

# Bighorn Audubon Society's Annual Report

## A Memorable Year!



June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Dear Members and Supporters:

Bighorn Audubon's commitment to fulfilling our mission for the protection of birds and habitats for the benefit of our communities and the region this past year has been memorable! Looking back since the fiscal year's beginning, July 1<sup>st</sup>, you might agree.

A highlight of the year is the inspirational *Birds of the Rocky Mountain Region* art exhibit, in partnership with The Brinton Museum. We extend our utmost appreciation to the staff and to the exhibit's contributors. This stunning 40-piece exhibit, its illustrated catalog, and educational programs that include fellow board member Pam Moore's release of *Wyoming Birds for Kids* and author John Taliaferro's lecture on George Bird Grinnell (Audubon founder and pioneer conservationist), have all been resounding successes in sharing the joy of birds and enriching lives.

In a rapidly changing world that continuously needs reminding of the importance of protecting birds' volatile habitat, deep gratitude is extended to Bighorn Audubon supporters, members, volunteers, advisory board members, and the terrific all-volunteer board of directors who have been participatory in these actions:

### Advocating for Birds and Habitats:

- Invasive and Other Plant Management Plan, Bighorn National Forest (BNF) – submitted written objections, and resolutions, and participated in critical meetings. Due to the hard work of the Bighorn Audubon Society (BAS), other organizations, and individuals, the Forest's final decisions were beneficial for the protection of sensitive habitats in the Forest.
- Powder River Energy Corporation - helped establish a viable plan for orphaned power line removal to help protect sagebrush bird species.
- Important Bird Areas (IBA) nominated– (1) HF Bar Ranch, nominated by Jackie Canterbury and the BAS and (2) Cook Ranch in Crook County, nominated by Deane Bjerke, Dennis Knight, and the BAS. Both were approved as IBAs. (3) Balding IBA nomination was submitted by BAS and Tom Balding – we are awaiting a decision.
- Blue Heron Rookery on Brundage - submitted concerns to Wyoming Game & Fish and USFWS on potential interference by building close to the rookery.

- Teal Springs Development - submitted comments of concern to Sheridan City Council and Planners on this 64-acre multi-home proposed development primarily along Little Goose Creek.
- Pole Creek Vegetation Proposal, BNF – submitted an extensive letter of concern.
- Greater Sage Grouse - signed letter of support to remove a rider from the Interior Appropriations bill. The rider prevents Greater Sage Grouse from being listed as threatened or endangered.
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Bonding Program - signed on with other organizations and with landowners urging BLM Director Stone-Manning for a stronger bonding program.
- BLM Conservation Management Plan – submitted a letter of support to revise the management plan.
- Sheridan County’s Acme/Kleenburn Rezoning Proposal, which would allow commercial development along the Tongue River– submitted a letter of concern.

#### **Education:**

- Presented programs with and/or for Science Kids, Rooted in Wyoming, Audubon Rockies, Bighorn National Forest, WY State Parks, The Brinton Museum, Murie Audubon, and Girl Scouts.
- Western Meadowlark signage was designed and created, in partnership with Sheridan Parks Department, for the Kendrick Municipal Golf Course.
- Birds in the Bighorn National Forest Area checklist completed, designed, and printed.
- Birding at The Brinton continued monthly with increased participation – rain, snow, wind, or shine!
- Powder Horn property (donated to BAS) had an enormous amount of work done and funds supplied by personal donations, time, and efforts to create a native plant showcase, and enhance the community’s awareness of the benefit of native plants. There are, however, complications going forward.
- Bighorn Audubon Notecards - continue distribution of these beautiful cards that benefit our mission.
- Bighorn Audubon’s educational website is kept up-to-date and informative email newsletters are released monthly.

#### **Monitoring and Citizen Science:**

- Tensleep Canyon Raptor survey continues for a third year, partially funded by BAS and with help from a few volunteers. Due in part to our efforts and observations, climbing routes were voluntarily closed through August 15, 2023, to protect nesting Peregrine Falcons and Golden Eagles.

- Worked closely with BNF on monitoring plan, methodology, and implementation of various sections of BNF sagebrush habitat. Surveys have begun and will continue for the next several weeks.
- Bird Counts continue! Christmas Bird Counts in Sheridan, Johnson, and Bighorn Counties; Breeding Bird Surveys on Bald Mountain and Ten Sleep/Medicine Lodge area; Spring Count in Sheridan and Johnson Counties. Several members participated in BLM's Eagle Survey.
- Monitoring and maintenance of hundreds Mountain Bluebird and Tree Swallow nest boxes continued by BAS and volunteers.

**Goals for the Coming Year:**

- Develop and continue partnerships with local, state, and federal agencies, in particular the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, and non-government organizations.
- Help provide critical bird data to local, state, and federal agencies, and non-government organizations to assist them in making informed decisions through systematic bird surveys and monitoring programs.
- Inspire people of all ages to learn, appreciate, and love birds.
- Among Bighorn Audubon's ongoing actions are to: increase fundraising efforts that directly benefits birds and their habitats; encourage citizen science; and educate through advocacy, outreach, programs, newsletters, and media releases.

Bighorn Audubon is an all-volunteer non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Your membership and contributions allow us to continue protecting our feathered friends and their critical habits – they need all the help they can get.

Your support is greatly appreciated!

JoAnne Puckett, President

Anne Montgomery, Director

Chris Kirol, Director

Pam Moore, VP, Secretary

Andy Sutphin, Director

Jill Morrison, Director

Ariel Downing, Treasurer

Kay Wallick, Director

Carol Mavrakis, Director

*Bighorn Audubon is a grassroots community that works for the protection of birds and habitats for the benefit of our communities and the region.*

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