



# YELLOWSTONE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

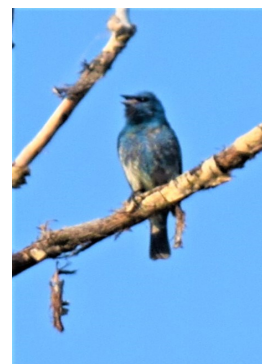
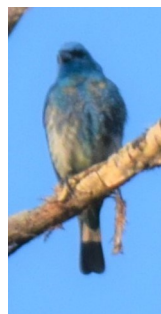
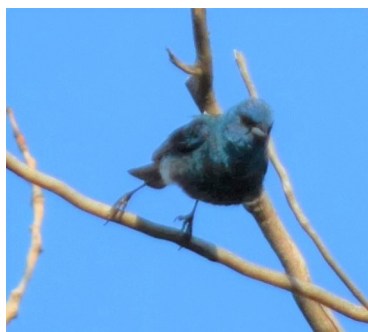
- FROM THE PRAIRIES TO THE PEAKS.

*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 47, NUMBER 8

AUGUST 2017

The 2017-18 Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society Chapter Meeting and Presentation season is commencing with a presentation at the September 18 Chapter meeting by world renowned paleontologist Dr. Jack Horner. He will talk about birds being dinosaurs and dinosaurs being “bird-like”. Details about the special presentation will be in the September Flyer and on the website. Stay tuned for those details and plan to attend. *Submitted by Steve Regele*



**YVAS Bird of the Month Indigo Bunting** July 22 Brian Henderson reported seeing an Indigo Bunting at Norm’s Island. Mike Weber and Will Crain joined him to view the 1st year male singing on a territory. *Photos by Will Crain.*

Though Indigo Buntings have been seen in Montana this bird that is abundant in the eastern and midwestern part of the US is not as common in Billings. I know Helen Carlson had one in her backyard not too many years ago and I have seen one in Miles City in 2014. Regardless, it is exciting to have the Indigo Bunting visit our ‘hood.

An interesting fact about these birds is that it migrates at night, using stars for guidance. In the 1960s researchers discovered this fact by studying captive Indigo Buntings in a planetarium. They use an internal clock enabling them to continually adjust their angle of orientation to a star. Perhaps, Mike Weber will capture an Indigo Bunting with his night recording project! *Submitted by Trenay Hart and adapted from All About Birds website*

## 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.**

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

**Monday, September 18, 7:00pm: Chapter Meeting**

**We will hold a YVAS fundraiser dinner at 5:30, before the Chapter meeting. Look for details in the September Flyer.**



**THIS FLYER IS PUBLISHED ON Sustainable Forestry Initiative SFI.org CERTIFIED PRODUCT**

**☞ We’re on the web! [yvaudubon.org](http://yvaudubon.org)**

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

There was no Board meeting in June or July, the next meeting is August 8 and updates will be in the September Flyer.

The Yellowstone River Basin Osprey Project has received a grant from the Billings Community Foundation (BCF) for monitoring Ospreys in 2017.

The Rose Family Fund in partnership with BCF awarded \$1,000 to the YVAS project. The Matthews-Dousman Memorial Endowment of the Montana Community Foundation in partnership with BFC awarded \$500.

The grant money will be used for gas expense to locate hazardous nests that need to be removed from active power poles, to rescue twine entangled Ospreys at nesting sites, and to band Osprey nestlings along the Yellowstone River in the ongoing study of these migratory birds and their nesting sites.

See the June/July 2017 Flyer, page 6, for more information on Osprey in the Yellowstone River Basin. Archived or previous Flyers can be found at the YVAS website under Publications.

*Submitted by Deb Regele*

Nancy Wiggins provided a book review she thought fellow members might enjoy reading. **Happiness is a Rare Bird.** The review was in the Billings Gazette and can be found at the following link.

<http://billingsgazette.com/entertainment/books/canadian-author-encourages-birders-in-happiness-is-a-rare-bird/article>

### Who do you call when you find an INJURED bird?

Injured Birds: Details at [yvaudubon.org](http://yvaudubon.org) (select the "Projects" tab and then "Injured Birds") or call MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks, (M-F) 406-247-2940.

Injured Raptors: Montana Raptor Conservation Center, Becky Kean, 406-585-1211.

Injured Waterfowl: WJH Bird Resources, Sheila McKay, 406-652-7175.

