

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 45, NUMBER 10

OCTOBER 2015

Dr. Jeff Morisette will be the featured speaker at the YVAS October 19, 2015 Chapter Meeting

Dr. Morisette is currently the Director of the Department of the Interior US Geological Survey's North Central Climate Science Center, Denver, Colorado. His presentation will include an overview of the North Central Climate Science Center and his Department's work on effects of climate and climate change on birds and flyways, invasive species and the effect of invasive species on native species. Jeff received his PhD at North Carolina State Univ.

Dr. Morisette manages and conducts research on how natural and cultural land management can respect the non-stationary nature of climate. A current research theme is how dynamic species distribution models can contribute to vulnerability assessment and adaptation planning. Some of his research interests include large-scale invasive species habitat mapping and work on land surface relations between climate and periodic biological phenomena (as bird migration or plant flowering) from satellite data. His prior positions include branch head of the Invasive Species Science Branch and the assistant center director for science at the USGS Fort Collins Science Center. Before transferring to the USGS, he was at NASA's Goddard Space Flight center for ten years and in FY'07 he served a yearlong detail at NASA Headquarters working in the Applied Science Program.



Clark's Nutcracker
Photos by Will Crain



YVAS field trip to Nichols Creek area near Red Lodge 9/19 with Ruth Vanderhorst and Stan Heath as trip leaders. See trip details in the Field Trip section of this Flyer. At left, Deb Regele and Doreen Hartman on the field trip to Red Lodge, MT

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, October 12, 6:00pm: Board of Directors Meeting

Monday, October 19, 7:00pm: Chapter Meeting

We will hold a YVAS fundraiser dinner at 5:30, before the Chapter meeting. Dinner donation: \$6. Trenay Hart with friend Liz Foley generously volunteered to coordinate. Please contact her at 406-860-1175 before 10/16 to make reservations and contribute.



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☞We're on the web! yvaudubon.org

Fall Can Drive

Larry Handsaker, in charge of aluminum recycling for YVAS as a special assignment from the Board, has requested a **FALL CAN DRIVE**. We are asking all members to recycle their aluminum cans to YVAS, which contributes the proceeds to Audubon Adventures. Larry informs us that the quantities of cans collected has declined in recent years and wants to remind us all that the program still exists.

Please bring all the cans you have (bagged) to the **OCTOBER and NOVEMBER CHAPTER MEETINGS** and Larry will be on hand to get them recycled. Helen Carlson had previously spearheaded this project and still offers her place as a drop off for cans. Bagged cans can be left at the driveways of either Larry or Helen at anytime.

Larry can be reached at 406-855-9832 or drop off at his house: 918 AVE C, Billings. Helen Carlson can be reached at 406-248-8684 or drop off at her house: 519 Highland Park Dr., Billings.



EDITORS CORRECTION: I received a message from Rick Stevens that it was actually his wife, **Starr Stevens**, who first spotted the Blue Grosbeak near Bridger, MT in June 2006. Apologies for the oversight and Thank you for the correction and important information.

Submitted by Trenay Hart

CALLING FOR FLYER CONTRIBUTION

If you are tired of seeing the same old folks represented in the Flyer and feel like you have something fresh to contribute PLEASE submit. All submissions encouraged and considered. Please submit them to the yvasflyer@gmail.com email address and have articles in a Word document Times New Roman font size 11.

It is a challenge to fill the pages of the Flyer each month without your contributions. To those who have been submitting material - please continue to do so! NEWCOMERS are greatly encouraged to help fill the Flyer with interesting and subject related issues. The Conservation News and Nesting Material sections are in greatest need of submissions.

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society Officers:

AREA CODE 406

President: Steve Regele, 962-3115, sregele@juno.com

Vice-President: open

Secretary: Doreen Hartman, 697-0277, rdzlh-man@bresnan.net

Treasurer: Pam Pipal, 245-4517, ppipal@charter.net

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Montana's Congressional Delegation:

Sen. Steve Daines: U.S. Senate, Wash. D.C. 20510
 website: daines.senate.gov

email: senator@daines.senate.gov

Billings: 406-245-6822 Wash. D.C. 202-224-2651

Sen. Jon Tester: U.S. Senate, Wash. D.C. 20510
 website: tester.senate.gov

email: senator@tester.senate.gov

Billings: 406-252-0550 Wash. D.C.: 202-224-2644

Rep. Ryan Zinke:

website: zinke.house.gov

email representative@zinke.house.gov

Billings: 406-702-1182 Wash, D.C: 202-225-3211

Committees and Special Assignments:: AREA CODE 406

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Bird Questions:

