

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.*

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*Helena, MT*

*November 2025*

## **Mongolia Through the Lens: A Journey with Bob Martinka**

**Tuesday, November 11, 2025 – Program begins 7:00PM**

**Montana Wild, 2668 Broadwater Ave.**

**Free – All Are Welcome**



*Genghis Khan Equestrian Statue, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Photo by Bob Martinka*

Join us for an evening of stunning photography and captivating stories from Bob Martinka, a retired biologist (Ph.D., Montana State University) whose lifelong fascination with the natural world has taken him to many locations both far-flung and local, most recently to the sweeping steppes of Mongolia. A dedicated observer of birds, dragonflies, and wildflowers, Bob has found in digital photography a way to share the beauty and wonder of nature with others.

In this presentation, Bob will take us on a visual journey through Mongolia—its birds, landscapes, and people. Once known for its harsh climate and remote isolation, Mongolia has recently undergone a remarkable transformation. Today, it attracts birders, fly fishers, and adventurous travelers from around the world, drawn to its vast open spaces and unique culture.

Bob's trip to Mongolia took a few unexpected turns—by choice. Committed to posting to eBird every day, he chose a meandering route ensuring he wouldn't miss an entry along the way! Joined by his daughter, Melissa Ackerman, they explored the country's lakes, deserts, grasslands, and mountain valleys, documenting the journey through their combined photography.

Come experience the wild heart of Mongolia through Bob's lens - a celebration of nature, travel, and the enduring connection between people and place.





## Motus Stations for the Valley!

November 1, 2025

We announced this year’s Fall Fundraiser at the October 14 program. We would like to fund a Motus station here in Helena. While the fundraising has begun, the work would likely not take place until Spring or Summer of 2026. It is a worthwhile project. I will try to give you more in-depth information about MOTUS here, so you can judge for yourself.



*MOTUS station. Photo by Lucas Berrigan*

“Motus stations are specialized receivers used in radio telemetry to track the movements of flying animals, such as birds, bats, and insects. They allow researchers to study and identify important migration routes, stopover areas, and wintering locations and provide valuable insights on animal behavior. Motus is a collaborative research network led by Birds Canada and partners with scientists and organizations across the globe.” This description is from the Motus website.

Motus provides the most precise tracking of birds, insects, and small mammals; better than GPS or satellites can offer. In recent years, scientists have developed tiny tracking devices, such that even a dragonfly can now carry one without detriment to its functionality. Since its inception in 2012, more than 9000 individuals of more than 87 species of birds, bats and insects have been tracked!



*Monarch butterfly. Photo by Stuart Mackenzie*

The “towers”, or Motus receivers, can be customized to meet many different site requirements. Data archived at [motus.org](http://motus.org) is available to anyone who wishes to see it or use it. I strongly recommend taking a half hour to stroll this website. It’s fascinating!



*Indigo Bunting. Photo by Lucas Berrigan*

In our area, our efforts in bird banding at Spring Meadow Lake, have given us an increased priority to have and to need a Motus station(s). With this in mind, we are researching the best way for Last Chance Audubon to engage. We clearly see the importance of having Motus stations here, to fill in a gap of coverage.

Being a part of the Motus network would help us and would help the birding community globally. Let’s get behind this important effort!

Leslie Smith, LCAS Board President  
406-431-4995 or [leslie\\_smi@yahoo.com](mailto:leslie_smi@yahoo.com)

## Montana Audubon News!



### Audubon Wildlife Fund Grants

Since 1996, Montana Audubon has awarded small grants to individuals or organizations in support of research and education projects that directly benefit wildlife in Montana. In 2025, we awarded seven grants to support research, habitat clean-up, a hawk watch station, and raptor rehabilitation centers. Visit the grant website (linked below) to see updates from each recipient.

Applications for the 2026 cycle are now available. All proposals must be received no later than Friday, January 16, 2026. Winners will be announced in March 2026.

See grant guidelines, download the application form, and read updates from 2025 recipients here: <https://mtaudubon.org/wildlifegrants/>

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### Montana Audubon Citizen Science Reports

This year, Montana Audubon organized three Citizen Science surveys: a new pilot project surveying for Nightjars; the second year of surveys for Western and Eastern Screech-owls; and the continuation of the long-running Long-billed Curlew Initiative, now in its 13th year.

Across all three projects, a total of 221 citizen scientist volunteers conducted a total of 167 survey routes, covering an estimated 1,287 miles! In total, 1,713 detections of target species were made, contributing to species conservation status and conservation action plans for these species.

Thank you to everyone who was involved with our Citizen Science surveys this year! These efforts would not have been possible without the dedication of volunteers, and we are grateful that so many joined us in looking for these birds in need.

These projects would not be possible without all of our sponsors and partner organizations, including Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks; Montana Natural Heritage Program; Tracy Aviary; L.E.A.W Family Foundation; Blackfoot Challenge; and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.

