

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 46, NUMBER 1

JANUARY 2016

Black Rosy-Finch and Long-billed Curlew, Big Lake birding and prairie playa area north of Billings

Presentation by Megan O'Reilly, Biologist, MFWP

Beautiful and interesting birds and habitats will be part of the special presentation by Megan O'Reilly, Biologist and regional nongame specialist for Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (MFWP), region 5 (Billings). Come listen to Megan and join in the discussion about her work and MFWP regional projects on January 18, 2016 at the Mayflower Church, corner of Poly Drive and Rehberg Lane.

Over 85% of Montana's birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians are classified as nongame, totaling almost 500 species. Megan is working hard to protect these species and their habitats, enhance situations that benefit both, and to educate the public about the species and MFWP efforts on their behalf. Her presentation and discussion will provide a great opportunity to learn more about her work as well as opportunities to enjoy birds and birding and to assist in efforts to monitor and protect wildlife and their habitats. *Submitted, with his photos of Long-billed Curlews, by Steve Regele*



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 11, 6:00pm: Board of Directors Meeting

Monday, January 18, 7:00pm: Chapter Meeting

We will hold a YVAS fundraiser dinner at 5:30, before the Chapter meeting. Dinner donation: \$6. Lois Dalton has generously volunteered to coordinate. Please contact her at 406-245-5118 before January 15 to make reservations and your dish contribution.



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☞ We're on the web! yvaudubon.org

And Facebook! <https://www.facebook.com/Yellowstone-Valley-Audubon-Society-504343829741848/>

Dr. Marco Restani, YVAS Board member (2014-2015), recently accepted the position 'Director of Conservation' with Montana Audubon. He will oversee priority conservation programs, develop and implement the Important Bird Area Program, establish and oversee citizen science efforts, work collaboratively with partners to advance habitat conservation, and integrate science into the policy program. Although Marco will be based in Helena, his participation and involvement in the Osprey Nest Monitoring Project will not change. He thanks Steve Regele, the YVAS Board, and members for their friendship, guidance, and support. His new email address is: restani@mtaudubon.org

Highlights of the December 7, 2015, Board of Directors meeting

The YVAS Board of Directors recently approved including a column in the Flyer that highlights Board activities and decisions. We want to keep you apprised of our efforts to make the YVAS chapter an exciting and dynamic organization. Each month the board members will select agenda items of particular interest or relevance to share with you. Comments, questions, and suggestions are always welcome, and may be directed to any member of the YVAS Board of Directors.

Jerry Dalton reported that six elementary teachers will be using Audubon Adventures in their classroom this year. The lucky schools are: Independent School (Ms. Denise Haines), Elysian School (Ms. Cindy Ewen), Bridger Elementary Schools (Ms. Lela Hall), Bitterroot School (Ms. Mary Hankins), Lavina Public Schools (Ms. Tani McKeever), Miles Avenue Schools (Ms. Sandra Abraham).

The YVAS Study Group has been discontinued due to lack of participation. Thank you to Jerry Dalton for his efforts to implement this activity.

YVAS has our own FACEBOOK page that launched December 10! Thanks to the hard work and diligence of Nancy Wiggins, you'll be able to keep track of activities, make comments, and view interesting articles on birds and birding every day. **Like us on Facebook at 'Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society'!**

Beginning January 1, 2016, all minutes of meetings, treasurer's reports, membership rosters, and other official club records will be maintained electronically and stored in our safe deposit box. Documents prior to 2016 will continue to be stored in paper format and housed at Rocky Mountain College. The Board will look at the feasibility of transferring some of these records to an electronic format in the future.