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Helen Carlson Cummins, 248-8684

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Injured Raptors: Montana Raptor Conservation Center, 406-585-1211; Raptor Transport Jeanette Tasey 669-3169,
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Membership Secretary: Joel M. Bowers, 534-3672,
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Baling Twine Project: Lisa Bessasparis,
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Program Chair: Sheila McKay, 652-7175,
wjhbird@yahoo.com

Recycling (aluminum): Larry Handsaker, 406-855-9832

Website: Deb Regele, 962-3115, debregele@gmail.com

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

• Board Meetings are held the second Monday of each month at 6:00pm. Board Meetings are open to the entire membership.

• General Chapter Meetings are held the third Monday of each month at 7:00pm. All meetings are open to the public.

RIVERFRONT PARK FIELD TRIP SEPTEMBER 3RD Early on the walk we sighted a large Great Horned Owl perched on a tree stump. It was so well camouflaged that we had to use binoculars to distinguish it from the rest of the stump! That was certainly the highlight of the trip.

Our leader, Mike Weber, then took us down to the Yellowstone River where the viewing was better on such a gray, cloudy day at 5 pm. On the way to the river we saw American Redstart, Wilson's Warbler, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and Black-capped Chickadee. Along the river we watched hundreds of Ring-billed Gulls assembling on gravel bars in the river. It was difficult to pick out possible California Gulls in the mass of gulls. In addition, we saw a Great Blue Heron, Spotted Sandpiper, and a Caspian Tern along the river.

Twelve people showed up to enjoy the smoke-free air at last! And part of a rainbow showed up brightly for us. The number of birds was limited. Perhaps some birds had hastened elsewhere to avoid our smoky skies. Who knows? Submitted by Bernie and George Mowat (Mike Weber, trip leader submitted that 22 species were seen on this trip.)



A YVAS members side trip On Sunday 13 Sept, 4 of us, 3 with scopes, scouted the Halfbreed Lake NWR on the Plains northeast of Molt, in search of the American Golden Plover. Then we found a bunch of waterfowl and a shorebird or two. Best was 3 Merlin spotted in that area. There is water at Halfbreed with good shoreline but Big Lake is a bust. You have to negotiate a chain at the first cattle guard and then a barbwire gate that requires serious care in getting over unless you are 6' tall. Don't forget you can always call another member and make your own trips! Robert Hill, Trenay Hart and Mike Weber pictured left. Photo and notes submitted by Will Crain

Red Lodge 9/19/2015

We saw a total of 25 species. Six carloads of eager birders left at 7:04 AM from Rocky for a meet-up with Stan in Red Lodge. No Birding along the way allowed! From the rendezvous point Stan Heath led us to Nichols Creek where birding was good the second we opened our car doors but fell off precipitously from there. Species count for the day was 25, 26 if you count the sound of a nuthatch.

Nichols Creek is a superb birding niche since a fire in March of 2015... lots of birds enjoy burn areas and for sure this creek and mostly intact vegetation is a bonanza. Northern Goshawks and White-crowned Sparrows led the opening, further up Mountain Chickadees were a hit; and as seen earlier on several of my half dozen trips up this easy incline, hummingbirds, flycatchers and Red-napped Sapsuckers in their nests. Note, this drainage does need some noxious weeds pulled, to be sure. The lack of bird species indicates to me that winter is coming and most birds are not singing since they aren't seeking mates nor defending territory save the Townsend's Solitaire.

After Nichols Creek we had a nice picnic in Red Lodge along Rock Creek, then we went to another spot on Rock Creek a little north called Wagon Wheel Trail but again the birding was scarce. Submitted by Will Crain

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. **PLEASE DO NOT BRING PETS.** 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. Binoculars and birding books are available on loan at the field trips

FIELD TRIP CHAIR: Donn Bartlett 252-0757, donnbartlett@msn.com

Oct 3	Sat	STILLWATER RIVER AND COONEY DAM. 8am to 6pm.	Sack lunch, Deb & Steve Regele, leaders
Nov 7	Sat	YELLOWTAIL DAM AFTERBAY. 8am to 6pm.	Sack lunch, George Mowat, leader
Dec 19	Sat	ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT	Contact Jim Court, leader, at custertours@gmail.com



Montana Audubon Center 7026 South Billings Blvd, Billings, MT 59101406-294-5099 www.mtacec.org

- October 10, 6-8PM- Nighthawk Adventure Program, family program theme to be bats
- October 16, 6-9PM- Nature Nights Program, “date night” program for parents to drop off children for an evening alone.
- October 15&16, 8:30AM-4:30PM- Break Camps for School District 2 PIR days.
- October 24, 1-5PM- Family Pumpkin Carving Event.

