloxsom, Even Estrada, Bethalee Schoyen, Janice Smith, Thomas Strizich, and Pam Tudor.

Sincere thanks to **National Audubon Society renewing members:** Sharon Bell, James Fradette, Bradley Heil, Richard Juhnke, and Walter Ludlow.

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.

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

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

We're looking for people who can adopt a Bluebird Trail and do upkeep on the boxes. Instructions included.

No previous experience needed. Must be able to walk over rough ground and work with some basic tools.

Contact Leslie at 406-431-4995 or leslie_smi@yahoo.com



*Mountain Bluebirds (male and female.
Photos by Bob Martinka*



Last Chance Audubon Society
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