

YELLOWSTONE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

- FROM THE PRAIRIES TO THE PEAKS.

Mission: Building on the tradition of special interest in birds, Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society is organized to promote enjoyment and protection of the natural environment through education, activism, and conservation of bird habitat.

VOLUME 42, NUMBER 2

FEBRUARY 2012

New This Issue

- Membership Survey
- Field Trip Results
- Audubon Center Activities
- MA Wings Across the Big Sky Bird Festival
- Photo awards



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MONDAY, FEBRUARY 20 YVAS MEMBERSHIP MEETING

CARE OF INJURED BIRDS



Dr. Olivia Seddon

As springtime gets closer and 'baby season' is just around the corner, Dr. Olivia Seddon will be talking about what to do if you find an injured or orphaned bird or animal. She will discuss how to determine if it is really injured or simply stunned, and if and how you should act in the best interest of treating it.

Dr. Seddon grew up in Florida and graduated from the University of Florida's College of Veterinary Medicine in 1993. She moved to Montana in 2001 where she resides with her husband, Andrew, their two German Shepherds, Lady & Rex, her bird, Lucy, and lots & lots of fish!

Dr. Seddon enjoys spending time with her husband, hiking, gardening, playing the clarinet, and has a passion for dog obedience & trick training. Aside from practicing at Caring Hands Veterinary Hospital in Billings, Dr Seddon has had a life-long interest in helping wild animals.

YVAS MEETINGS

All YVAS Meetings are at Mayflower Congregational Church, corner of Rehberg Lane and Poly Drive, Billings, MT unless otherwise noted. The public is welcome, there is no admission fee and ample free parking is available.

Monday, February 13, 6:00pm: Board of Directors Meeting

Monday, February 20, 7:00pm: General Membership Meeting

We will hold a YVAS fundraiser dinner at 5:45 before the February membership meeting. Dinner donation: \$6. The Spaghetti Dinner will be hosted by Ruth Vanderhorst. Please call her to contribute to dinner and/or to make reservations at 2455118.



☞ We're on the web! yvaudubon.org

THIS FLYER IS PUBLISHED ON SFI CERTIFIED PRODUCT



MEMBERSHIP SURVEY — VALUABLE RESPONSES

YVAS Board of Directors developed a membership survey last fall as a way to improve member participation and to better meet member needs and expectations. Since the December Fundraiser Dinner, we have received almost 50 replies. The Survey Form is posted on the website for those of you who didn't get a chance to respond. Yvaudubon.org

Overwhelmingly, responders enjoy current YVAS activities and the Flyer. There were no negative comments – just ideas and requests for more activities and programs. There clearly is a strong demand for more field trips, more chapter and board meetings, and more conservation and education efforts. Proposals for more field trips include a mixed interest in shorter, local half-day or evening events, to multiday trips to Westby or Red Rocks. Education and conservation suggestions include bird classes for beginners, stronger river cleanup, partnering with other groups with similar interests, hearing from legislators who support conservation, and involving younger members.

YVAS Board of Directors will be studying these results in detail over the coming months to determine options and feasibility for implementing many of the ideas for expanded activity and fun. Watch the Flyer for more developments.

A VERY SPECIAL THANK YOU TO ALL WHO TOOK TIME TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY AND TO PROVIDE SOME WONDERFUL IDEAS FOR MORE ACTIVITY. YOUR HELP IS GREATLY APPRECIATED!!!



- A pair of reading glasses with taupe-colored frames were found at the Christmas Fundraiser dinner. Please call Nancy Wiggins 651-0218 to claim them.
- Consult the website www.yvaudubon.org if you haven't received your latest edition of the Flyer. Due to the logistics of mailing, the Flyer is often posted to the website before you receive it in the mail. You will also find the latest information about field trips on the website.
- **CHECK THE MAILING LABEL ON YOUR FLYER SO SEE IF YOUR CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP IS UP TO DATE! COMPLETE AN APPLICATION FOR RENEWAL ON THE BACK PAGE OF THIS ISSUE.**

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society Officers:

President: Bill DeMeyer, 671-7501, battie@bresnan.net
Vice-President: Steve Regele, 962-3115, sregele@juno.com
Secretary: Dorothy Bartlett, 252-0757, dpadanyil@live.com
Treasurer: Deb Regele, 962-3115, dregele@juno.com
Past-President: Kayhan Ostovar, 256-7481, kayhan@q.com

Board of Directors:

Donn Bartlett: 252-0757, donnbartlett@msn.com
 Rita Harding: 259-7586, mtroses22@bresnan.net
 Jeanette Tasey: 669-3169, jtasey@gmail.com
 Nancy Wiggins: 651-0218, nwiggins83@gmail.com

Montana's Congressional Delegation:

Sen. Max Baucus: U.S. Senate, Wash. D.C. 20510
 website: <http://baucus.senate.gov>

email: max@baucus.senate.gov

Billings: 657-6790 Wash. D.C.: 1-800-332-6160

Sen. Jon Tester: U.S. Senate, Wash. D.C. 20510

website: <http://tester.senate.gov>

email: senator@tester.senate.gov

Billings: 252-0550 Wash. D.C.: 1-866-554-4403

Rep. Dennis Rehberg: U.S. House of Rep. Wash. D.C. 20515

website: www.rehberg.house.gov

email: denny.rehberg@mail.house.gov

Billings: 256-1019 Wash. D.C.: 202-225-3211

Committees and Special Assignments:

Archives and History.....open

Audubon Adventures.....Jeannette Davis, 656-7618

Bird Questions.....George Mowat, 656-7467 or

Helen Carlson, 248-8684

Christmas Bird Count.....Helen Carlson, 248-8684

or Billie Hicks, 962-3798

Conservation Chair.....Kayhan Ostovar, 256-7481,

kayhan@q.com

Editor.....Nancy Wiggins, 651-0218, nwiggins83@gmail.com

Field Trip Chairs... George and Bernie Mowat, 656-7467,

gmowat@bresnan.net

Greeters.....Phyllis Holt 252-7373

Audrey Jurovich 656-2748

Injured Raptors...Jeanette Tasey 669-3169, jtasey@gmail.com

Membership Secretary.....Joel M. Bowers, 534-3672,

cell: 591-5635, jmba@jmba.com

Program Chair.....open

Recycling (aluminum).....Tom Davis 656-7618

Website.... Tom Lyman, Tomglyman@gmail.com

Meetings are held September through May at Mayflower Congregational Church, corner of Poly and Rehberg:

- Board Meetings held second Monday of each month at 6:00pm. Board Meetings are open to entire membership.
- General Chapter Meetings are held third Monday of each month at 7:00pm. All meetings are open to the public.



FIELD TRIP NOTES

DECEMBER 17 ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT



From December 14 through January 5 tens of thousands of volunteers throughout the Americas took part in an adventure that has become a family tradition among generations. Families and students, birders and scientists, armed with binoculars, bird guides and checklists go out on an annual mission - often before dawn. For over one hundred years, the desire to both make a difference and to experience the beauty of nature has driven dedicated people to leave the comfort of a warm house during the Holiday season. The longest running Citizen Science survey in the world, Christmas Bird Count provides critical data on population trends. Data from the over 2,000 circles will be entered over the coming months into mid-2012 and will be available at Audubon.org/cbc. On December 17th, experienced YVAS leaders Billie Hicks and Helen Carlson organized 28 participants into teams, who counted in a 15 mile radius circle, and 9 'Feeder Watchers'. Walking and driving, participants put in over 50 hours and 380 miles and reported 28,480 birds and 64 species. In 2010, 61 species and a total of 28,389 birds were recorded by more than 30 participants in the official 'counting circle', who drove 334 miles. Data from as far back as 1984 showed as many as 56 individuals participating. Thank you to Billie Hicks