Registration or questions: 406-294-5099 ex307 or email naturalist@mtaudubon.org

Baling Twine Committee News After a long summer of working the Baling Twine Educational Booth at the weekly South Park Gardeners’ Market, we are ready for a larger venue. Our goal is to have a booth at the 2016 MATE show *February 18, 19, & 20, 2016*. At the MATE, we will be able to reach out to far more people than we have currently. We will also have the opportunity to build a larger network of others willing to help us in our quest to recycle baling twine.

In order to get our booth into the MATE show, we need sponsors soon. The cost of one booth is \$580 (since it’s now after Sept. 1). There is a chance that we can get the booth at a reduced cost, but that is only if someone else cancels and it would be short notice. Either way, we need to have the full amount now to reserve the space. We did make some money selling hand-crafted items at our booth, but we fell very short of the required amount. We are asking for generous donors to sponsor our Baling Twine Educational Booth. If you love Osprey and would like to see baling twine recycling established in our area, please help us out! Once again, we would like to thank everyone for their kind words and support.

Submitted by Lisa Bessasparis

YVAS Issue Study Group Last spring a small group started meeting once a month to discuss an issue or book of conservation interest. The group has selected the following list of topics to choose from as we start up again:

*Public land management of federal lands-should lands be federal, state, or private? Do federal agencies need budget increases to manage better?

*Xeriscaping and a book titled-The Lawn: a History of American Obsession

*Book title: Silent Spring by Rachel Carson

*Drone impacts on wildlife

*Philosophical background on an issue from government agencies and conservation groups

*Book title: Natural West: environmental history in the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains by Dan Flores

The next meeting will be *Friday, October 16, from 7:00 to 9:00 pm* at Dalton’s house, 2255 Darcy Lane. The discussion topic will be “Sage grouse conservation: what has the U.S. Interior Dept. proposed?” A group of background articles to read in advance will be available via email.

Anyone is welcome to join the group at any time for one or more topics. Meetings are the third Friday of the month; the location varies.

*Submitted by Jerry Dalton, 656-3656, daltonlj@centurylink.net***CONSERVATION NEWS****Greater Sage-Grouse Listing Announcement***Adapted from National Audubon Society*

September 22, 2015 the Fish & Wildlife Service announced their decision to NOT list the Greater Sage-Grouse under the Endangered Species Act. On initially hearing this news one felt great defeat. This is not the case necessarily. The National Audubon Society gave a statement of encouragement regarding the NON-listing as a victory for the birds because it actually creates less gridlock for all stakeholders.

A decade ago in Wyoming 15 million acres of sagebrush lands-home to 80% of the states Greater Sage-Grouse-became protected. The decision not to list the bird under the ESA was made with the plan that the 15 million acre win in Wyoming be expanded to 65 million acres across the West, including parts of Montana under the Bureau of Land Management. The remaining 40% of the birds habitat is on private lands. The Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) Sage Grouse Initiative, with which Audubon is partnered, will continue to work to protect these lands. See details at:

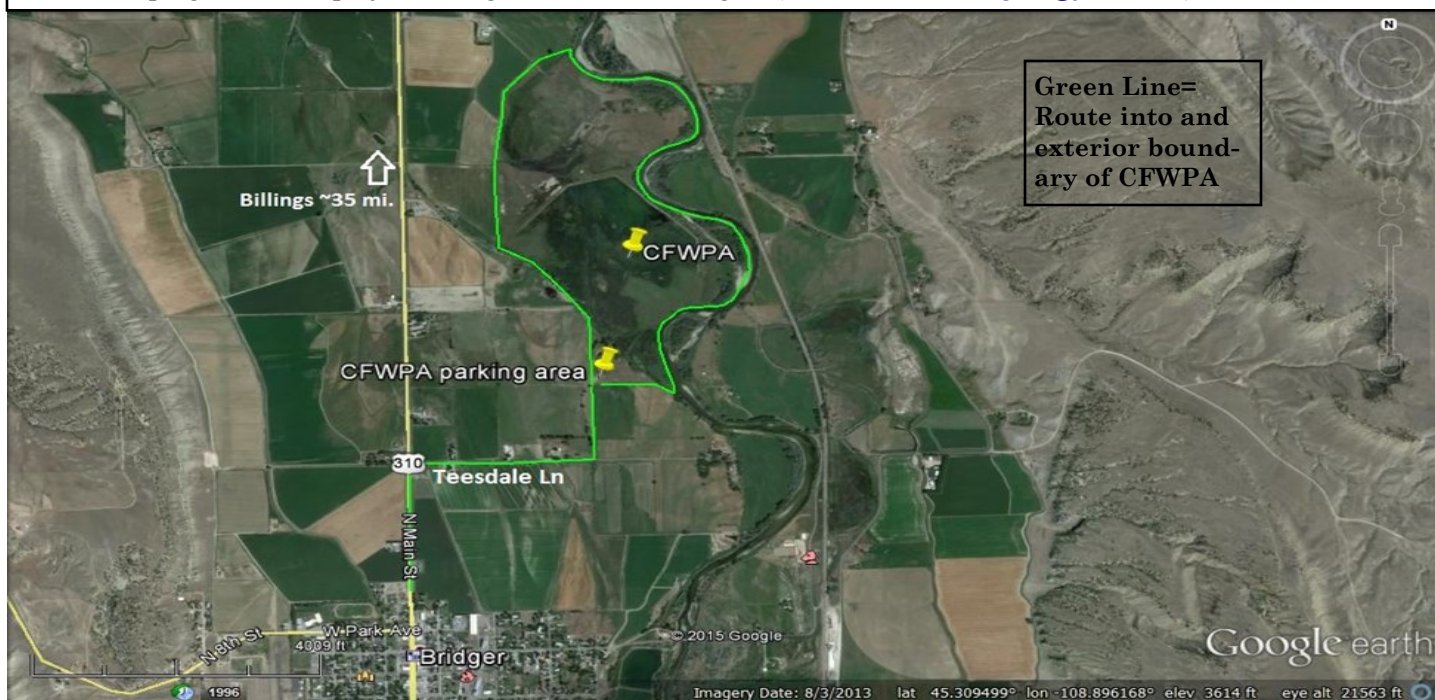
<https://www.audubon.org/news/unprecedented-conservation-efforts-keep-greater-sage-grouse-endangered-species>

Update on the trail improvement project at Clarks Fork Waterfowl Production Area *Submitted by Steve Regele*

In the April 2014 Flyer we reported that in January 2014 YVAS received \$1,000.00 from an anonymous donor through the "Network for Good" organization. The YVAS Board of Directors voted to dedicate the money to improving the trail into the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Clarks Fork Waterfowl Production Area (CFWPA). CFWPA is located about 1 mile northeast of Bridger, MT, along the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone River. Since then YVAS, USFWS and others have been evaluating seasonal characteristics of the marsh area the trail crosses to determine where to place culverts, and what trail improvement strategy is needed and affordable.

Thanks to the YVAS "Network for Good" grant and much appreciated contributions from Bank of Bridger (Bridger, MT) and Town & Country Supply Association (Laurel and Bridger, MT), we were able to get most of the gravel needed as well as two necessary culverts purchased. USFWS was then also able to contribute financially which added substantially to the gravel stockpile for the trail improvement. The needed materials for trail improvement are now sufficient for the project.

We are waiting for wildfire season to wind down and for availability of the USFWS front loader and possibly a few fire fighters to help YVAS folks get the culverts and gravel in place. Trail work may be completed this fall. If you are interested in helping to see this project through contact Steve Regele (406-962-3115, sregele@juno.com).



THE CREATIVE CORNER

Remember to always go to www.yvasudubon.org to view color photos.

"Living on the Wind" By Scott Weidensaul

Even the darkness moves with the passage of birds. On soft spring midnights, the air is alive with the flight notes of unseen warblers and vireos, thrushes and orioles, sparrows and tanagers, filtering down through the moonlight like the voices of stars.

Submitted by Jim Sells

Western Tanager, male under going molt into non-breeding plumage. It might also be molting into breeding plumage. Depends when Pete took the photo, spring or late summer.

Photo by Peter Murray



WFO News: SEE AND HEAR HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR BILLINGS, MT CONFERENCE. To relive some of the highlights of our last conference this past June, go to: www.westernfieldornithologists.org/conference.php Click on the Highlights document and take a look at the video with birds and birdsong from the event.

The video highlights our local birding sites and sounds. It's worth a watch.