Read the reports here: <https://mtaudubon.org/2025-citizen-science-reports-now-available/>



## LCAS Board Meeting Highlights

- The Board decided that the LCAS 2025 fall fundraiser project will be the installation of one or more monitoring sites in the Helena valley to track birds and other small flying wildlife such as bats that have been tagged with miniature digital coding devices. The site(s) will be selected in coordination with MTFWP and will become part of Motus, a global wildlife tracking network sponsored by Birds Canada that is relatively new to Montana but includes extensive sites elsewhere in North America.
  - The Board discussed a need for follow-up on the vegetation management project at the K-Mart ponds due to re-sprouting on Russian olive stumps that were cut this past summer. This effort would entail LCAS volunteers periodically cutting the sprouts, and herbicide application in coordination with the City of Helena.
  - LCAS will produce a brochure to guide maintenance of bluebird nesting boxes which are built by LCAS volunteers and supplied to interested landowners. As more boxes continue to be disseminated, there is a corresponding need for volunteers to properly maintain the boxes. The board is also exploring how this activity might be expanded to include data collection on use of the boxes by the target bird species and brood sizes.
  - The board will create a new LCAS position to coordinate volunteer activities, with a goal of promptly matching interested people and the kinds of work they would like to do with new project opportunities that arise. The Board will consult with MTFWP and other partner organizations to compile an ongoing list of volunteer opportunities which will be highlighted in the LCAS newsletter and website.
  - The Board selected December 20, 2025, as the date for this year's Christmas Bird Count.
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### **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!**

We are always looking for volunteers for various projects ranging from working at a table to promoting Last Chance Audubon and educating folks, to helping with clean up at some of our birding areas to taking part in bird surveys. We need you!

Please get in touch with me, Leslie, at 406-431-4995 / [leslie\\_smi@yahoo.com](mailto:leslie_smi@yahoo.com), or with our new Volunteer Coordinator, Pete Strazdas, at 406-461-2728 / [petestrazdas@gmail.com](mailto:petestrazdas@gmail.com).

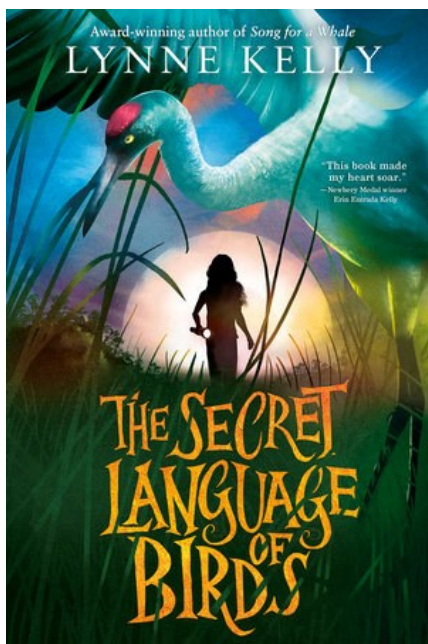
We want to hear from you!

## Birding Book Reviews

### *The Secret Language of Birds, by Lynne Kelly*

This month's book is **The Secret Language of Birds**, by Lynne Kelly. This book is fiction and is appropriate for readers 8-12 of age.

WAIT! DON'T STOP READING! Here is your opportunity to hear about a book informative about birding and the protection of endangered species for a younger generation. I know you have young neighbors, kids or grandkids in your life. This might make a good Christmas or birthday present.



The story is about a girl, already interested in birds and with some knowledge, who goes to a summer camp. While there she spies a bird she thinks might be a Whooping Crane. And then there's two birds.

She and her buddies watch while the birds create a nest. She makes contact with wildlife officials who encourage her to watch the birds daily, photograph them and provide the data to try and identify the birds (which are so depleted in number that every individual is known.) I won't tell you if they identify the birds or if an egg is laid. I will tell you that in this story, the frustration and determination of a wildlife biologist who bonds with specific birds, is brought to life.

It's a fun read, a little bit of science, a little bit of mystery, and with a good message.

Last Chance Audubon has a goal of reaching younger people to carry on our support and protection of birds and the environment. You can help spark an interest by introducing this book to a young reader.

Leslie

## Membership Report

Sincere thanks to **Last Chance renewing members:** Emily Brand, Bonnie Bowler, and Ann and Ron Waterman.

Please also welcome **National Audubon Society new members:** Rory Burke, Greg Duncan, Nita Ibara, Christina Stern, and Savannah Woods.

Sincere thanks to **National Audubon Society renewing members:** John Andes, Mary Carparelli, Barbara Cooper, Holly Franz, William Gallea, Martha Haddock, Margaret Hubber, Alison Schulte, and The Lewis & Clark Library.

**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.

**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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## Groundbreaking for WILD Avian Center

LCAS has been watching the progress of a new raptor rehabilitation facility being built by MTFWP at Spring Meadow Lake. The project was on hold for a time, but construction has started and is expected to be completed by spring. Thanks to Sara Meloy, FWP Education Bureau Chief, for sharing updates and photos of the project.



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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#### LCAS COMMITTEE CHAIRS/ CONTACTS

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**Education:** Sumner Sharpe,  
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**Field Trips/Website:** Don Skaar  
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**Habitat:** open

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