JANUARY 1 NEW YEAR'S FIELD TRIP

The annual YVA trip to Fort Smith and the Yellowtail Dam Afterbay departed Billings on a brisk but clear morning and headed south along the old Hardin Highway. Our first stop at the crest of the ridge just south of Billings was quite productive for a January morning and included Red-breasted and White-breasted Nuthatches, Red Crossbills, and a surprising flock of Red-winged Blackbirds foraging in the Ponderosa Pines high on the slope above the creek. Our caravan continued south with pauses here and there to check out various observations - Gray Partridge, Common Redpoll, and Merlin among others. After a quick break in Hardin, where we watched another Merlin slice through the trees in pursuit of the ever-present European Starlings, we continued up the Big Horn Valley. We observed large flocks of Canada Geese, including one individual with a completely white head that at first appeared to be a blue phase Snow Goose. There were quite a few Rough-legged Hawks observed throughout the day and mixed in were an occasional Red-tailed Hawk and a couple of Northern Shrikes. When we arrived at the overlook above the Afterbay we were greeted by throngs of Canada Geese, with a few Cackling Geese mixed in and even one immature Ross's Goose tagging along - perhaps the rarest species we observed that day. Also mixed in among the geese was an assortment of other waterfowl. Mostly Mallards, but also Northern Pintails, American Wigeon, Common Goldeneye, Gadwall, and Bufflehead. At the head of the Afterbay we had a quick encounter with a Belted Kingfisher and a few of us managed to catch a glimpse of an American Dipper before it disappeared. As we headed back north we all agreed it was a wonderful way to ring in the New Year. I don't have a good tally of the final number of species observed by our party, but it really doesn't matter. We all got outside and enjoyed seeing some great birds in good company on a balmy winter day. That's what matters. Thank you to John Carlson

JANUARY 7 EAGLE SURVEY



Brad Hall, leader, Ruth Vanderhorst, Anne Cowan, and I went on the field trip. Most notable was the sunny, windless day that made the trip an enjoyable experience. The complete lack of frozen stretches of water on the Yellowstone River may have scattered the wintering eagles.

At the east end of the route, a pair of adult eagles perched in a cottonwood tree made a spectacular sight. Two Moon Park, normally good for several eagles, drew a complete blank. In fact, it wasn't until we reached the KOA Campground that we had our next

Bald Eagle Photo by
George Mowat

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eagles: 4 adult and 2 immature Bald Eagles. I was somewhat surprised that 2 of the adults were halfway up the mudstone cliffs on the south side of the river.

We saw very few eagles after that until we reached the hill dropping into the town of Columbus. That area yielded 2 adult and 6 immature Bald Eagles. That was a nice finish to what started out as a rather sparse day. In all along the entire route, 13 adult and 10 immature Bald Eagles were sighted. It is hard to complain about weather when it was so beautiful, but the low bright sun made spotting eagles rather difficult when looking in a southerly direction. Thank you to George Mowat



ACTIVITIES AT THE AUDUBON CENTER

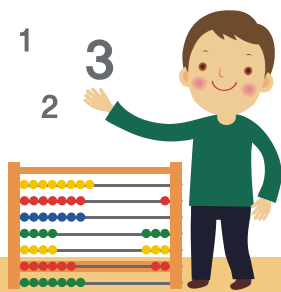
7026 South Billings Blvd, Billings, MT, 59101 406-294-5099, www.mtacec.org

- **February 4** Snow tracking workshop for families from 9 – noon. Held at the Red Lodge Nordic Center with Custer National Forest and Audubon Center staff. Learn how to cross-country ski, then explore the trails in search of animal tracks. Bring your own skis. Children ski free. Adults \$5 trail use fee. Call 294 – 5099 to register.
- **February 10** Nature Night at the Audubon Center! Drop your child off for an evening of outdoor adventures with our Teacher Naturalists. Program is open to 1st – 6th grade students, and runs from 6 – 8 PM. Fee is \$10 per child. Call 294 – 5099 to register.
- **February 12** Owl prow! for families from 6:30 – 8 PM. Learn amazing owl facts, and go on a hike in search of the resident great-horned owls on Norm's Island. Free! Call 294 – 5099 to register.
- **February 17** Celebrity Critters School Break Camp from 8:30 – 4:30: in honor of President's Day we'll learn about famous animals in the White House, in Hollywood, and in the wild! Open to students in 1st – 6th grades. Fee is \$40/child. Register by calling 294 – 5099.
- **February 26** Winter Ecology Weekend Wonders family workshop from 1:30 – 3 PM: Learn about amazing adaptations that help our hardy critters in Montana survive until spring. Free! Call 294 – 5099 to register.
- **February 28** Free evening lecture from 7 – 8 PM at the Audubon Center. Dr. Bernie Quetchenbach presents "Writing the River", a reflection on the Yellowstone River landscape including weather, geology, and wildlife. Dr. Quetchenbach teaches writing and literature, including literature and the environment, at MSU-B. His essays, poems, and articles have appeared in a variety of books, anthologies, and magazines.