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

Board of Directors:

Donn Bartlett: 252-0757, donnbartlett@msn.com
 Dorothy Bartlett, 252-0757, dpadanyi@live.com
 Steve Linder: 380-0073, becon1@bresnan.net
 Sheila McKay: 652-7175, cell 694-7918, wjhbird@yahoo.com
 Deb Regele: 962-3115, debregele@gmail.com
 Sue Weinreis: 855-4181, granpeak47@gmail.com
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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

Audubon Adventures: Jerry Dalton, daltonlj@centurylink.net

Bird Questions: George Mowat, 656-7467 gbmowat@gmail.com
 or Helen Carlson Cummins, 248-8684

Birdathon: Ruth Vanderhorst, 245-5118, erv132@charter.net

Christmas Bird Count: Jim Court, 259-5099, C: 860-0450,
custertours@gmail.com

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Editor: Trenay Hart, 860-1175, yvasflyer@gmail.com

Field Trip Chair: Donn Bartlett, 252-0757, donnbartlett@msn.com

Hospitality: Audrey Jurovich, 656-2748

Injured Raptors: Montana Raptor Conservation Center, 406-585-1211; Raptor Transport Jeanette Tasey 669-3169,
jtasey@gmail.com

Membership Secretary: Joel M. Bowers, 534-3672,
 cell: 591-5635, jmba@jmmba.com

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

Baling Twine Project: Lisa Bessasparis,
ospreybtc@gmail.com

Publicity: Dorothy Bartlett, 252-0757, dpadanyi@live.com

Program Chair: Sheila McKay, 652-7175,
wjhbird@yahoo.com

Recycling (aluminum): Larry Handsaker, 406-855-9832,
 918 AVE C, Billings, MT

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.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7**Yellowtail Dam Afterbay Field Trip***Submitted by Dorothy Bartlett*

It started out chilly and windy, but as the day progressed the wind died down, the temperature rose, and 17 birders enjoyed a spectacular day of birding. The number of species we saw was lower than last year, around 40 species, but the beautiful day and some interesting sightings, as well as the excellent company, more than made up for it.

On the back roads traveling east, we saw Ferruginous, Rough-legged, and Red-tailed Hawks and an immature Bald Eagle. A most unusual sighting along the two lane road was a bear cub lumbering along. It looked quite young and we saw no mother bear, so we wondered how the little fellow would fare out there alone. The cub got through the fencing by the side of the road and was last seen running across the prairie.

As we explored bodies of water, we observed eight or ten swans, some of which were Tundra Swans and some Trumpeter Swans. Also seen were Gadwall, American Wigeon and Hooded Merganser, along with the expected Buffleheads, Mallards and others. Overhead, a mature Bald Eagle put on a fabulous and lengthy show, circling and catching the sun to show off its plumage. There were several Townsend Solitaires and Pine Siskins seen as well.

On the way home, one car saw a Chukar in Fort Smith, and another car saw a significant flock of Red-winged Blackbirds just outside Fort Smith. It pays to be in the right car; it's just hard to tell which one is the right one!

MONDAY, DECEMBER 14**HOLIDAY POTLUCK**

The weather outside was frightful, but the YVAS traditional Holiday Potluck was attended by over 62 people, where the inside of Mayflower Church was delightful, with wonderful food and people! This year the only fund-raising activity of the evening was the \$8 admission fee. After expenses, YVAS netted about \$118. The program by Bob Landis, with his latest video from wildlife activity in Yellowstone National Park, including bears, birds, bison, elk, and even otters, was warmly received. Thank you Bob Landis for bringing the Park alive for us!

Thanks go out to all the help and support of YVAS members in organizing, setting up, and cleaning up. Special thanks go to Dorothy Bartlett, our Holiday Event Director, who does the lion's share of organizing and orchestrating this event.

Thanks also go to Mayflower Congregational Church for graciously hosting our group, and to Dr. Mike Downing for technical support for Bob Landis' presentation.

*Submitted by Pam Pipal***SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19****CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**

The National Audubon Society coordinates the nationwide Christmas Bird Count (CBC) effort and has been doing so for 116 years. YVAS has been sponsoring and coordinating the Billings area CBC effort since 1953-second longest running CBC effort in Montana. YVAS members comprise the majority of Billings area CBC volunteers each year.

