



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 46, NUMBER 7

AUGUST 2016

Bird of the Month

Mountain Plover

Photos: Starr Stevens, Pryor Mountains



This bird breeds in high tablelands, despite its name, Mountain Plover. Native of the short-grass prairie, it is a dull-colored shorebird of open, dry areas. *Adapted from All About Birds website.*

This highly camouflaged bird was located by careful eyes while on the Pryor Mountains field trip by YVAS birders. Each year Mountain Plovers are found on this field trip so if you missed it this year plan to attend next and we are sure to spot them again.



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, August 8, 6:00pm: Board of Directors Meeting

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

We will hold a YVAS fundraiser dinner at 5:30, before the Chapter meeting. Dinner donation: \$6. Sue Weinreis has generously volunteered to coordinate. Please contact her at 855-4181 [before Friday, September 16](#) 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/>

On June 8, 2016 YVAS received a grant from the Gary Armstrong Endowment Fund through the Billings Community Foundation. The award was to assist the Osprey Nest Monitoring Project. Deb & Steve Regele were in attendance and Dr. Marco Restani graciously received the grant on behalf of YVAS.

Montana Outdoors magazine published an article titled Deadly Decoration on baling twine which featured comments by Baling Twine Committee chairperson, Lisa Bessasparis. The article can be viewed online at:

<http://fwp.mt.gov/mtoutdoors/HTML/articles/2016/osprey.htm#.V5Gieo1wWP9>

Deb Regele commented on the Osprey Google Group that, "Western Montana has the same issues with twine as eastern Montana which is no surprise to us! The important thing now is to find a way to decrease the amount of loose twine in the environment.

WANTED: Aluminum Cans! Larry Handsaker asked to remind the Membership again to collect their aluminum cans and drop them off at his house, 918 Ave C or call him for pick, 855-9832. Helen Carlson Cummins and Peter Cummins also accept cans to be dropped at their home, 519 Highland Park Drive.



Yellow Warbler with fledgling photos by Will Crain in his own backyard, July 8, 2016. Great evidence of breeding there!

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

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Board of Directors:

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 Nancy Wiggins: 651-0218, nwiggin83@gmail.com

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

Conservation Advisor: Steve Regele, 962-3115, sregele@juno.com
 Data Base Administrator: Joel M. Bowers, 534-3672,

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Hospitality: Audrey Jurovich, 656-2748

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

Membership Committee Chair: Dorothy Bartlett, 252-0757,
 dpadanyi@live.com

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

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

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 Nancy Wiggins, 651-0218, nwiggin83@gmail.com,
 Sheila McKay, 652-7175, wjhbird@yahoo.com

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

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 all members.

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

Tuesday, June 7, Bull Mountains*Submitted by Frank Cookson*

On June 7th, 17 YVAS s led by Steve and Deb Regele piled into 5 vehicles and took off for a day of birding. The first stop was the Ah Nei Recreation Area near Shepherd and then onto the Pfister ranch located in the Bull Mountain “foothills”. Most of the birders went back to Billings early afternoon however Brian Henderson, Frank Cookson and Doreen Hartman went on to view a Golden Eagle nest.

The highlight of the trip was meeting Ellen Pfister the owner of the Pfister Ranch and hearing some of her life story. In addition to birds the ranch offered a small petting zoo with llamas, horses and a Bactrian camel named Samson. Steve Regele was the only YVAS member courageous enough to pet Samson. (See photo on page 8 of this Flyer.) Everyone thought it was a good idea, even Samson, and encouraged Steve’s enthusiasm. Ellen says Samson will finish shedding his long winter coat by about mid-July and will be sleek and even more beautiful.

What has been hailed as the “Great Kingbird Debate” soon developed, led by Brian Henderson the group was able to distinguish the subtle color differences between the Western Kingbird and the Cassin’s Kingbird. The final verification was comparing the habitat and the vocalizations of the two kingbirds.

