

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 9

#### New This Issue

- Christmas Fundraiser
- Field Trips
- Yellowstone River Clean-up
- Yellowstone River Bird Conservation
- ACEC
- Bridger Raptor Festival
- Nesting Materials



Marco Restani and Cameron Sapp. Photo by James Woodcock, Billings Gazette, July 25, 2012. Reprinted with permission.

## MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 17 YVAS MEMBERSHIP MEETING

SEPTEMBER 2012

Back by popular demand, as we reconvene after the summer, is speaker Marco Restani. Marco describes himself as 'a migrant worker', dividing his time between being a Professor of Wildlife Ecology at St. Cloud State University, MN and being in Red Lodge, MT. He attended the University of Montana (BS), Montana State University (MS), and Utah State University (PhD). For the past 25 years he has conducted wildlife research – mostly on raptors – in Australia,

Greenland, and the US. He recently participated in a study overseen by the Yellowstone River Research Center at Rocky Mountain College. The study is designed to evaluate osprey along the Yellowstone River from Gardiner to Forsyth to see if any have high levels of mercury which can disrupt reproduction and young birds' health. A truck from NorthWestern Energy lifted him up along with RMC student Cameron Capp, to access the chicks in the stick aerie high on a pole. Once being lowered to the ground, the chicks were weighed, measured, banded, and blood samples were taken from the underside of the wing.

### 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, September 10, 6:00pm: Board of Directors Meeting at Nancy Wiggins' house, 3016 Brentwood Iane, Billings

Monday, 7:00pm: General Membership Meeting

We will hold a YVAS fundraiser dinner at 5:45, before the membership meeting. Dinner donation: \$6. It will be sponsored by the YVAS Board of Directors and feature something special prepared by Dorothy Bartlett. Please email her at dpadanyi@live.com or call to make reservations at 252-0757.



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Inside this issue:This Month's ChapterIMeetingIMeetings ScheduleIOfficers and Commit-<br/>tees2Membership Forms7Field Trip Schedule8

### THINK CHRISTMAS IN SEPTEMBER



The Christmas Potluck is scheduled for Monday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> this year. We hope that you will put it on your calendar now so you can be sure to attend this fun holiday get together and fundraiser for YVAS.

There are some new things this year.....

 $\Rightarrow$  We will be in a new location: The Harvest Church in the Heights. The reason for **MONDAY DECEMBER 3** the change is that we have begun to outgrow the space that we have been using, and

would like to grow this event in the future. Also, Harvest Church has projectors, screens and a sound system for our program.

 There will be more advertising for the program, inviting all Auduboners and other interested community people to the program part of the evening.

The rest will be familiar.....

- We will have our regular potluck for YVAS members and guests.
- Bob Landis will present and narrate a 45 minute program of his Yellowstone photography.
- We will have our silent auction and raffle as usual.

The reason we have the silent auction and raffle is to fund activities and projects for YVAS. And it's fun. I would love to hear from any of you about what kind of items you would like to see on the auction table. Also, be thinking about what items you might donate, and later on we'll be asking you to sign up on a donation list. The Board is allowing me to coordinate this event this year. If you have participated in the past and there are aspects of it that you would like to help with or be responsible for, please let me know. You can contact me, Dorothy Bartlett at 406-252-0757 or <u>dpadanyi@live.com</u>.

**IT'S REALLY IMPORTANT** to make reservations and volunteer to bring a dish if you plan on attending a dinner before the monthly membership meeting. These dinners are sponsored by generous YVAS volunteers who would appreciate your help by calling them in advance so they can plan the menu and accurately plan for the number of diners they will be serving. Thanks to all!