Twine Entangled Osprey in Nest: Dr. Marco Restani, 406-425-2608 or Deb Regele, 406-962-3115

#### Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society Officers:

##### AREA CODE 406

**President:** Steve Regele, 962-3115, [smregele@gmail.com](mailto:smregele@gmail.com)

**Vice-President:** Steve Linder, 380-0073, [becon1@bresnan.net](mailto:becon1@bresnan.net)

**Secretary:** Doreen Hartman, 697-0277, [rdzlhman@bresnan.net](mailto:rdzlhman@bresnan.net)

**Treasurer:** Pam Pipal, 245-4517, [ppipal@charter.net](mailto:ppipal@charter.net)

##### Board of Directors:

Donn Bartlett: 628-5058, [donnbartlett@msn.com](mailto:donnbartlett@msn.com)

Dorothy Bartlett, 628-5058, [dpadanyi@live.com](mailto:dpadanyi@live.com)

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Sue Weinreis: 855-4181, [granpeak47@gmail.com](mailto:granpeak47@gmail.com)

Nancy Wiggins: 839-4461, [nwiggins83@gmail.com](mailto:nwiggins83@gmail.com)

##### Montana's Congressional Delegation:

Sen. Steve Daines: U.S. Senate, Wash. D.C. 20510

email Sen. Daines via his website: [daines.senate.gov](http://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](http://tester.senate.gov)

email: [senator@tester.senate.gov](mailto:senator@tester.senate.gov)

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

Rep. Greg Gianforte:

email Rep. Gianforte via his website:

<https://gianforte.house.gov/contact/email>

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

#### Committees and Special Assignments: AREA CODE 406

Audubon Adventures: Jerry Dalton, [daltonlj@centurylink.net](mailto:daltonlj@centurylink.net)

Baling Twine Project: Deb Regele, [debregede@gmail.com](mailto:debregede@gmail.com)

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

Birdathon: Ruth Vanderhorst, 245-5118, [erv132@charter.net](mailto:erv132@charter.net)

Christmas Bird Count: Jim Court, 259-5099, C: 860-0450,  
[custertours@gmail.com](mailto:custertours@gmail.com)

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Field Trip Chair: Donn Bartlett, 628-5058, [donnbartlett@msn.com](mailto:donnbartlett@msn.com)

Hospitality: Audrey Jurovich, 656-2748

Membership Committee Chair: Dorothy Bartlett, 252-0757,  
[dpadanyi@live.com](mailto:dpadanyi@live.com)

Osprey Project: Deb Regele, 962-3115, [debregede@gmail.com](mailto:debregede@gmail.com)

Publicity: Barbara Garrett 652-3180, [garrettimprisonart@gmail.com](mailto:garrettimprisonart@gmail.com)

Program Committee: Steve Regele, 962-3115, [smregele@gmail.com](mailto:smregele@gmail.com)  
Nancy Wiggins, 839-4461, [nwiggins83@gmail.com](mailto:nwiggins83@gmail.com),

Sheila McKay, 652-7175, [wjhbird@yahoo.com](mailto:wjhbird@yahoo.com)

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

Website: Deb Regele, 962-3115, [debregede@gmail.com](mailto:debregede@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 Tuesday 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.

**Sat/Sun, June 3-4, BIRDATHON 2017** Final Report

*Submitted by Ruth Vanderhorst*

June 3-4 saw three teams vie for fundraising to benefit YVAS and identification of the greatest number of bird species in a 24 hour period. The teams began under sunny skies at 5pm on Saturday and completed their bird search in more sunny weather at 5pm on Sunday. It was warm!

The teams brought in \$1133.00. Funds raised are designated for erecting signs about birds in parks, notably, Dover Park. We are very appreciative to those who donated to this project and hope that the signs will soon adorn the park. The fundraising competition was won by the Senior Moments team which brought in \$738. Avian Rangers and Birders for Fun each brought in \$160.

The teams identified 151 bird species in the designated 24 hours. The Avian Rangers handily won with 132 species identified, followed by the Birders for Fun with 85 and trailed by Senior Moments with 69.

Avian Rangers: Mike Weber, Brian Henderson, Robert Hill and Will Crain. Birders for Fun: Peter & Helen Cummins and George & Bernie Mowat. Senior Moments: Ruth Vanderhorst, Phil McBride and Pam Pipal.