Cassin’s Kingbird: gray head and chest, yellow belly and under tail, black square-tipped tail with white tip, and found in open country with scattered trees or open woodlands

Western Kingbird: gray head, whitish chest and throat, yellow belly, black tail with white outer tail feathers, and live near the edges of woodlands

Eastern Kingbird: blackish above and white below, head is a darker black than the wings and back, a black tail with a conspicuous white tip, and are especially abundant in open places along forest edges or water

**Cassin’s Kingbird****Western Kingbird****Eastern Kingbird**

Photos are courtesy of William Crain

The group went on to see several more Cassin’s Kingbirds, a few Western Kingbirds and some Eastern Kingbirds as well. A total of 49 species were observed during the trip including Say’s Phoebe, Mountain Bluebirds, Sandhill Cranes, Common Nighthawks (aka goatsucker), a Red-headed Woodpecker and two Golden Eagle nestlings.

A great time was had by all and we hope to have more outings to the Bull Mountains (aka the Bull “foothills”) in the future!

Saturday, June 11 Red Lodge Area*Submitted by Jerry Dalton*

On a nice sunny day in the 70s F, Stan Heath did a great job leading 17 birders. First stop was Beaver Lodge Fishing Access Site near Fox. One outstanding bird was the first nighthawk of the season, perched and sleeping on a high dead branch. Two birders from Florida, visiting family in Red Lodge, joined us. Next stop was Nichols Creek, first pull off on the right on the West Fork Rock Creek road. We were treated to repeated perched views of Broad-tailed and Calliope Hummingbirds. Next a Green-tailed Towhee put on a show next to our parking area, and later we saw a Williamson’s Sapsucker. Highlights of Palisades Campground were two soaring Broad-winged Hawks as we ate lunch, and a MacGillivray’s Warbler before we left. Along Willow Creek Road we were able to see a few Bobolink’s flying over the meadows in the distance. From there, we dispersed like swallows to find our own way home.

Saturday, June 18 Pryor Mountains/Sage Creek*Submitted by Judy Weddel*

On a beautiful, clear morning 20 intrepid birders gathered at the Bridger rest stop anticipating an avian filled day led by Stan Heath. We were rewarded early with the sighting of a Lazuli Bunting on the Pryor Mountain road. Shortly after, Dr. Marco Restani, excitedly led us know he had seen a Blue Grosbeak. With some electronic (calls) encouragement the Blue Grosbeak moved about, allowing everyone a good look.

Many were pleased that some Pinyon Jays were spotted. An interesting bit of interaction was a Long-billed Curlew chasing away a Northern Harrier. The most eye-catching bird of the day was the colorful Western Tanager seen in two different locations. An Ovenbird was heard by most and seen by few.

We headed back the long way hoping to spot Mountain Plovers. A few diehards did manage to find the extremely camouflaged birds after others had signed off for the day. (See Bird of the Month on page 1 of this Flyer.) I was in the second to the last car that had signed off to head home and we were summoned back to see the Mountain Plover by the honking vehicle of Trenay Hart with Marco Restani who kindly chased us down to come back for a view of two birds.

Over 70 species were identified by the main group. Being in a car with 3 "super birders" (Rick & Starr Stevens and Brian Henderson) we drove by Warren Ponds and Bridger Wastewater Treatment Ponds and had over 80 species for the day. We returned to RMC just before 8pm. A long, but fun and educational day!

Blue Grosbeak

Pryor Mountain Road,
Bridger, MT

*Photographs captured by
Will Crain during the
Pryor Mountains Field
Trip, June 18, 2016.*

**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

Aug 6	Sat	Shorebirds, Hawks, & Prairie Birds 8:00 am	Sack lunch. Mike Weber, leader.
Aug 19-21	Fri-Sun	Bowdoin NWR	Observe migrating birds including warblers and shorebirds in Northwestern MT. Ruth Vanderhorst, leader. Call Ruth at 406-245-5118 for information. Make your own reservations for two nights at Maltana Motel in Malta 406-654-2610.
Sept 8	Thur	Fall migrants. Meet at Riverfront Park, S. Billings Blvd. 1 st parking	Mike Weber, leader.
Sept 17	Sat	Pryor Mountains	Meet at 7:00 am at Rocky Mountain College for carpooling or 8:00 am at Bridger Rest Stop. Sack lunch. Ruth Vanderhorst and Stan Heath, leaders.
Oct 1	Sat	Clark Fork WMA-Blue Water Fish Hatchery-Fromberg. 8:00 am to 6:00 pm	Sack lunch. Steve Regele and George Mowat, leaders.
Nov 5	Sat	Yellowtail Dam Afterbay. 8:00 am to 6:00 pm.	Sack lunch. George Mowat, leader.
Dec 18	Sun	Annual Christmas Bird Count	Jim Court, leader. custertours@gmail.com 259-5099