#### **Committees and Special Assignments:** Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society Officers: Archives and History.....open President: Bill DeMeyer, 671-7501, battie@bresnan.net Audubon Adventures......Jeannette Davis, 656-7618 Vice-President: Steve Regele, 962-3115, sregele@juno.com Bird Questions..... George Mowat, 656-7467 or Secretary: Dorothy Bartlett, 252-0757, dpadanyi@live.com Helen Carlson, 248-8684 Treasurer: Deb Regele: 962-3115, dregele@juno.com Christmas Bird Count......Helen Carlson, 248-8684 Past-President: open or Billie Hicks, 962-3798 Conservation Chair......Kayhan Ostovar, 256-7481, **Board of Directors:** kayhan@q.com Editor.....Nancy Wiggins, 651-0218, nwiggins83@gmail.com Donn Bartlett: 252-0757, donnbartlett@msn.com Field Trip Chairs... George and Bernie Mowat, 656-7467, Rita Harding: 259-7586, mtroses22@bresnan.net gmowat@bresnan.net Shelia McKay, 652-7175, wjhbird@yahoo.com Greeters...Phyllis Holt 252-7373, Audrey Jurovich 656-2748 Jeanette Tasey,: 669-3169, jtasey@gmail.com Injured Raptors...Jeanette Tasey 669-3169, jtasey@gmail.com Nancy Wiggins: 651-0218, nwiggins83@gmail.com Membership Secretary.....Joel M. Bowers, 534-3672, Montana's Congressional Delegation: cell: 591-5635, jmba@jmba.com Program Chair.....Shelia McKay, 652-7175, Sen. Max Baucus: U.S. Senate, Wash. D.C. 20510 wjhbird@yahoo.com website: http://baucus.senate.gov Recycling (aluminum)...Will Crain, 697-9156, williamemail: max@baucus.senate.gov crain@earthlink.net, Billings: 657-6790 Wash. D.C.: 1-800-332-6160 Website.... Tom Lyman, Tomglyman@gmail.com Sen. Jon Tester: U.S. Senate, Wash. D.C. 20510 Meetings are held September through May at Mayflower Conwebsite: http://tester.senate.gov gregational Church, corner of Poly and Rehberg: email: senator@tester.senate.gov Billings: 252-0550 Wash. D.C.: 1-866-554-4403 Board Meetings held second Monday of each month at Rep. Dennis Rehberg: U.S. House of Rep. Wash. D.C. 20515 6:00pm. Board Meetings are open to entire membership. website: www.rehberg.house.gov email: denny.rehberg@mail.house.gov General Chapter Meetings are held third Monday of each month at 7:00pm. All meetings are open to the public. Billings: 256-1019 Wash. D.C.: 202-225-3211

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## FIELD TRIP NOTES

#### **4 AUGUST SHOREBIRDS, HAWKS AND PRAIRIE BIRDS**

During a scorching summer of record heat, we were treated to a rarefied day where the thermometer did not crack the 80 degree mark. Our first destination was Broadview Pond. It was shrinking quickly under the drought and much of it was turning into a quagmire, but its receding waters attracted numerous Greater and Lesser Yellow Legs. There were many Wilson's Phalaropes too. We picked out American Coots, Pied Billed Grebes, Eared Grebes, Double Crested Cormorants, gobs of Ringbilled Gulls and a handful of Franklin Gulls. There seemed to be at least a bakers dozen Great Blue Herons west of the main pond, most of them standing hunched up and looking morose. The herons were a delight to a birder named Teresa. She was in the area visiting relatives and came across our field trip on our website and was able to join us for the first half of the day. We were all enamored by the American White Pelicans soaring overhead as well as those loafing in the shallows. We looked for



MCCOWN'S LONGSPUR (with evident 'spur'). Photo by Will Crain

peep sandpipers and we just observed a few-our best guess was that they were Bairds. We also saw several Spotted Sandpipers, Avocets and three beautiful Marbled Godwits. We called out a rather shy Marsh Wren on our walk back out.

Next, we examined the nearby Spiedel WPA. It was dusty and bone-dry but we saw a number of Western and Eastern Kingbirds, Swainson's Hawks, Ravens, a lone Red-tailed Hawk and a Logger Head Shrike, which Will Crain was able snap numerous photos of.

There Teresa left for Billings and the remaining birders piled in my rig for a high plains birding tour from Broadview to Hailstone Basin. We stopped at a site not far from Broadview and witnessed some McCown's Longspurs perched on a wire. A few were still singing, their notes reminiscent of the twittering call of the Purple Martin.

We lunched at a shady abandoned farmstead. As we ate under a sprawling old willow, the birds seemed to like the spot too, as Yellow Warblers, Kingbirds and Western Wood Pewees flitted in the trees. Says Pheobes could be heard calling in the distance. George Mowat observed a female Bullock's Oriole that we all got brief glimpses of.

Along the drive to Hailstone Basin we came upon a small outcropping of jagged sandstone cliffs where we stopped and observed quite a few Rock Wrens. Soon we were at the gates of Hailstone National Wildlife Refuge; the road was blocked and signage warned us away. The Refuge is undergoing a restoration project from an alkaline lake to a prairie stream and we assumed it would be open by now. We surprised a flock of Gray Partridge into taking flight, and witnessed a lone immature cowbird-we surmised that most of the adults had already flown south.