FEBRUARY 17-20 GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

The 15th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) will be held Friday, February 17 through Monday, February 20, 2012. The GBBC is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where birds are across the U.S. and Canada. It is a joint partnership between the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, with Bird Studies Canada as its official Canadian partner. The GBBC is open to birders of all ages and abilities, and helps provide researchers with citizen science data on where birds are each February.

While many rare sightings are reported, the 2011 GBBC top-10 list showed the European Starling leading the way with 1,378,210 individuals, all believed to be descended from 100 birds that were released in New York's Central Park in the early 1890's. Second was the American Robin, with just over a million individuals being reported. For the first time in eight years the American crow has moved back up the list and is now at number seven, after suffering a sharp decline as a result of the West Nile virus.



(Continued on page 5)

How can you join?

- 1. Plan to count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count.** You can count for longer than that if you wish. Count birds in as many places and on as many days as you like—one day, two days, or all four days. Submit a separate checklist for each new day. You can also submit more than one checklist per day if you count in other locations on that day.
- 2. Count the greatest number of individuals of each species that you see together at any one time.** You may find it helpful to print out your [regional bird checklist](#) to get an idea of the kinds of birds you're likely to see in your area in February. You could take note of the highest number of each species you see on this checklist.
- 3. When you're finished, enter your results [through the web page](#).** You'll see a button marked "Enter Your Checklists!" on the website home page beginning on the first day of the count. It will remain active until the deadline for data submission. Visit Photos www.birdcount.org

JUNE 8-10

2012 Montana Audubon

Wings Across the Big Sky Bird Festival

Come join us for Montana Audubon's Annual Bird Festival, this year co-hosted by the Flathead Audubon Society, June 8–10, 2012, at the **Hilton Garden Inn** and Conference Center, 1840 US Hwy 93 S in Kalispell. We are very excited about this new facility, which will be center stage for festival activities Friday through Sunday, including registration, birding field trips departure point, guest speaker presentations, meals, banquet festivities, and much more.

The Hilton is centrally located in the heart of the Flathead Valley and provides easy access to all our birding activities, field trips, and workshops, and is within a short drive of abundant recreational destinations, such as Flathead Lake and Glacier National Park. Currently we have 50 rooms blocked out for festival-goers Friday and Saturday nights. (25 King beds and 25 Queen/Queen beds at \$99 per night plus applicable taxes.) This rate will be extended to us for three days prior and post event. Be sure to tell them you're with the Bird Festival group to get the special rate! We suggest you make your reservations soon at the hotel directly at 1-406-756-4500. For nearby accommodations within walking distance of the Hilton, here are more options:

Aero Inn, 1830 US Highway 93 South | Kalispell, MT | 59901. 1-406-755-3798

Motel 6, 1540 US Hwy. 93 South | Kalispell, MT | 59901. 1-406-752-6355

Super 8 Motel, 1341 1st Avenue East | Kalispell, MT | 59901. 1-406-755-1888

The Outlaw Hotel, 1701 Hwy 93 S | Kalispell, MT | 59901. 1-406-755-6100

Alternative accommodations can be found at www.kalispell.stayingj.com, toll free 1-877-STAY-HGI

2012 PRE-FESTIVAL WORKSHOPS

Our workshops were so popular at our 2011 Festival in Glasgow that we again are offering two pre-festival Conservation Workshops, plus adding one pre-festival Education Workshop, all scheduled for Friday, June 8. You can sign up for these during registration from March 15 to May 22. The festival brochure will be arriving in your mail box mid-March. So you will want to act fast—space is limited for each workshop! We're excited to offer the following three pre-festival (Friday) workshops this year:

Conservation

1). ***Northwestern Montana Birds and Wildlife in a Warming World.*** We'll tour local forests and, hopefully, Glacier National Park. Participants will get up close and personal with the flora and fauna of the area, discuss the impacts of our changing climate, and delve into how we can lessen the impact by reducing carbon pollution and building resilient ecological systems best able to adapt to a changing climate.