California Condor Cam! This is a fun watch. Recently, they lost a nestling but they didn't mention how "It's not Disney out there.", a motto adopted by our Osprey Nest Monitors from Dr. Marco Restani. See the video and read their blogs at: http://cams.allaboutbirds.org/channel/49/California_Condor/

Site submitted by Will Crain

Sage Grouse Initiative Website link to the Endangered Species Act Listing Averted

You can subscribe to and get email updates, and earn action you can take regarding Wildlife Conservation through Sustainable Ranching. It is a worthy site and as mentioned in the Conservation News section of this Flyer National Audubon Society has partnered with this organization to continue to protect Greater Sage-Grouse whose habitat is on private land.

www.sagegrouseinitiative.com/historic-conservation-campaign-protects-greater-sage-grouse-esa-listing-averted/

Photo at right from their website summarizes their philosophy.



Seven Ways to Experience Fall Migration *Adapted: Bird Watcher's Digest suggested by Deb Regele*

September and October the sweet spot between summer and winter can still be a phenomenal time to bird. Large numbers of birds are already on the move, winging their way south across the North American continent. Don't miss it. Here are 7 ways to experience the season: 1. Take an Early Morning Walk, most birds aren't singing now so focus on sunlit areas where birds congregate looking for prey. 2. Find some Shorebirds, migration for most peaks in Sept. 3. Look to the Skies, many birds are nocturnal migrants though some move in daylight; look for Common Nighthawks and many species of Hawks. 4. Make New Friends, more eyes and ears zeroing in on elusive birds. 5. Visit a Hawk Watch, a few special places provide views of up to thousands of raptors a day. 6. Bird by Radar, this webpage links the radar people.mbi.ohio-state.edu/hurtado.10/US_Composite_Radar/?mc_cid=d0d73c7282&mc_eid=57f67cab93 7. Look out Your Window, your own backyard provides the platform. Just ask Robert Hill who reported (I believe) 10+ Wilson's Warblers in his backyard during this Fall migration.



Birding By Radar

Submitted by Trenay Hart

I did a little digging on the webpages Deb Regele had sent for submission regarding Fall Migration with comments on birding by radar and it isn't as simple (yet) as we all would hope.

At left is an example I found from May 11, 2015 at 0257 AM over Lake Erie describing how birds are lifting off and picking up elevation before reaching the lakeshore. Once over the lake they have reached optimal cruising altitude helping them cross the water quickly and efficiently.

This is just one example I found with interpretation. Unfortunately, there are no bird radars in our area. They are looking for volunteers to develop. From: badbirdz2.wordpress.com

The YVAS Board of Directors is trying to find a better way to alert supporting Chapter Members of their renewal dates. The list below consists of those members up for renewal in OCTOBER 2015. Please use the application form below (include your email address) and submit it, along with a check, to any Board Member or mail it to the address on the application when it is time to renew. Contact Membership Secretary Joel M. Bowers at 534-3672 or jmba@jmba.com, with any questions.

Ted & Patty Lechner

Jeanne Olson

Dana Murphy



YVAS would like to Welcome new and renewing Members to the Society:

Steven Evans, Vern & Sharon Martinz, Jennifer Koffler, Candace & Chuck Allen and Robin Manfredi.

WELCOME

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 (electronically), 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
P.O. Box 1075
Billings, MT 59103-1075

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society
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 family 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
P.O. Box 1075
Billings, MT 59103-1075



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Greater Sage-Grouse Photo: Images of GSG from the web.

With all the news lately on this bird it should have been our Bird of the Month! However, maybe we can honor them next April with a trip to a lek if anyone has a good connection to one. Please contact Donn Bartlett if so to arrange a field trip.

YVAS Bird of the Month: Blue-gray Gnatcatcher



Blue-gray Gnatcatcher Photo by Robert Hill The photo was taken June 20, 2015 during the Pryor Mountains Field Trip near the entrance to Bear Canyon.

Bird of the Month: Blue-gray Gnatcatcher

This tiny, long-tailed bird of broadleaf forests and scrublands makes itself known by its soft but insistent calls and its constant motion. It hops and sidles in dense outer foliage, foraging for insects. It flicks its white-edged tail from side to side, scaring up insects and often chases them. Pairs use spider web and lichens to build nests on the top of tree branches. *Adapted from All About Birds*

The Blue-gray Gnatcatcher is listed as a R2 (Rare bird and Species of Concern) in the Montana Bird Distribution, 7th Edition, book by PD Skaar. It is listed in the Quarter Latilong 41C which includes Bear Canyon and Weatherman's Draw both sites where this bird was seen by many people throughout the breeding season this year. It is recognized as established in this QLL and therefore doesn't require Rare Bird reporting, however, if you see it outside of this QLL you would need to report it as rare. Submitted by Trenay Hart