On to Halfbreed National Wildlife Refuge. From a distance it was teeming with birds. At another vantage point we could see Halfbreed's satellites to the south, Grass and Goose Lake that were both filled with water. We dared not venture in by automobile due to the high fire danger. Nearing Big Lake we scanned the sky and viewed a very high soaring Golden Eagle and Turkey Vulture. Flocks of Gulls darted between them, and as an exclamation point Brad Hall pointed out a Ferruginous Hawk in the mix of high altitude birds. Approaching Big Lake we startled a Peregrine Falcon from a fence post. Big Lake was shrinking from the drought but there were many waterfowl and shorebirds in the distance, the heat waves making them difficult to identify. We remarked that an adventurous birder on foot or mountain bike would probably be well rewarded at Big Lake or Hailstone.

On the drive back into Billings we spotted some Wild Turkeys in Echo Canyon. Our last stop was a old gravel pit off of 48<sup>th</sup> Street West. We nabbed our last two new birds of the day, Violet Green Swallows and a family of Black Necked Stilts. We finished the day with a list of 69 species of birds. Thank you to Mike Weber

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Anne Cowan, a long-admired familiar and friendly face in the YVAS community, died on August 5, 2012 at the age of 89. Anne retired from a devoted career in nursing in 1988, but she continued to volunteer her time and companionship to the community. The Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society benefited enormously over the years from her generous spirit. She will be missed.





#### SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 15TH ANNUAL YELLOWSTONE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY RIVER CLEANUP

In conjunction with the Yellowstone River Research Center at Rocky Mountain College, this is the 6th year YVAS will sponsor a float through the city of Billings, working to make our community a cleaner and healthier place to live. The Yellowstone River is the longest free-flowing river in the United States and we would like your help to ensure it remains clean. Volunteers are needed to float the river or walk sections of shoreline. This project

directly relates to the Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society osprey monitoring project, as we can scout for new nests from the river and help improve water quality. We also use our time on the water to document all birds observed. This will allow us to gather long term data on some of the bird populations in the area. Our generous sponsors include:

- Peaks and Prairies Land Trust
- Eastern Wildlands Chapter Montana Wilderness Association
- National Audubon/Toyota Together Green Grant
- Northern Plains Resource Council
- Western Organization of Resource Councils
- ExxonMobil
- Billings Clinic Foundation
- Walmart West End
- St. Vincent Healthcare's Environmental Stewardship Committee
- Yellowstone River Conservation District Council
- Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks
- Yellowstone River Park Association
- Many members of the community

**WHEN**: Saturday, September 15th, 8:00am. We start at Duck Creek Bridge for the River Float Crew. Other teams will be walking sections of river shoreline and cleaning up Two Moon Park, Mystic Park, River-front Park and Norm's Island. We will float to Coulson Park, stopping to clean up sections along the way. Please call Kayhan at 657-1175 to sign up for a shore or river based team. The city of Billings helps us haul away what we collect at each location as it is literally mountains of trash.

### YVAS YELLOWSTONE RIVER BIRD CONSERVATION AREA PROJECT

As part of this project Kayhan Ostovar, Brad Hall, and Deb and Steve Regele have been recording bird observations at Yellowstone River sites including Two Moon Park, Isaac Homestead Wildlife Management Area near Hysham, and at the Gray Bear Fishing Access site near Big Timber. The data is being managed by the Rocky Mountain College Yellowstone River Research Center and is submitted to the Montana Natural Heritage Program for global use.



The inventory will continue at least into next year. If you are interested in birding these and other sites along the River, and adding to the Yellowstone River bird data set, please contact Steve Regele. Trips are scheduled when the trip leaders can arrange them, with some emphasis on migration and nesting seasons. Anyone interested in going on these trips will be notified with as much lead time as possible about the trip departure time and place. Steve can be reached at 406-962-3115 or at <u>sregele@juno.com</u>. In 2013 we look forward to organizing birding trips for numerous Yellowstone River locations as part of the Yellowstone River bird project. Details of these birding outings will be announced in the Flyer(s) and coordinated with George and Bernie Mowat, the YVAS birding trip General Chairmen.

