

Bird Field Note
Poorwills, woodpeckers,
raptors, field observations
May 22, 2015
Compiled by: Eric Rasmussen





The Clubhouse Floodplain is alive with bird activity. A lone Hooded Merganser (above) chases off an incoming visitor.





A Spotted Sandpiper
peruses the shoreline,
bobbing...



...and bobbing again,
stabbing the water
surface for insects.



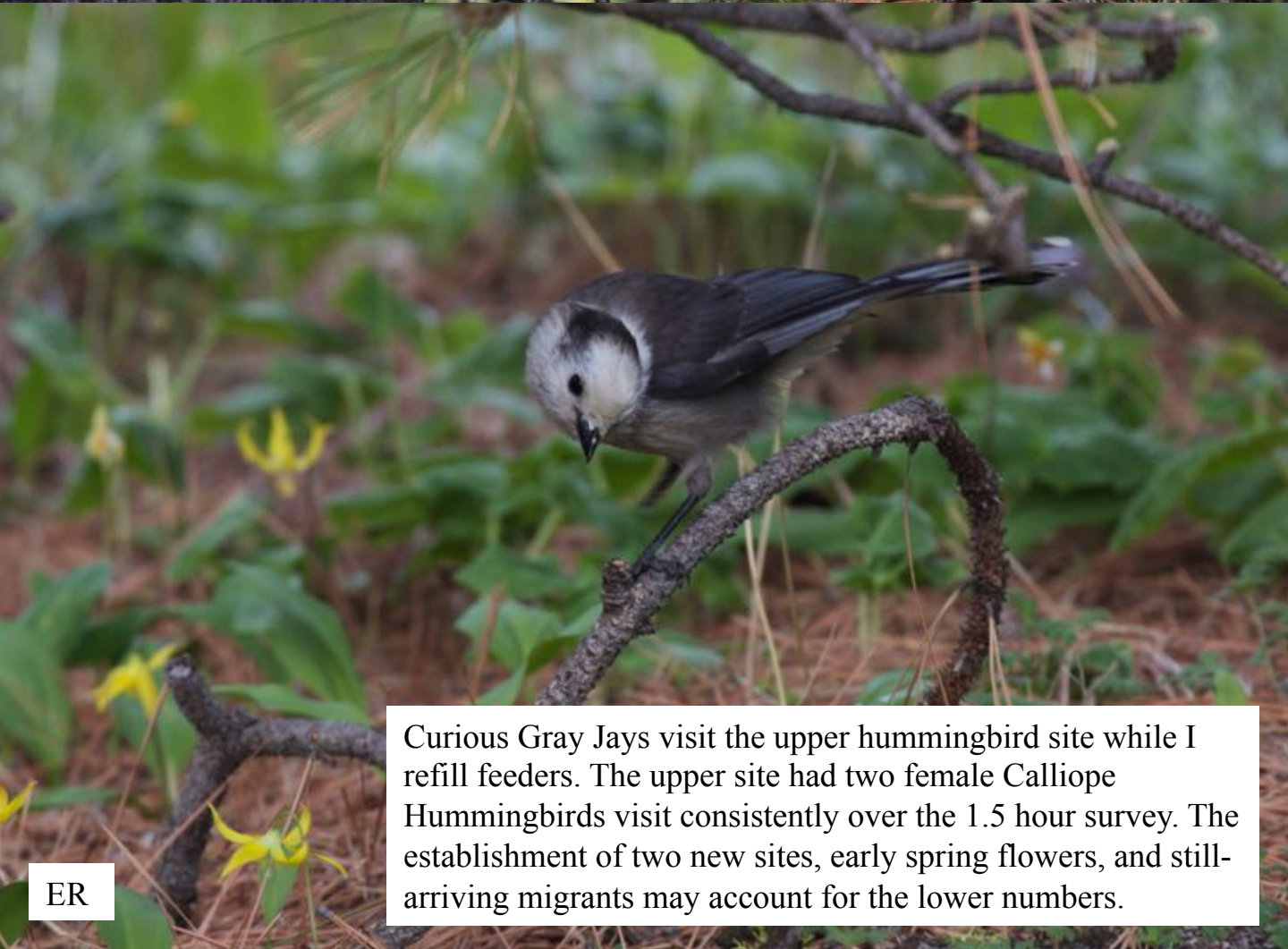
Crouched low, still
bobbing, the sandpiper
strikes deep.

The chattering of Vaux's
Swifts reveals one flying
low over the pond.



Hummingbirds arrived at the lower and upper sites in early May. Activity is picking up, but numbers are still low. This male Calliope Hummingbird visits the Clubhouse Pond feeders, showing off his pink gorget feathers. I observed three Calliope Hummingbirds (two males, one female) during this week's survey at the lower site.





Curious Gray Jays visit the upper hummingbird site while I refill feeders. The upper site had two female Calliope Hummingbirds visit consistently over the 1.5 hour survey. The establishment of two new sites, early spring flowers, and still-arriving migrants may account for the lower numbers.

