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FLATHEAD AUDUBON



A PAIR of ospreys nest above the Flathead River in 2021. (Casey Kreider/Daily Inter Lake FILE)

Osprey monitoring project takes flight

By HAILEY SMALLEY
Daily Inter Lake

There was definitely a bird in the old osprey nest above Old Steel Bridge. Jess Garby could see the arc of a small round head peeking over the tangle of sticks, backlit by the morning sun. She steadied the excitement rising in her throat. It was only April 6, far too early in the season for most ospreys to settle down with a brood. But maybe... Garby raised her binoculars and drew the bird into focus.

“Yeah, it’s a goose,” she sighed a moment later. “You can really tell when it turns its head to the side.” The education coordinator for Flathead Audubon Society and a self-proclaimed “raptor girlie,” Garby had spent the better part of the last week scanning the skies, hoping to catch sight of her first osprey of the year. The birds migrate to the Flathead Valley in droves each spring, often flying thousands of miles north from overwintering grounds in Mexico to reunite with longtime partners in nests

that they built in years prior. They spend the next five months trading feeding and nesting duties as their clutch grows from hatchlings to nestlings to fledglings. This year, participants in a new monitoring program organized by Flathead Audubon will follow the birds through every stage. Volunteers will visit an “adopted” osprey nest each week to record observations about the inhabitants, including the number and approximate age of the offspring. It’s a unique opportunity to engage with

an iconic animal in an intimate way, Garby said. “You’re getting to go outside and just watching a bird raise a family, watching all the hardships it has to go through,” she said. “It really makes you appreciate these animals on a total other level.” The project is also practical. Once compiled, the data volunteers collect this summer will likely represent one of the most complete studies on ospreys in Northwest Montana in years.

See **OSPREY, A8**

KALISPELL

Developer seeks tax dollars for affordable housing

By JACK UNDERHILL
Daily Inter Lake

The developer behind a proposed affordable housing project in West Kalispell is seeking public funding to help finance the project. Mach Development is looking to build a 24-unit apartment building that will boast one- and two-bedroom rent-restricted apartments for households making below 50% to 60% of the area median income. Called the Outpost at Kalispell, the property at 40 Appleyway Drive is located within the West Side/Core Area tax increment financing districts, which aim to address blight and promote economic development in those neighborhoods.

See **PROJECT, A8**

Flathead County looks at change for cannabis businesses

By HANNAH SHIELDS
Daily Inter Lake/Report for America

Business owners who want to grow marijuana indoors in business zones in Flathead County would have to obtain a conditional use permit under a proposed new process. The Flathead County Planning and Zoning Department expects to draft the process following a Planning Board workshop Wednesday. County zoning regulations prohibit cannabis business owners from growing product in business zones, which can force cultivation to occur in a separate facility. Jim Roth, owner of First Class Grass Farm in Kalispell, said this creates a financial burden for business owners, who already operate in a heavily taxed industry.

“We’re generating revenue for the state of Montana, and we’re generating a lot of it,” said Angela Palmer, who works for UURB Inc., a Bigfork dispensary. “I feel like we should get the same respect and same protections from the county and from the state that any other legitimate business is afforded.” County regulations allow the growth of marijuana in AG (agricultural), SAG (suburban agricultural), R-2.5 (rural residential) and R-1 (suburban residential) zones. Business zones only permit the sale of marijuana, which is considered an agricultural product.

See **BOARD, A5**

Netanyahu pledges to keep up strikes in Lebanon

By JON GAMBRELL,
ELENA BECATOROS
and MIKE CORDER
Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — In a potential boost to Middle East ceasefire efforts, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Thursday that he authorized direct negotiations with Lebanon “as soon as possible” aimed at disarming Iranian-backed Hezbollah militants and establishing relations between the neighbors. The two countries have technically been at war since Israel was established in 1948,

and Netanyahu later stressed that there was no ceasefire between them. In a video statement, he said Israel will keep striking Hezbollah until security is restored in northern Israel. There was no immediate response from Lebanese authorities. But Israel-Lebanon negotiations were expected to begin next week at the State Department in Washington, according to a U.S. official and a person familiar with the plans who both spoke on condition of anonymity due to the delicacy of the matter.



LEBANESE CIVIL defense workers inspect the rubble at the site of a building destroyed in an Israeli airstrike a day earlier in Beirut, Lebanon, Thursday, April 9, 2026. (AP Photo/Hussein Malla)

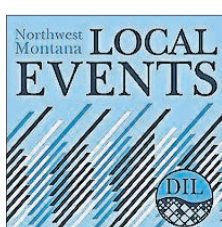
See **ISRAEL, A8**

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Looking for a little fun this month? The Daily Inter Lake has the rundown on all of April's activities around the Flathead Valley. Scan the QR code.



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