Jim Court again coordinated the annual CBC for the Billings area. A 15-mile diameter circle from the center of downtown Billings is divided into 13 areas with teams of birders counting birds through the daylight hours. The count also included 6 teams of backyard feeder watchers organized by Bernie Mowat.

Jim reports these statistics from this years CBC: 66 species of birds seen (67 including the feeder watchers), 5 new species seen this year included: Long-eared Owl, Black Rosy-Finch, Double-crested Cormorant, Pied-billed Grebe, and Osprey. A total of 25,101 birds were seen by counters in the field and 354 birds seen by feeder watchers. The European Starling was the most common bird seen at 7923 while the Canada Goose rounded out second most common with 5278 birds observed. Thirty-three species were NOT seen that have been seen on previous counts.

Jim wishes to thank all those who participated and a special thanks to Johnathan Lutz, new Director of the Montana Audubon Center, and his staff for permitting us use of the Center for the reception following the CBC where members tallied the count. Also, thank you to YVAS who provided the pizza for the CBC volunteers at the data wrap up.

Data from the CBC are valuable and useful for many purposes-

<https://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count> provides more information.

A Hearty Thank You

To Dr. Marco Restani to his service on the YVAS Board and for all he's done on behalf of YVAS all around. All the best at Montana Audubon from everyone at YVAS.



7026 South Billings Blvd, Billings, MT 59101 www.mtaudubon.org

- Every Sunday, 2-4 pm—**Weekend Wonders**. Open to all ages, explore and discover! Stop in at the Center to get your supplies or challenge for the day. No registration required. \$2 fee to cover equipment use or free for *Friends of the Center*.
 - Jan 9, 6-8 pm—**Nighthawks Family Program**. Join us at the Center for a nature-filled evening and a tasty snack on the theme of “Starry Skies”. Fee is \$5/person or free for *Friends of the Center*.
 - Jan 15, 6-9pm—**Nature Night**. Drop your child off (ages 4 – 12) for an evening of outdoor adventures with our Naturalists, while you enjoy a child-free evening. Cost is \$22/child or \$20 for *Friends of the Center*.
- Jan 18, 8:30am-4:30pm—**Break Camp**. A day off from school is a day to explore the great outdoors! Ages 4 – 13. Cost is \$45/day or \$40 for *Friends of the Center*. Registration required.
For more information: www.mtaudubon.org/education or call 294-5099.



FOR YOUR CALENDAR: Wings Across the Big Sky

June 3-5, 2016 Missoula, Montana

Time to begin making those summer plans! ... **Montana Audubon's Wings Across the Big Sky Festival**, co-hosted by **Five Valleys Audubon Society**, will be held June 3-5 in Missoula. We invite you to spread the news and enthusiasm so we can all enjoy a fantastic turnout. Invite your out-of-state and nearby friends, birders and non-birders alike, to visit Missoula and surrounding areas to participate in abundant festival activities.

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

Jan 1, 2016	Fri	NEW YEAR'S DAY YEL- LOWTAIL DAM AF-	Sack lunch, George Mowat, leader
Jan 9	Sat	ANNUAL EAGLE MID- WINTER SURVEY IN LOWER 48 STATES. 8am to 5pm.	Yellowstone River, Billings to Columbus. No host lunch, George Mowat, leader
March 19	Sat	DUCK DAY: LEARN YOUR WATERFOWL AT WJH. 8am to noon.	Meet at Rocky Mountain College at 8am for guidance to WJH (2753 S 56 th St. W) or at WJH between 8 am and 8:30 am Sheila McKay and George Mowat, leaders



Baling Twine Committee Booth at the MATE Show: *February 18, 19, 20, 2016*. Volunteers needed. See article on the following page.