Three of the four Say's Phoebe fledglings patiently await the next flying insect delivery from their parents.



Rock wrens love nooks and crannies (usually rocky scree or talus slopes), and have adapted to use piles of old fence posts. They share this habitat with rodents and insects that also seek small places to hide. A Vesper Sparrow (not pictured) was singing from the top of the pile when I snapped this shot.



A Sage Thrasher, presumably the same individual that's been observed over the past few weeks, peers out from a planted tree near the Clubhouse. We've detected this uncommon visitor during spring and fall migration for the last three years.

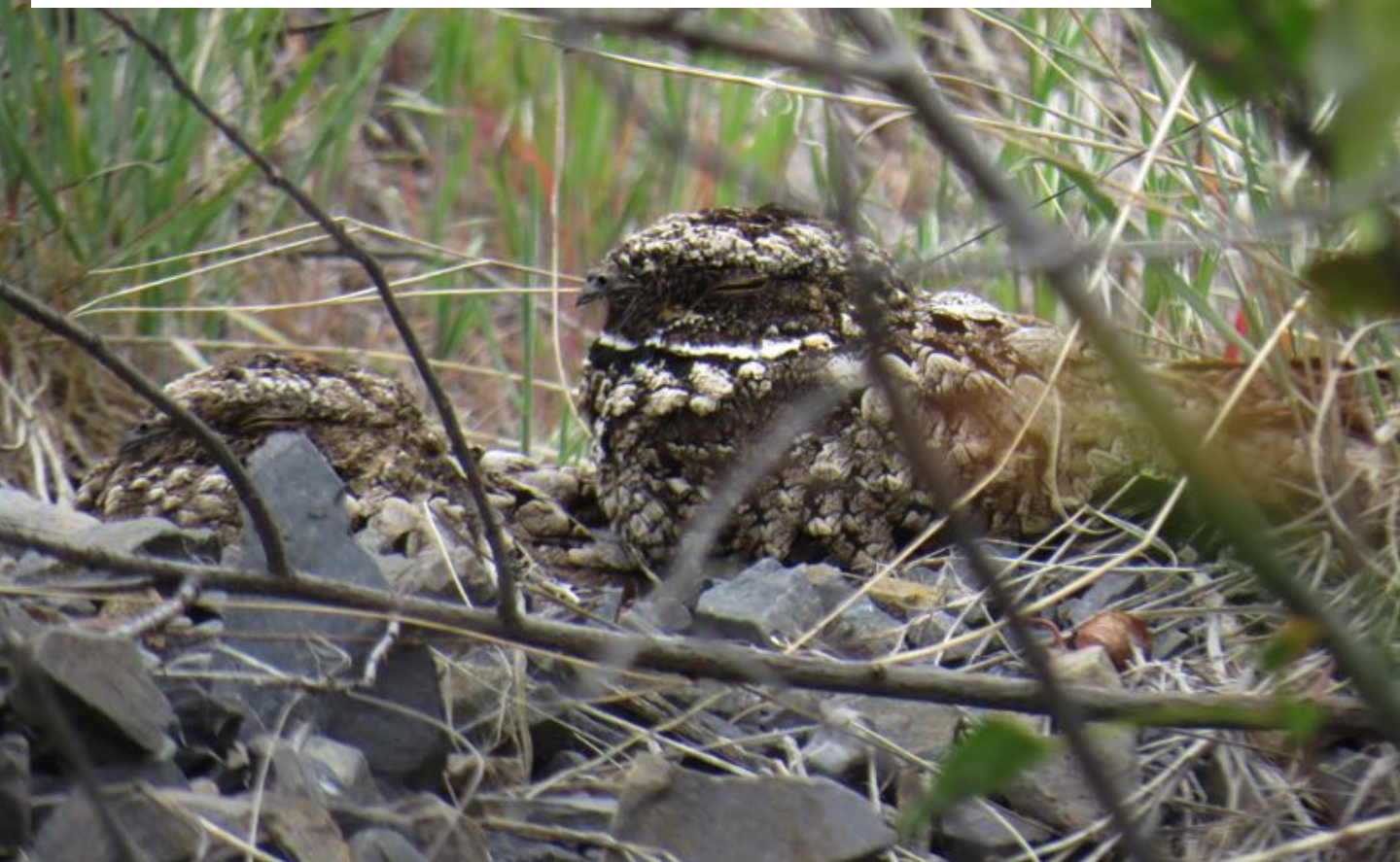


Common Poorwill Update

We are still tracking two of our four male poorwills. Two birds lost their glue-on transmitters. We will use a harness to secure the remaining transmitters.



Mat found two of the males roosting with females on multiple days at the same location. He suspects those pairs are close to nest initiation.



Mat found pellets accumulating at the roost sites. We're collecting pellets as part of a diet analysis.



Long-billed Curlew Update

The curlew crew recaptured the female “DAVE” and outfitted her with a new transmitter. They tried to capture her mate but he escaped the net. They will make a second attempt this weekend.



While searching for curlew nests, Kate found a Horned Lark nest tucked into the base of a bunchgrass. Even this tiny nest showed a clear thermal signature.



