Bighorn Audubon Society

Annual Report

June 14, 2025

Dear Members, Volunteers, Partners, and Supporters:

This year, Bighorn Audubon celebrates 55 years of helping birds in our region. Our ability to encourage and strengthen an appreciation of birds and the habitats they need to survive continues because of all of you. We are grateful and honored to do this work for our feathered friends. This past fiscal year (July 2024 - June 2025), our board of directors was very active with educational programs, advocacy actions, projects, community science, and surveys – all part of our mission to work for the protection of birds and their habitat, enhancing our communities and region.

- *Birds of the Rocky Mountain Region II* opened on April 19th at The Brinton Museum, with the Artist Reception on April 18th. This is the second such exhibition at The Brinton Museum in partnership with Bighorn Audubon and features more than 50 works of art by 39 artists from throughout the U.S. *Birds of the Rocky Mountain Region II* is presented in the S.K. Johnston, Jr. Family Gallery and continues through June 29. The wide variety of artistic styles, from realism to abstraction, as well as a diversity of mediums, makes this exhibition an exceptional presentation. An illustrated educational catalog was produced and is available in The Brinton Museum store. On April 19th, an informative guided exhibition tour was led by Scott Johnson, an art show judge and advisory board member. Sponsorship for the exhibition and related educational programs was generously provided by Carol and Sam Mavrakis of the Seidler Foundation; Jill Morrison; and Kay Wallick and D J Purcell. We also take this opportunity to recognize and express our gratitude to Curator of Exhibitions Barb McNab, who was instrumental in the success of the *Birds of the Rocky Mountain Region II* and the first exhibition in 2023. Our gratitude is extended to Barb, Scott, and James Jackson for the commendable and difficult assignment to judge and choose from so many pieces by artists nationwide.
- Michael Forsberg's tremendous presentation, *Into Whooperland: A Photographer's Journey with Whooping Cranes,* on June 6th at the WYO Theater in Sheridan left the audience in awe. Mike's decades-long passion, knowledge, and devotion to Sandhill Cranes and Whooping Cranes cannot be underscored enough, especially the endangered Whooping Crane. This moving educational program was part of the *Birds of the Rocky Mountain Region II* art exhibition.
- In partnership with the Bighorn National Forest, we continued with our 5th year of Tensleep Canyon raptor surveys. The 3rd year of Forest sagebrush habitat surveys and the 2nd year of American Goshawk monitoring are underway. Two Raptor Survey Guides for volunteers have

been created and are available in print and on our website. An all-day volunteer raptor survey was held in Tensleep Canyon in April. We are thankful for our funding support, volunteers, and C.J. Grimes for his sagebrush surveying expertise.

- An informative eBird class for volunteers was presented by Tony Lammers at the Johnson County Library.
- Christmas Bird Counts and Spring Counts contributed to bird population data, all completed thanks to the many dedicated volunteers and faithful compilers. Bighorn Audubon volunteers also participated in USGS Breeding Bird Surveys and BLM Midwinter Eagle Surveys in our region.
- The Powder Horn Native Plant Habitat project was developed and led by a committee devoted to encouraging, through this habitat and education, the benefits of native plants for birds and the community.
- Maintenance and monitoring of hundreds of nest boxes continue, mostly in the Bighorn Forest, thanks to passionate volunteers. Years of this undertaking have increased populations of Mountain Bluebirds and Tree Swallows in our region and beyond.
- Bighorn Audubon helped to support some post House Draw Fire habitat efforts and contributed towards lek surveys, with thanks to Linette Sutphin, Chris Kirol, Dave Malutich, and many others.
- Bighorn Audubon's website and monthly email newsletters continue to share our efforts to help birds. Further information on most items in this report can be found on our website: bighornaudubon.org
- On June 13th, 2025, the Wyoming Community Foundation awarded Bighorn Audubon a generous grant to provide *Wyoming Birds for Kids*, an educational children's book authored by fellow board member Pam Moore, to all elementary school and public libraries in the State of Wyoming. Last fiscal year, books were provided to each elementary school and public library within our seven-county chapter with Bighorn Audubon funding. This fiscal year complimentary copies were also mailed to 34 government officials with gratitude from many recipients. *Wyoming Birds for Kids* has opened an understanding and appreciation for birds in many of Wyoming's youth. We trust this foundational appreciation will grow with the child.
- We presented and/or participated in educational programs and bird walks, partnering with the SAGE Art Camp, Story Garden Club, Ucross Foundation, Fort Phil Kearny State Historic Site, Science Kids, and Sheridan Community Land Trust. Additional programs are noted below.
- The monthly Birding at The Brinton activity continues with fellow bird lovers from near and far. Our long-standing partnership with The Brinton Museum is valued beyond measure.
- The Buffalo Wetlands Program at the Johnson County Library was organized by Buffalo conservationist Phil Gonzales and Bighorn Audubon. Representatives from BLM, Army Corps of Engineers, Weed & Pest, and Wyoming Game and Fish presented to a large and engaged group of community members.
- *The History, Legends & Birds of Lake DeSmet* was held at Lake DeSmet in partnership with Jim Gatchell Museum, Fort Phil Kearny State site, Fort Phil Kearny/Bozeman Trail Assoc., and Linwood Tall Bull of Northern Cheyenne on the significance of the lake and of its birds.

- We participated in the Ucross Foundation's *Confluences*, a unique site-specific sound experience created by artists and Ucross Fellows Teri Rueb and Laurids Sonne.
- Last but not least, we advocated for birds to government agencies and leaders on issues which include: Sage Grouse Management Plan; BLM Conservation Management Plan; BLM Industry Bonds; Forest Service Climbing Plan; Forest Service Pole Creek Vegetation Management Plan; Tensleep Climbing Management Plan, Sheridan County Zoning, and threats to the National Environmental Protection Agency, Endangered Species Act and Migratory Bird Species Act. We urge our members to keep informed and voice concerns to congressional leaders about the effects regulatory reductions and removals will have on birds and their shrinking habitats.

Sincere gratitude is extended to advisory board members with special acknowledgement to Andy Sutphin, Chris Kirol (both former board members), and to Scott Johnson, who have been exceptionally helpful this year to Bighorn Audubon and our mission. Sadly, though, this year our former fellow board member Peter Lecholat passed. His love and knowledge of birds was inspirational to so many of us.

In closing, our entire board of directors extends our heartfelt appreciation to Bighorn Audubon members, partners, volunteers, and supporters whose shared love for birds is far-reaching and critical to help protect our feathered friends.

JoAnne Puckett, President

Jill Morrison, Vice-President

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Kay Wallick, Director

Carol Mavrakis, Director

Barb McNab, Director

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