

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 43, NUMBER 1

JANUARY 2013

New This Issue

- **CHRISTMAS POT LUCK RESULTS**
- **YELLOWSTONE RIVER OSPREY PROJECT**
- **NESTING MATERIALS**



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OSPREY AS BIOLOGICAL INDICATORS



OSPREY READY FOR RELEASE

Photo by Paul Ruhter Gazette Staff
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MEMBERSHIP MEETING MONDAY, JANUARY 21

Our speaker, **Cameron Sapp**, recently graduated from Rocky Mountain College with a Bachelors of Science in Environmental Science-Ecology option, and Environmental Management and Policy. Sponsored by Professor Kayhan Ostovar to work with YVAS over the past year, he collaborated with others to band osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) chicks and

test their blood levels for heavy metal contaminants. Heavy metal levels and fledgling success are useful environmental health benchmarks.

High mercury levels were found in the osprey chicks this year. These findings in pilot study encourage an effort to continue the research. This project is unique in that it involved community input among Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society, Rocky Mountain College, St. Cloud State University and the four power companies (NorthWestern Energy, Beartooth Electric Cooperative, Park Electric Cooperative, and Yellowstone Valley Cooperative). According to Sapp, community involvement is an important part of research because it strengthens support and directly relates the results to the place we live.

Now that this project is picking up momentum, he feels it is more important than ever to continue collecting data on local osprey behavior. This would not be possible without the aid of citizen scientists.

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, January 14, 6:00pm: Board of Directors Meeting

Monday, January 21, 7:00pm: General Membership Meeting

We will hold a YVAS fundraiser dinner at 5:45, before the membership meeting. Dinner donation: \$6. Shelia McKay has again generously volunteered to host. Please e-mail her at wjhbird@yahoo.com or call 652-7175, cell 694-7918 before January 18 to make reservations and tell her what you will bring.



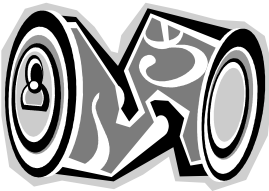
☞ We're on the web! yvaudubon.org

THIS FLYER IS PUBLISHED ON SFI CERTIFIED PRODUCT

A photograph of a Screech Owl perched on a wooden fence post in a snowy field. In the background, there is a snow-covered landscape with a fence and distant hills under a cloudy sky.

Mike Weber, Will Crain, and I braved the foggy, snowy weather and drove to the Afterbay, in Fort Smith. On the way we were rewarded with a great view of a Wilson's Snipe on a gravel bar in the Big Horn River. Several flocks of small birds on the highway flew away at our approach. Patient waiting allowed us to identify Common Redpoll, a couple of Gray-crowned Rosy-finch, Horned Lark, and American Tree Sparrow.

On the way home we encountered 5 short-eared Owl in a flock on corral fence posts. That made a total of 9 Short-eared Owl observed on the trip. And finally a Great Horned Owl appeared on a power pole. Our total number of species was 56. Thank you to George Mowat



Will Crain is no longer able to pick up aluminum cans collected at Helen Carlson's house. We would appreciate a volunteer with a pick up truck to gather them from Helen, and take them to the recycling center, where we get a nice contribution to our treasury. If you can spare an hour each month, please contact Deb Regele 962-3115 or dregele@juno.com

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

- 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.

THE RESULTS ARE IN: YVAS had a wonderful old fashioned Christmas Potluck!

Both attendance (165) and fundraising (\$4,000 after expenses) broke previous records. The hall looked very festive with white tablecloths, blue chairs, and hand made bird-houses with natural greens on each table.

The program by Bob Landis was outstanding, as always. His video on the large screen with sound effects and his narration kept the audience enraptured. Bob's generosity of sharing his work with Yellowstone Valley Audubon is greatly appreciated. He also donated the proceeds from the sale of his DVDs to YVAS.



The auction took a bit of a different turn in that we had some live auctioning as well as the silent auction and raffle. Dave Pauli, Director of the Northern Regional Office of the Humane Society, was our gifted Master of Ceremonies, and it turns out he is a skilled auctioneer also. The live auction was something new for YVAS and was successful in selling several art items as well as outings donated to the auction. People bid generously in the silent auction. Also popular was the bargain table where guests could take items and determine the amount of donation to put in the "kitty". Helen Carlson had many items in the raffle and exceeded her last year's sales by \$100.

Many people did a lot of work on this event, and we would like to thank every one for their dedication to YVAS. People responsible included your Board, volunteers from the membership, and all the businesses and individuals who generously donated items. YVAS offers special thanks to Dorothy Bartlett and Shelia McKay.

The Board welcomes comments, criticism, and suggestions from the membership that would help us plan for next year. Please contact any Board member or call Dorothy Bartlett at 252-0757, email dpadanyi@live.com or write to YVAS, PO Box 1075, Billings, MT 59103.