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#### SEPTEMBER 8: EVENING UNDER THE BIG SKY 6pm at the

Audubon Center. Inaugural fundraising event for the Audubon Center. Fine din- **CONSERVATION** ing, silent and live auction hosted by Doug Nagel, and music by Kemmick and **EDUCATION CENTER** Friends. Special guest speaker: Monte Dolak, Montana artist. Call 294-5099 to purchase tickets or www.mtacec.org. Tickets are \$50 per person or \$350 for a

table of 8. Location: 7026 South Billings Blvd, Billings, MT 59101 info@mtacec.org, (406) 294–5099

#### Weekend Wonders Family Programs

Open to all ages; Register in advance. \$2/person or FREE for Friends of the Center

<u>September 16, 1:30 - 3 PM</u>: Bug Out with our naturalists while you collect and learn to identify spiders and insects!

September 29: National Public Lands Day - we'll help the BLM with projects at their Sundance Lodge Recreation Area. Call us for more info.

Sept 24 - Nov 16 Adventures in Nature After School Classes!

Join us for an 8-week series of afterschool classes, Scholarships are available! Call or visit our website for more info.

September 25 Free Evening Lecture from 7 - 8 PM with Kim Frank from the Science and Conservation Center on Wildlife fertility control: treating the problem and not the symptoms. One of the major efforts of this Center involves the humane control of wildlife populations by means of fertility control. Learn about their research and the field studies that they are involved in across the globe during this free program.

#### OCTOBER 5TH, 2012 - 7:00 PM THE BRIDGER RAPTOR FESTIVAL



<u>Museum of the Rockies</u> is an annual event held in and around Bozeman, Montana. The festival, which is free to the public, centers around a raptor migration count of the largest known Golden Eagle migration in the United States which takes place at the Bridger Bowl ski area in the Gallatin National Forest just north of Bozeman. Other activities include wildlife films, nature walks and talks, education and entertainment programs for people of all ages. The event has been sponsored by Imerys Talc as well as other partners and supporters, and is hosted by Bridger Bowl, Gallatin National Forest, and the Montana Raptor Conservation Center.

Keynote Speaker - Jack Horner will be speaking on "Raptors: The Extinct Kind, The Living Kind and Those We Might Create." Visit www.bridgerraptorfest.org for more information



#### **ESTING MATERIALS**— NOT TO BE MISSED:

"The Singing Life of Birds" by Donald Kroodsma, Houghton Mifflin Company 2005. I marvel at folks on field trips who can identify a bird by its song. At the Parmly Bill-ings Library I discovered this book on birdsong, which comes with a CD in the back. The author provides drama and suspense while weaving the science factors into the story,

keeping you on edge to find out what this or that bird is singing and what the neighbor bird is replying. Some birds learn their songs from a same specie neighbor, some are just born knowing what to sing, others make them up, mimic and retool them. Kroodsma examines 46 different, but well known species of birdsong. He explains the means used to analyze what is taking place as birds sing. The author takes us on a journey that explains the differentiation of the Alder and Willow Flycatchers. He shows us the differences between most Black-capped Chickadees and the odd isolated ones on Martha's Vineyard or in the Olympic Forest. He takes on the Blue Jay and what they are non-singing about; with careful listening they exhibit many songs. None sing as many as the Brown Thrasher, well over 2000 different ones! For those of us that don't hear so well, George Mowat is always generous offering birders to listen in on his amplifying devices. There's a lot more going on in the various songs of birds than meets the ears of the common birder. This book explains a lot of details about the varieties of birdsongs, and is a fun read on how to listen with questions one should be asking for comparative field work and the simple joy of learning more about bird communications. Thank you to Will Crain

#### NESTING MATERIALS— NOT TO BE MISSED (cont'd)

<u>Beauty and the Beak</u>. Restoring a Bald Eagle's beak gives it a second chance—with a little help from technology. Shot and edited by Keith Bubach for Evening Magazine (KING-TV). 2008 Emmy winner. Visit: http://www.vimeo.com/15184546 9Eagle

Osprey Chicks Get Their Wings In Live Video Feed From Audubon's Hog Island, Maine. Visit Audubon.org for some captivating footage :



### **BIRDS KEEP THEIR COOL, EVEN IN SUMMER**

As temperatures bake much of the United States and drought continues, birds are trying to keep their cool. They don't sweat like humans, or even pant like dogs; instead, they have a variety of unique adaptations to help beat the heat. In a <u>study</u> conducted on marsh sparrows in 2011, scientists found that bill size correlates to outside temperatures. Marsh sparrows with larger bills live in warmer climates, for example. The study noted that the <u>tropical toucan</u> also possesses a large bill, and has the ability to increase or decrease blood flow to its beak to either promote or prevent heat loss.