2) ***River-to-Lakes Initiative.*** Since 2000, the River-to-Lake Initiative has been providing conservation and restoration expertise to private landowners along the Flathead River and along the North Shore of Flathead Lake. River-to-Lake partners, spearheaded by the Flathead Land Trust, work directly with landowners to craft conservation efforts that meet their needs. We'll meet many of these partners and visit several project sites, including two Important Bird Areas (Owen Sowerwine Natural Area and North Shore Flathead Lake).

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Education

Develop a Bird Education Program in your Community. This six-hour training is for any Audubon Chapter member looking to begin or improve their bird education programs within their community. Each participant will receive training and curricula-oriented materials from Flying Wild, a Council for Environmental Education program which introduces students to bird conservation through standards-based classroom activities and environmental stewardship projects. In addition, instructors will share their expertise and experiences in developing new environmental education programs for all ages. (For more information on Project Flying Wild go to www.flyingwild.org.) This workshop will be presented by the Montana Audubon Conservation Education Center: Darcie Vallant, Center Director, and Heather Ristow, Education Director. For questions on this training please contact Darcie at 406-294-5099, ext. 302. For more information about the festival please contact: Montana Audubon Bird Festival Coordinator, Larissa Berry at lberry@mtaudubon.org/406-443-3949, or any Flathead Audubon Board Member. For updates, visit <http://www.mtaudubon.org/birdwatching/festival.html> and "like" us at <http://www.facebook.com/MontanaAudubon>.



AWARD WINNING PHOTOGRAPHS

A dedicated nature photographer, YVAS Board member Jeanette Tasey was recently awarded first place out of 7,000 entries in the 'Group' category from the 2011 Great Backyard Bird Count. The photo that got the award is this group of Gray-crowned Rosy Finches. Jeanette had 4 additional photographs that were accepted in the GBBC 2011 Photo Gallery; she has consistently had photos accepted in the Galleries since 2007. To see more of Jeanette's photographs, please visit <http://www.yvaudubon.org> or <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/2011-photo-contest-finalists/2011-finalists-group>.

Gray-crowned Rosy Finches Photo by Jeanette Tasey

contest-finalists/2011-finalists-group.

NESTING MATERIALS



- Please submit your backyard or travel bird photos to Jeanette Tasey at jtasey@gmail.com for identification confirmation and sizing so they can be posted to the YVAS website.
- Bring walkie/talkie radios on field trips if you have them. It's really helpful for each car to have one, and sometimes we have more cars than we do radios.
- Barn Owls are raising their young: Visit http://js-kit.com/blob/h_AIAiGwpZOeUGLa_xLWb1.jpg This link displays a recent photo of a pair of barn owls mating; the eggs will be coming soon. The live webcam for viewing the Barn Owls and owlets is http://sportsmansparadiseonline.com/Oceanside_Barn_Owls.html

- Montana Audubon: Birds Call This Home - Riparian "BMPs"

Check out MA's new brochures which describe "best management practices" for living along Montana waterways with birds and wildlife in mind. Designed for landowners, this guide shows just what birds need to thrive and how we can help. The Bitterroot Audubon Chapter and Five Valleys Audubon Society were instrumental in crafting these two brochures as outreach for local Important Bird Areas. View them on line www.mtaudubon.org/birds/riverinebmp.html

National Audubon Society
Recruitment Code: C0ZN500Z
Application for New Membership

Please enroll me as a member of the National Audubon Society. I understand that I will receive the Audubon Magazine and Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society Flyer. Make check payable to **National Audubon Society**.
*Renewals will be sent to you through National Audubon.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Email Address _____