THANKS TO ALL OUR DONORS TO THE SILENT AUCTION

DONATING BUSINESSES

| | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| The Base Camp | Wild Birds Unlimited | The Fort | Sylvan Nursery |
| Joy of Living | Zimmerman Ace Hardware | Billings Army Navy Supply | Billings Nursery |
| Fitness 19 | Gainan's Flowers | Straw Hat Pizza | and Landscaping |
| Laurel Tractor Supply | Pelican Plaza | S Bar S Building Center | Michael's Crafts |
| Thomas Books | Wild Purls Yarn Shop | Highlands Golf Club | Kohl's |
| Ducks Unlimited | | Montana Mills | |

DONATING ARTISTS

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Bob Jones, photographer | Jeanette Tasey photographer | W.R. Pirami- photographer |
| Linda Weeks | Jennifer Baretta. Sandstone | |
| Don Anegal | Louis Habeck, artist, sculptor | |
| Curtis Morse | Dan Mazel, Stonefly | |
| Will Crain, Sandstone Gallery | Craig Phillips, Decoy artist | |
| Charles Ringer Studio and Gallery | Larry Robson | |

THANKS TO ALL OUR DONORS TO THE LIVE AUCTION

Fitness certificate
 Conservation Fund Contributions
 Trip to Montana Raptor Conservation Center
 Birthday Party at ACEC
 Two trips with or at WJH- (private bird resource group)
 A Day with Dave Pauli - US humane Society Wildlife Response team
 Ducks Unlimited Print
 Swan Sculpture and Event Poster by Louis Habeck
 Sculpture by Charlie Ringer

And thanks to all our supportive YVAS members and friends who donated items !!

YELLOWSTONE RIVER OSPREY PROJECT 2012



<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:OspreyNASA.jpg>

This year Kayhan Ostovar, Luke Ward and Cameron Sapp from the Yellowstone River Research Center at Rocky Mountain College worked with Monty Sullins and other members of the Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society, and Marco Restani, of St. Cloud State University, Minnesota, to band osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) chicks and test their blood levels for heavy metal contaminants.

For several years now, members of YVAS have been carefully watching the osprey along the Yellowstone River to learn more about their reproductive success and potential causes of mortality. This year, 15 members and non-members conducted nest monitoring observations on 43 osprey nests from Gardiner to Custer, MT. Included on the data sheet that YVAS members filled out, was a check off for whether or not there

was baling twine present in the nest. We do not know why adult osprey gather baling twine to line their nests but the results can be deadly. The Raptor View Research Institute in Missoula recently found a 20-year old nest that had blown down in a storm that had approximately a quarter mile of baling twine.

Baling twine is predominantly used for agricultural purposes. Modern baling twine is not biodegradable sisal fiber but is now made with polypropylene rope. While baling twine is most commonly associated with proximity to ranching activities and agricultural fields, there are instances where nests are filled with baling twine even when there is not a field in sight.

During the study this summer, there were two instances in Yellowstone County involving osprey entangled in baling twine. This year we documented that up to 10% of osprey chicks die each year due to entanglement by baling twine that has been used to build the nest. This may be a significant source of mortality in this population.

The two cases in Yellowstone County illustrate the danger of baling twine and highlight the importance of developing a broad education program. The first case involved a nest located behind the sugar beet factory. Western Sugar promptly called the right people and within hours osprey project members coordinated a bucket truck to access the nest and perform a rescue. The chick's legs were badly injured by the twine, and it was necessary to take it to the Montana Raptor Conservation Center in Bozeman.

The other osprey was entangled in a nest by the Lockwood Exit # 452. This instance illustrated the importance of frequent observation and quick reporting. An osprey chick had caught its talon in twine on another osprey chick that had already died inside the nest due to baling twine entanglement. Unfortunately, this osprey had been hanging upside down for quite some time, and we were not able to save it. So in just one nest, two birds died from baling twine.

While tragic, the observations made by YVAS osprey nest observers and osprey researchers have identified a problem that we can take actions to remedy. YVAS has a large number of pamphlets warning landowners of the dangers of baling twine to osprey. Through the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) programming, RMC researchers have identified a list of roughly 250 landowners that live within a one mile radius of each of the osprey platforms along the Yellowstone River. We would like to mail a pamphlet to each of these landowners. Hopefully, through education of the problem, they will be encouraged to pick up baling twine in their fields. To send out this mailing will be expensive, but we think it is a worthwhile step.