Baling Twine Committee News

Submitted by Lisa Bessasparis

The Baling Twine Committee has had to postpone its public “twine art” display until the 2016 Winter Artwalk on Friday, February 5 in downtown Billings. So far, three creative projects have been submitted by Osprey enthusiasts but we still need several more to make a proper collection. We need creative folks to help out by making art or craft projects that incorporate baling twine. The deadline for turning in projects is February 1. There are no limits on what is acceptable so create, create, create!

The BTC would also like to thank those individuals that have donated financial support towards our booth at the 2016 MATE show, February 18, 19, and 20. If you are interested, we are still accepting donations for the booth. We are also asking fellow YVAS members to help us man the booth. Just an hour or two on any day would be appreciated.

If you need baling twine to work with, have a piece to drop off, or you would like to volunteer your time, please contact Lisa at (406) 698-9405 or ospreybtc@gmail.com.



Chapter Members Baling Twine ART

At left a piece submitted by Deb Regele.

At right a piece submitted by Doreen Hartman.

CREATE A PIECE by Feb. 1 for Artwalk. See article above for details.



February 1st Deadline is Fast Approaching!

If you are interested in applying for the 2016 YVAS Conservation Grant, or if you know of someone or an organization that needs financial assistance on a conservation project, the deadline to submit your 2016 YVAS Conservation Grant application is February 1.

Procedure and Information on the Conservation Grant and the Conservation Grant Application can be found on the YVAS website at yvaudubon.org under the Projects tab. Up to \$1,000 is available. The application is simple to complete and can be emailed when completed. For further information contact Steve Regele at sregele@juno.com or any YVAS Board Member.

Submitted by Deb Regele



Each summer nestling Ospreys are banded along the Yellowstone River in collaboration with YVAS. Bands bear a combination of letters and numbers unique to the individual, and the code on green bands can be read from a distance (zoom in on photo). Debbie Repasz photographed Osprey 10/B in Galveston Bay, Texas in October 2015. She also spotted him last winter in the same area! I banded 10/B in July 2013 outside Columbus, 1350 miles from Texas. He will reach sexual maturity this summer and we hope to find him breeding on the Yellowstone.

If you ever read the code on a bird band, please report the information to the Bird Banding Lab through their webpage (<http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbl/>) or by phone (1-800-327-2263). You will receive a “Certificate of Appreciation” that lists where and when the bird was banded; the bander will receive information on where and when you made the observation, including the bird’s condition (alive or dead). From these data we can determine movements and survival. For example, we now know that many migrants - including Ospreys - are just as faithful to their wintering areas as they are to their breeding areas.

Submitted by Marco Restani

Book Review: "Standing in the Light" by Sharman Apt Russell*Book review submitted by Will Crain*

My dear longtime mentor and friend Claire Coleman (83) thought I might like to take a gander at this book she enjoyed reading, as it had something to do with Bird Banding. She had seen my photos taken during an opportunity of a lifetime, with Marco Restani, when was netting and tagging birds at the ZooMontana.

Claire is a Quaker, not unlike the woman who weaves this delightful story of life as a Quaker, who takes part in yearly bird banding in the Southwest. The title struck a chord, as I once had been 'Brought into the Light' and fortunately it only dimmed and flickered.

You'll be treated to a view of Quaker life and a plate of delicacies on pantheism while out banding birds in the Southwest... one of those birds is the ubiquitous Blue Grosbeak which I tried so desperately to see this fall.

If you're looking for something to snuggle up to these wintery nights, this book is at Billings Public Library. On line reviews <http://www.amazon.com/Standing-Light-My-Life-Pantheist/dp/0465013805>

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society has a new Facebook page *Submitted by Nancy Wiggins*

Follow us at: <https://www.facebook.com/Yellowstone-Valley-Audubon-Society-504343829741848/> to see the latest news about the Osprey Project, bird sightings, speakers, field trips, events and activities. You can post bird sightings, messages, and photos on the 'visitor' section to share with other members. You can also access our Facebook page from the website yvaudubon.org. We would love to hear from you!



