

A State-Wide Look at Montana's Diverse Avian Datasets

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Since the online platform eBird.org launched in 2002, millions of bird observations have been collected by citizen scientists and amateur bird observers. Today, 10's of thousands of bird observation lists are uploaded each day and the data building up is incredible. Over 391 thousand lists have been submitted by over 13 thousand observers in Montana, with 431 species having been observed. Along with trusted long-term and large-scale bird data series, like the Breeding Bird Survey or the Integrated Monitoring in Bird Conservation Regions effort, and species-specific efforts like annual fall hawk counts, a truly immense body of bird observation data has been amassed. Though the diversity of survey efforts and individual birders' contributions to data collection efforts are crucial to understanding the state's 442 bird species, they are complicated to utilize in their respective silos. Now after a multi-year partnership effort between the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MTHNP) and Montana Audubon millions of bird data records have been reviewed for final acceptance and incorporation into the MTNHP zoological database. The huge effort will directly contribute to improved range analysis tools and updated range extents for dozens of species, in addition to supporting trend analysis for Montana's birds; one of the few groups of species where enough data exists for trend analysis. In some cases, as with the Lesser Goldfinch, and Gray Flycatcher, the data may help MTNHP assess a status for the first time, and in all cases the updates will be seen immediately through the MTNHP tracker and project