Birdathon 2016 Financial Report

Submitted by Ruth Vanderhorst

The record-setting list of bird species identified (165) in the 2016 Birdathon is published on the YVAS website. The team (Avian Rangers) identifying the greatest number of species (140) has been congratulated. Now, we have the full accounting of monies raised by the event to report. Unfortunately, though the total species seen is 20 more than last year, monies raised is almost \$200 less. We are very grateful to the generous people who responded to the pleas to participate by making a donation. Eighteen individuals or couples did make donations, some especially generous, to total \$1819.19. Your gifts are greatly appreciated and will be used to make durable signs to be placed in the new Dover Park, which will open very soon just outside Billings. The park, which is being developed by the Yellowstone River Parks Association, will provide trails for walking, hiking and birding. The signs will provide conservation information which will enrich the experience. Should you still wish to make a contribution, send it to YVAS, P. O. Box 1075, Billings, MT 59103

Pryor Mountains Bear Canyon Weed Pull

Submitted by Steve Regele

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society (YVAS) and regional weed crews had a great turnout for Pryor's Bear Canyon weed work June 15, 2016. Workers were from Carbon and Sweet Grass County Weed Shops, a BLM range manager, and YVAS members participated. The weeds took a pretty good hit due to our efforts. We also had some good discussions and good ideas and plans for further productive projects among YVAS, County Weed Shops, BLM, USFS and others regarding public lands weed control, birding/hiking trail maintenance, etc. This and other stewardship projects are important and effective and help build good relationships with and support for the important work done by our local, state and federal government agencies. We will keep you informed as future projects develop. Your support is not only appreciated but makes the work a lot more fun.



Left to Right: Carbon County Crew: Cori Krook, Megan Williams, Teal Hatten, Kenyon Hatten, Tel Daniels; Sweet Grass County Crew: Evie Halverson, Jill Bainter, Elaine Allestad, and Connie Weston; YVAS members Jim Wiggins, Robert Hill, Jerry Dalton, Frank Cookson, Deb Regele, Steve Regele; BLM's Larry Padden.

Not pictured: Brian Henderson, wife Teresa, son Scott and daughter Lea, and Tom Holt - still pulling weeds at photo time!

Photograph by Brian Ostwald, Carbon County Weed District Supervisor

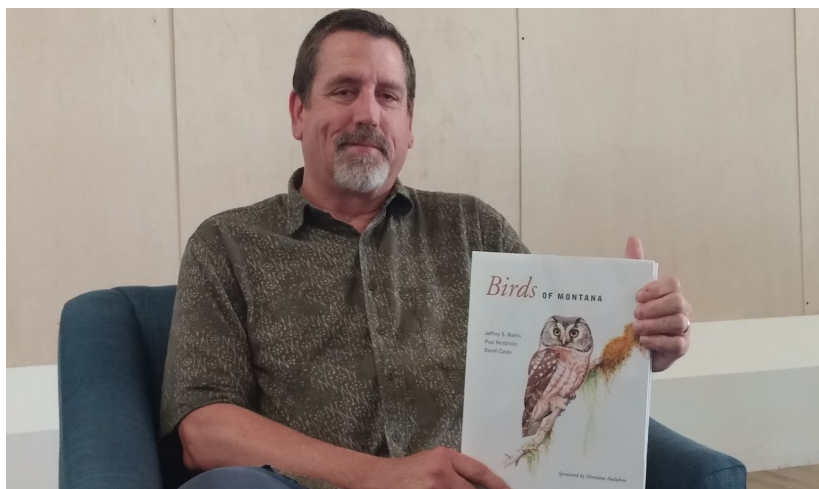
A Wintertime Osprey Monitor visits Montana

Ospreys banded along the Yellowstone River as part of the YVAS Osprey Nest Monitoring Project have made it a habit of wintering along the Texas Gulf Coast. We know this because photographers, such as Debbie Repasz, capture images of 'our' Montana birds (see January 2016 Flyer). Debbie visited Montana in July with her husband and accompanied nest monitors to the bandings of nestling ospreys. Welcome to Montana, Debbie, and thanks for your careful observations and beautiful photographs!