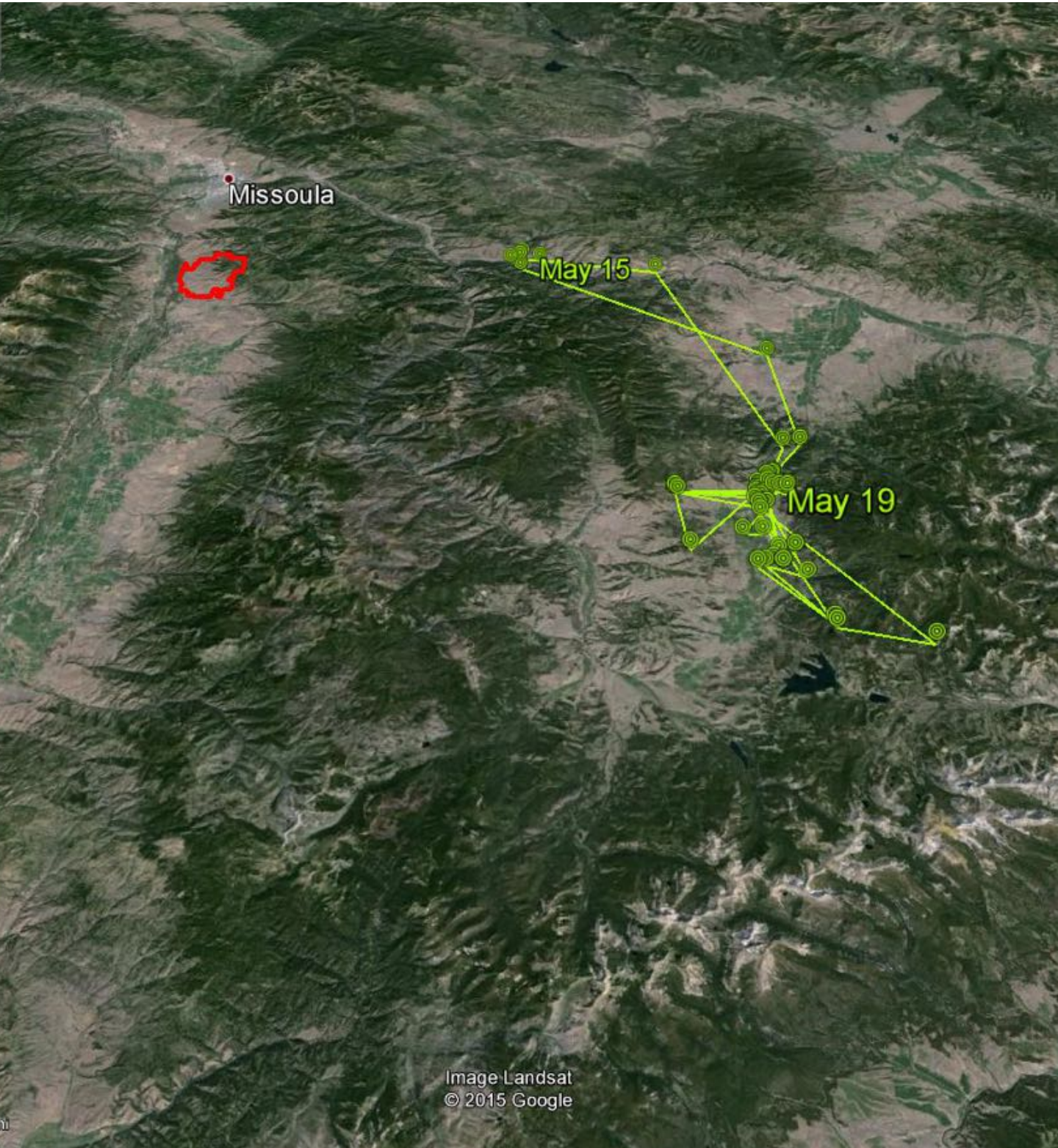
Female Lewis's Woodpecker "BOWA" seems to be attracted to a territory used by a different female last year. For over a week, we've seen her interacting with an unbanded male about 0.7 miles south of her 2014 nest. She also frequents the northern center pivot suet feeder. We will be trapping and deploying tracking units on woodpeckers next week.



Raptor View Research Institute Update 5/21/15



With the exception of a May 15 trip to Beavertail Hill State Park on the Clark Fork River, Rapunzel (Osprey) spent the week near Philipsburg, MT. The majority of her locations have occurred near Flint Creek, which has high concentrations of mercury. Since Rapunzel hasn't settled on a nest we are confident that she will not breed this season.



We recaptured American Kestrel AK-62 eight days after outfitting her with a Pinpoint GPS transmitter to evaluate her condition. She was incubating her eggs as usual and appeared to be handling the new unit well.



AK-62 had preened the transmitter beneath her feathers until only the antenna was visible. After seeing that she had accepted the transmitter, we will continue our plan to deploy 15 GPS units on American Kestrels this season.