If you are not on Facebook but would like to be a part so you can see current notices from any number of organizations, including YVAS, there are courses available at the Billings Library (billings.lib.mt.us) free, The Senior Center \$25 (billingsparks.org/program/senior-programs-2), and Lincoln Center \$25 (billingsadultcommunityed.org).

What type of birder are you?*Adapted from Cornell Lab of Ornithology website*

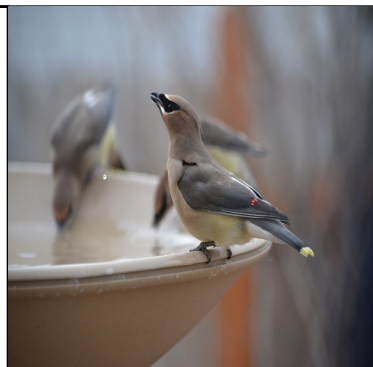
The Cornell Lab of Ornithology has a quiz you can take to find out what your birding preferences say about you! This might be material to add to your online dating profile! Anyway, some folks like to watch birds flutter outside their living room windows, others travel the globe to check another species off their life list, while some observe bird behaviors and submit their observations to citizen-science projects, like many at YVAS! Go to: allaboutbirds.org/take-our-quiz-what-kind-of-birder-are-you? To discover your birding identity.

CREATIVE CORNER**The Grackle**

by Ogden Nash

The grackle's voice is less than mellow,
His heart is black, his eye is yellow,
He bullies more attractive birds
With hoodlum deeds and vulgar words,
And should a human interfere,
Attacks that human in the rear.
I cannot help but deem the grackle
An ornithological debacle.

*Submitted by Jim Sells, Photo at left of a
Common Grackle by Daniel Casey*



Cedar Waxwings at heated backyard bird bath, *photo submitted by Nick Wells*, a new member, from his yard in Roundup, MT. Nick reported a flock of about 20 birds drained his bird bath in about half an hour. He photographs birds regularly.



At left, Christmas Bird Count, YVAS members in the field.

At right, the CBC after party/tally at the Montana Audubon Center.

Photos by Will Crain, see full article on page 3.



Reminder to update email addresses

Submitted by Dorothy Bartlett

YVAS is depending more and more on electronic communication.

Please remember to update your email address when it changes by contacting our Membership Secretary Joel Bowers at jmba@jmba.com.

If we do not have your email on file, please send it to Joel. We promise never to share it with any outside party or organization.



RENEWAL NOTICES: Don't forget to renew your membership to YVAS. For those of you who receive the Flyer by mail, please be sure to check the date listed to the right of your mailing address on the Flyer for your renewal date. If you receive the Flyer electronically, Joel Bowers will notify you via email of your renewal date. Please use the application form below (include your email address) or visit yvaudubon.org to renew via the web. You may also submit your renewal, along with a check, to any Board Member or mail it to the address on the application. Contact Membership Secretary Joel M. Bowers at 406-534-3672 or jmba@jmba.com, with any questions.

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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AUDUBON FLYER**

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Ferruginous Hawk, seen on the Old Hardin Road east of Hardin by members on the November 7th Yellowtail Dam Afterbay Field Trip. *Photo by Will Crain*

YVAS Birds of the Month:

Common Redpoll and American Tree Sparrow

After a long, warm Fall season these two birds have finally arrived from their breeding grounds in the tundra of the far North. Members submitted wonderful photographs of these birds from their “backyards”, a place we commonly see these species during the winter. Look for both these winter visitors at your feeders.

Peter Murray photographed the Common Redpoll (lower left) in his backyard near Yellowstone National Park in November and *Nick Wells* caught this American Tree Sparrow (lower right) in his Roundup backyard in December.



Please submit any interests or ideas to the Flyer! I am always grateful for contributions. If you would like to be included on the monthly email notice for submissions send an email to: yvasflyer@gmail.com