Submitted, with photo at right of Debbie, by Dr. Marco Restani



Birds of Montana, an interview with co-author Daniel Casey by Trenay Hart



In June of 2016 the weighty (5 pounds to be exact) book, **Birds of Montana** was released. The book was co-authored by Jeffery S. Marks, Paul Henderson and Daniel Casey. I had an opportunity to interview Daniel Casey regarding the comprehensive and enjoyable book, recently.

Question: What's the intended readership of your book and how would they use it?

Answer: The book is intended for birders at any level, although beginning birders may feel overwhelmed with the amount of information. Seasoned Montana birders may find it very enjoyable to read the accounts of rare bird sightings as many of the people involved with confirmation of the first sighting have been included. They might "re-live" the experience of seeing that bird the first time through the descriptions in the book. This book is one where you can look for all answers related to Montana birds.

Question: What motivated you to write a book like this?

Answer: Jeffery S. Marks, the senior author set the spark for getting it done 10 years ago. He wanted to produce a book similar to the book A. Saunders wrote in 1921, **A Distributional List of the Birds of Montana**. **Birds of Montana** could be considered a follow up to that 1921 book.

Question: How are you co-authors connected?

Answer: Jeffery S. Marks and I worked together on the Montana Bird Records committee and each of us had experience with Paul Hendricks doing field work on separate projects.

Question: What is the most surprising result of this book? The most optimistic result?

Answer: I believe all readers will be surprised by the history of ornithology of the state that is included in the book. Optimistically, the burgeoning interest in birding with the geometric growth of information that is available to the authors and birders is refreshing.

Question: How would a similar book written 100 years from now differ from yours?

Answer: Even more information will be available. For example, I believe we will see a shift in bird communities more in 100 years than we have seen since Saunders did his book in 1921. Many factors will contribute to this and some, including climate, are discussed in our book.

Question: What's the next step in writing/thinking about the birds of Montana?

Answer: Future revisions to the work we have done on **Birds of Montana** will likely be electronic editions.

My hope is that birding will prevail as a hobby and keep people outside, that it won't be an echo of things past but what still drives people both tomorrow and 100 years from now.

Daniel recommends **Wings Over Montana** with photos by Don Jones and text by Daniel Casey as a companion book to **Birds of Montana**.

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 August 2016. 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 406-534-3672 or data@yvadubon.org, with any questions.

AUGUST 2016 Renewals: Donn & Dorothy Bartlett, Cindy Meccage, Coleen Perdue, and Rick & Starr Stevens.



Web Site Update

Submitted by Deb Regele

For those of you that don't know, Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society has some very good photographers in our midst! Members have been submitting excellent photos over the past year and are continuing to do so. I am in the process of slowly revising the YVAS web site to accommodate these efforts. I have added a 'YVAS Photos' tab on the web page drop down menu, although that tab and it is currently under construction. Previous Flyers from 2012 to present can now be found as 'Archived Flyers' under the 'Publications' tab. It's been a busy summer but I hope to have the new addition completed by September 1st. If anyone has photos they would like to submit now or in the future, please do!

Megan O'Reilly, Wildlife Biologist, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks has made the High Alpine Multi-Species Survey Methodology Priority Species- Black Rosy-Finch- MFWP Regions 2, 3, 4, and 5 available for anyone to review and to encourage participation is available on the YVAS website, yvadubon.org. If you are interested in participation please review this Methodology and contact Megan at moreilly@mt.gov or 406-247-2966 or 406-794-6154.

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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Steve Regele courageously petting Samson, a Bactrian camel on a recent YVAS Field Trip to the Pfister Ranch in the Bull Mountains. *Photo by Brian Henderson*



Photographs at right and lower right captured on the Pryor Mountains Field Trip by *Barbara Garrett*, captions she related to the one at right is **It's Over There**, and the one at bottom right, **Making Friends with the Locals**, thanks Dorothy Bartlett!



Wilson's Phalarope, *photographed by Robert Hill* in June on Odell Spring Creek, Ennis, MT