In more positive news YVAS and researchers were able to help with the rescue, recovery and eventual release of a young osprey chick that was probably injured after falling out of a nest. This bird was released in time to join the annual fall migration, however we will never know if it returns to Yellowstone County or even survives into adulthood. In an effort to better track individual osprey chicks, there are plans in the works to use individually colored sets of ID leg bands (that can be read with binoculars) so that we know when individual osprey chicks come back to nest along the Yellowstone or other rivers in Montana. Little is known about site fidelity of osprey chicks, and much could be learned about their localized movements, the age of first reproduction, and mortality rates. This effort will be costly, and we are looking for sponsors to help fund these individual tags.

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YVAS members can help by alerting Fish, Wildlife, and Parks or any board member as soon as you see a bird in trouble. They will alert researchers who can help coordinate a rescue. To help fund these efforts we are offering individual chick adoptions (\$50.00) and nest site adoptions (\$250.00). Anyone making a donation for a chick will get a picture of their chick along with the ID number and where and when it was banded. For nest adoptions we will coordinate with the donor to join us when we go out to the nest to sample the chicks and band them. These donors will get to have their photo taken with a chick and take part helping the research team with the sampling effort.

Tax deductible donations can be made to Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society or Rocky Mountain College. Please reference Project Osprey. Mail to the attention of: Kayhan Ostovar, Rocky Mountain College, 1511 Poly Drive, Billings MT 59102

MONTANA'S WILDLIFE NEEDS YOUR VOICE



With the 2013 Montana Legislature starting in January, many important issues impacting wildlife, wildlife habitat, and our environment are at stake. The passionate and reasoned voices of Auduboners across the state can make such a difference.

We anticipate that most of our work at Legislature will be defensive. Our priorities are:

Fighting for Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat by supporting wildlife program budgets—and fighting legislation that prohibits the purchase of any new public land, including for wildlife habitat.

Advocating for Climate Change Solutions by ensuring that Montana's energy development remains as wildlife-friendly as possible—and that the state continues to make progress on energy efficiency, renewable energy, and other climate change solutions.

Defending our Environmental Laws, including the Montana Environmental Policy Act (which requires a review of environmental impacts before new mines, large subdivisions, oil and gas wells, timber sales, etc. are approved), land use laws designed to regulate uncontrolled development (from subdivisions to gravel pits), and laws that protect our clean air and water.

Please lend your voice to help Audubon in Helena! You can do this by signing up for our action alert program at your local Audubon Chapter meeting or at www.mtaudubon.org. We limit the use of our action alert program to the most critical times! And if you are not sure if you are signed up, just sign up again—we make sure that duplicate email addresses are weeded out.

ADOPT A BIRD Audubon Holiday gift catalog: you can honor a loved one, family member or friend by adopting one of 16 breathtaking birds. Your gift recipient will receive: a beautiful "Happy Holidays" season greeting card, a charming 5" x 7" full-color photo of your bird species, a personalized holiday e-card, an exclusive 2013 Audubon calendar with an array of beautiful birds featured each month (while supplies last), and a full year of the award winning Audubon Magazine. It's three-fold giving. You adopt birds like the Northern Cardinal, the Roseate Spoonbill or the Burrowing Owl for loved ones. Your donation helps protect birds for future generations. You and your loved ones know that you have made an important difference. Visit the Audubon Gift Catalogue at www.Audubon.com.

NESTING MATERIALS

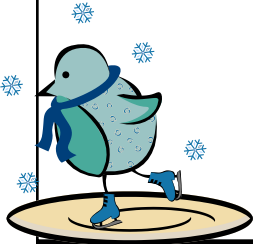


- **"MATING FOR LIFE"**, airing January 10 at 7pm on PBS, features the Sandhill Crane. Produced by MSU filmmaker Cindy Stillwell
- **CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY** invites you to experience the Birds-of-Paradise Project through dazzling photos and video from Cornell Lab scientist Ed Scholes and National Geographic photographer Tim Laman. During an eight-year quest, they captured images of all 39 species for the first time. This fall, they shared their story as part of a National Geographic Society-wide effort in collaboration with the Cornell Lab. As the trailer shows, the opulent plumes and fantastical dances of these 39 species are astounding and leave us with the most profound of scientific questions: Why? See hours of entertaining educational birding videos at www.youtube.com/user/LabofOrnithology
- **OLIVIA BOULER'S ART CONTINUES TO HELP BIRDS**
Eleven year-old artist Olivia Boulter came to public attention for her advocacy work during the Gulf Oil

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Spill. Now, at 13 years old, she has raised over \$200,000 to help birds. She has been named a White House Champion of Change, ASPCA Kid of the year, Youth Service America's 25 Most Powerful and Influential Young People, and a National Scholarship Winner. Olivia's children's book, *Olivia's Birds: Saving the Gulf*, is featured at many prominent bookstores. Gryphon Design Collective has featured Olivia in their Youth Ambassador Program, which promotes young game-changers who are advocates and role models within the global community. Read more at <http://bit.ly/126m8cX>.