One Year Membership

☐ \$20 One year new membership

Send this application and your check made out to **National Audubon Society** to:

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society
Attention: Membership Secretary
P.O. Box 1075
Billings, MT 59103-1075

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society
Recruitment Code: C0ZN500Z
Application for New & Renewal Membership

Please enroll me as a supporting member of Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society. I understand I will be supporting local chapter activities and receiving the local newsletter. I will enjoy full Chapter benefits. Make check payable to **Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society** for \$20. If applying for a new or renewing student membership, make check for \$10 and indicate academic affiliation.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Email Address _____

Do you want to receive the Flyer electronically?

☐ YES ☐ NO

Send this application and your check to:

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society
Attention: Membership Secretary
P.O. Box 1075
Billings, MT 59103-1075



WHOOPS!!

Is it time for you to become a YVAS member or renew your chapter membership?

PLEASE CHECK THE MAILING LABEL ON YOUR FLYER. IF IT SHOWS "YVAS JAN 12" BELOW YOUR NAME, THEN YOU ARE A SUPPORTING CHAPTER MEMBER WHOSE MEMBERSHIP EXPIRES IN JANUARY 2012. IF YOU ARE NOT A MEMBER OR YOUR MEMBERSHIP HAS EXPIRED, HELP US OUT BY JOINING OR RENEWING NOW WITH YOUR CHECK FOR \$20, USING THE FORM ON THE RIGHT. YOUR MEMBERSHIP HELPS FUND THE PUBLICATION OF THE FLYER ALONG WITH OTHER ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE MANAGEMENT OF OUR CHAPTER.

Membership Information

Although the National Audubon Society gives complimentary membership in our chapter as a benefit, no dues come to us. We strongly encourage you to join YVAS as a Supporting Chapter Member, which is offered for \$20 a year. Use the application form above to join as a Supporting Chapter Member or to renew your Chapter Membership.

1. **Moving???** Let us know as early as possible when you plan to move. The Post Office does charge us a fee for returned flyers. Include your old address as well as your new address so we can track you. You may write, call, or email the information to the Membership Secretary.
2. Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society offers Supporting Chapter student memberships for a reduced rate of \$10 a year. If you applying for a new student membership or are renewing a student membership, make sure you indicate your academic affiliation in your application. Joel Bowers, Membership Secretary



**YELLOWSTONE VALLEY
AUDUBON FLYER**

Non-Profit Organization
PRST STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BILLINGS, MT
PERMIT NO. 27

P.O. Box 1075
Billings, MT 59103-1075

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Field Trip Calendar:

All field trips depart from Rocky Mountain College parking lot on Rimrock Road, adjacent to Billings Studio Theater, unless otherwise noted, and will be by car. All field trips are open to the public. Passengers will share gas costs with driver when car- pooling. Do make sure you check all field trips with listing in flyer each month for any changes.

- **Feb 4 (Sat) WINTER WANDERERS FIELD TRIP -- 9 a.m. to dark. FUNDRAISER**-Rare winter birds. **Progressive birding and eating.** A day that provides breakfast, lunch and dessert stops as well as bird watching and lots of good conversation and fun. Cost is a donation of \$15.00 or more. **Reservations mandatory by Thursday, Feb 2nd. Call Ruth Vanderhorst for reservations and information at 245-5118.**
- **Apr 21 (Sat) EXXON PONDS AND EMERALD HILLS. 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.** Sack lunch. One mile walk. Ron Kuhler and George Mowat, leaders.
- **May 5 (Sat) LAKE BASIN 8 a.m.** Sack lunch. Mike Weber, leader.
- **May 12 (Sat) MEET AT RIVERFRONT PARK at 8:00 a.m.** Half day. George and Bernie Mowat, leaders.
- **May 17 (Thur) MEET AT RIVERFRONT PARK. 5:30 p.m.** Mike Weber, leader.
- **May 19 (Sat) STILLWATER AND WOODBINE AREAS. 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.** Sack lunch. Ruth Vanderhorst, leader.