Laura Erickson of the <u>Cornell Lab of Ornithology</u>, however, points out that the size of a bird's bill isn't the only factor that keeps it cool. "In the case of the raven,

the further north you go the bigger their bills are," says Erickson. "But they need the bigger bill to chip into frozen carcasses in the winter." Instead, some birds rely on a variety of behavioral adaptations in order to regulate their body temperatures.

Some birds, like the great blue herons that star on the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's <u>nest cam</u>, will open up their wings on a hot day, allowing air to circulate across their bodies and sweep away the excess heat. "We've watched the adults move their bodies to shade the chicks," says Erickson. Great blue herons will also "droop" their wings in addition to opening them to protect their nestlings from the sun. But researchers can tell that the posture does more than just keep chicks cool, because the birds also do it when they're off the nest. These are only a couple of behaviors that birds use. When it's hot, some species will also resort to gular fluttering. The bird will open its mouth and "flutter" its neck muscles, promoting heat loss (think of it as the avian version of panting). "If you think about a dog panting, their tongue isn't only allowing evaporation, but is losing a lot of body fluid," says Erickson. "Birds are much more efficient about water and water loss."

Even so, birds still need to replenish fluids on a hot day. Installing a birdbath can provide feathered friends with a place to cool their heels in the summer, and get a drink. The water level shouldn't be too high—only about an inch deep—and the bottom of the birdbath shouldn't be too slippery. Replenish the water once every two or three days. Otherwise, the stagnant water can play host to algae and mosquito larvae, which can carry the West Nile virus as adults.

Almost as important as water is shade. Temperatures can be far cooler under trees or bushes, and birds often seek out these microclimates. Since a bird's body temperature is much higher than that of humans—a golden crowned kinglet was once found to have a body temperature of 111 degrees Fahrenheit—it's doubly important for them to cool off in a hurry. Proteins that shuttle vital information to a bird's organs begin to break apart at temperatures that are only slightly higher.

Climate change is expected to make droughts more frequent and extreme temperatures more common. And some bird populations are already being affected by the consequences of global warming. A <u>study</u> published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* reported that tree swallows laid their eggs up to nine days earlier because of warmer temperatures in the spring. Several populations of birds, most notably warblers, have also shifted their home ranges northward, and migration patterns are changing to accommodate the change in climate.

Together, these shifts indicate that birds are learning how to adapt to springs that feel like summers, and summers that feel like scorchers. Excerpted from <u>audubonconnect@audubon.org</u>

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National Audubon Society Recruitment Code: C0ZN500Z Application for <u>New</u> 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 <u>National Audubon Society</u> .         *Renewals will be sent to you through National Audubon.         Name         Address	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 <u>Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society</u> for \$20. If apply- ing for a new or renewing student membership, make check for \$10 and indicate academic affiliation.
	Name
City           StateZip	Address
Email Address	State Zip
One Year Membership 20 One year new membership Send this application and your check made out to <u>Na-</u> <u>tional Audubon Society</u> to: Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society Attention: Membership Secretary P.O. Box 1075 Billings, MT 59103-1075	Email Address Do you want to receive the Flyer electronically?
	Membership Information
Is it time for you to become a YVAS member or renew your chapter mem- bership? PLEASE CHECK THE MAILING LABEL ON YOUR FLYER. IF IT SHOWS "YVAS JAN 12" BELOW YOUR NAME, THEN YOU ARE A SUP- PORTING CHAPTER MEMBER WHOSE MEM- BERSHIP 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	<ul> <li>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.</li> <li><b>1.</b> 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.</li> </ul>

TELLOWSTONE VALLEL

#### YELLOWSTONE VALLEY AUDUBON FLYER

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

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# 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.

Sept 6 (Thur) MEET AT RIVERFRONT PARK at 5 p.m. Fall Migrants. Mike Weber, leader.

Sept 29 (Sat) MEETEETSE SPIRES HAWK WATCH. 8 a.m. Bring a sack lunch. Jerry Dalton, leader.

Oct 6 (Sat) STILLWATER AND COONEY DAM. 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sack lunch. Helen Carlson, leader.

Nov 10 (Sat) YELLOWTAIL DAM AFTERBAY. 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sack lunch. George Mowat, leader.

**Dec 22 (Sat)** ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT. More details will be in the FLYER.

- Jan 1 (Tues) NEW YEAR'S FIELD TRIP. 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sack lunch. Yellowtail Dam Afterbay. Helen Carlson, leader.
- 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.

FIELD TRIP CHAIRS: George and Bernie Mowat 656-7467