Olivia recently developed two beautiful greeting card collections that are available through Gryphon Design Collective. A portion of the proceeds will benefit the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. To order Olivia's Holiday Greetings or Birds by Olivia cards, visit <http://bit.ly/YXZZ1S>. If you are interested in purchasing the cards for resale, contact Michele Slobin Apprille at (781) 401-0684 or mslo-gryphondesigncollective.com.



FEB 9 (SAT) WINTER WANDERERS FIELD TRIP--9 a.m. Fundraiser--Rare Winter Birds. Progressive birding and eating. A day that provides breakfast and lunch 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 Thurs. Feb. 7th. Call Caroline Jones for reservations and information at 652-3041. Limit 15 persons.

EVENTS AT THE AUDUBON CONSERVATION EDUCATION CENTER

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

Winter 2013

JANUARY 2 Registration opens for the Audubon Center's winter session of Adventures in Nature Afterschool and school break Camps, Hands-on Home School Science classes, and Nature Nuts Pre-school program. Classes begin the week of January 28th. For more info and a registration form, visit www.mtacec.org or call 294 - 5099.

JANUARY 11 Nature Night at the Audubon Center! Drop your child off for an evening of outdoor adventures with our Teacher Naturalists. Program is open to K - 6th grade students, and runs from 6 - 8 PM. Fee is \$15 per child or \$10 for Friends of the Center. For more info and a registration form, visit www.mtacec.org or call 294 - 5099.

JANUARY 20 Weekend Wonders Family Program from 1:30 - 3PM: Ice Fishing! Learn to ice-fish on Audubon's ponds with Naturalist Neal. Bring your own pole if possible. Fee is \$2/person or free for Friends of the Center. For more info and a registration form, visit www.mtacec.org or call 294 - 5099.

JANUARY 14 School Break Camp for kids in K - 6th grades! Join us for Fire and Ice Camp - winter is a time of extremes: cold weather, dark days, wind, and snow. We'll add a cozy fire to the mix as we learn what to expect and how to survive outdoors year-round. Runs from 8:30 - 4:30. Cost per day is \$45 or \$40 for Friends of the Audubon Center. One hour of after-care until 5:30 is available for an extra \$5. Call to register at 294-5099 or print out a registration form from www.mtacec.org!

JANUARY 22 Photography Workshop from 8:30 - 1:30 with David Grubbs, formerly Assistant Photo Editor at the Billings Gazette. Class will cover everything from picking the right camera to photo exposure to how to capture moments. Fee is \$80 per person. Space is limited so register early by calling the Audubon Center at 294 - 5099.

JANUARY 30 Photography Workshop Series on Wednesdays from 6 - 8 PM for six weeks with David Grubbs formerly Assistant Photo Editor at the Billings Gazette. Class will cover everything from picking the right camera to photo exposure to how to capture moments. Fee is \$100 per person. Register by calling the Audubon Center at 294 - 5099.



GET YOUR AUDUBON ON! SAVE the DATE: 2013 CONVENTION // JULY 12-15, SKAMANIA LODGE, STEVENSON, WASHINGTON After 13 years, the Audubon Convention returns. Join Audubon staff, volunteers, and Chapter leaders to learn about how our work contributes to Flyways conservation. Experience four days of cutting-edge science, networking, birding and FUN in the Pacific Northwest. For more information and to receive email updates visit www.audubon.org/2013convention

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



WHOOOPS!!

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 EXPIRED IN JANUARY 2012. IF YOU ARE NOT A SUPPORTING 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.

| | | | |
|--------|------|---|--|
| Jan 5 | Sat | ANNUAL EAGLE MIDWINTER SURVEY in Lower 48 States. 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Yellowstone River: Billings to Columbus | Brad Hall or George Mowat, leader. No Host Lunch. |
| Feb 9 | Sat | WINTER WANDERERS FIELD TRIP. | Rare winter birds. Progressive birding and eating. 9 a.m. FUNDRAISER. Reservations Required by Feb. 7th. See p. 6 of the Jan FLYER for details. |
| Apr 13 | Sat | EXXON PONDS AND EMERALD HILLS. 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. | Sack lunch. <u>One Mile Walk.</u> |
| May 4 | Sat | LAKE BASIN 8 a.m. | Sack lunch. Mike Weber, leader |
| May 11 | Sat | MEET AT RIVERFRONT PARK at 8:00 a.m. Half day. | George and Bernie Mowat, leaders. |
| May 16 | Thur | MEET AT RIVERFRONT PARK. 5:30 p.m. | Mike Weber, leader. |

FIELD TRIP CHAIRS: George and Bernie Mowat 656-7467