The gathering to tabulate bird lists occurred at 5pm at Mayflower Church and was hosted by Trenay Hart who plied the tired birders with pizza and soft drinks. Thank you for this service to tired and hot birders, Trenay. To each person who participated by birding and/or by donating or by hosting the gathering we thank you.

**Tuesday, June 6, Bluewater Fish Hatchery, Artesian springs area and a private ranch**

We rounded up fifteen avid birders at Rockvale and set off for the hatchery birding at some stops along the way. We glassed in the pond in Bridger and picked up some Ruddy Ducks. Stopping to hunt for Lark Buntings we located a prairie dog town. While glassing in the doggies, someone exclaimed, "That one just flew!" We commenced to seek out the Burrowing Owls and saw four! We also watched a Golden Eagle, Common Raven and Red-tailed Hawk soaring in a tight circle. The Lark Sparrow resisted, but finally showed. A real gem is always, the fluttery flight of Mountain Bluebirds. Stopping before the hatchery we were graced with a male Lazuli Bunting perched and singing. A brief visit at the fish hatchery gave us a good look at Say's Phoebe.

Continuing on we arrived at a private ranch that had the red Chugwater formation cliffs and some small hay fields already cut. We scanned for signs of nests on the cliffs, but did not see any. Western Kingbirds, Bullock's Oriole, American Goldfinch, and Gray Catbirds entertained us during our lunch. Some of the group climbed up the hillside seeking the noisy Yellow-breasted Chat and other birds. We searched all over and finally he gave a showing at the bottom of the hill where the whole group could see him! We happened to look over at the cliff across the way and saw an American Kestrel flying. All of the sudden a second kestrel came flying in with a small rodent in its talons and the female flipped upside down, locked her talons and took the offered gift then righted herself and flew on! It was such a graceful mating ritual. What a beautiful spot with artesian springs all around the area.

Further down the road we stopped at an artesian pond and saw three species of swallows zipping around. Some of us saw a Wilson's Snipe zoom out of the reeds. Efforts to find this one again were not successful. As some women were visiting, all of the sudden they spotted a Sandhill Crane standing up from the middle of the reeds and giving them a look. In watching the bird we realized it was on a nest as it laid back down and you could just barely see the red on the head. Another highlight was the mating of the Lark Buntings where the male flies up and is singing and gracefully falls back down to earth, earning the name "angel wings". Truly a wonderful sight.

What a beautiful day exploring the Bluewater Hatchery, ranch area and artesian springs with great companions and 50 bird species cooperating! An added bonus was seeing a Bald Eagle on a power pole as I was driving to work after the trip. I had seen this Eagle all winter long, but not recently!!

*Submitted by Gail McGlothlin, Photo by Steve Regele*





**Sunday, June 18, Yellowstone River WMA State Park***Submitted by Dorothy Bartlett*

A group of birders met our leader, Megan O'Reilly at Bundy Bridge fishing access, and spent some time listening and viewing the birds there. We heard and/or saw a lot of birds, including a Yellow-breasted Chat, Gray Catbird, Yellow Warblers, Cliff Swallows and a Veery, among others. The Osprey was in residence on the bridge and papa was in his usual tree alongside the river. After the turn toward the park we passed the site of a Golden Eagle seen in previous years. This year that nest sits empty, however we found what seemed to be an immature Golden Eagle on a ledge further down. This magnificent bird put on a show by flying around along the cliffs for our viewing pleasure.

Megan granted us access into the park through a locked gate and we proceeded to our previously used stopping area, where some took a hike deeper into the park while others stayed by the cars to see what would come to us. A Lazuli Bunting posed for us, while Yellow Warblers and American Goldfinch flew around.

On the drive out we observed White-throated Swift and hunted for Burrowing Owls without success. The GRAND FINALE was a family of Upland Sandpipers, right in front of the lead car! Mom quickly shooed (we think) two chicks into the grass and tried to draw us away with her "broken wing" display while papa flew around chattering and demanding we move on. We took a great look, then drove on, so as not to cause more stress than we already had by driving down that road. What a treat! Thanks to Megan O'Reilly for leading us and allowing us access to this valuable conservation area.



**Upland Sandpiper,**  
*Photos by Will Crain*  
during the field trip to  
Yellowstone River WMA  
State Park.

**Friday, June 23, Pryor Mountains***Submitted by Peter Cummins*

Three cars, with eleven passengers left the Bridger Rest area with high hopes for an enjoyable day of birding in sunny weather. Sadly there was no sign of the Blue Grosbeak, but good views of a Belted Kingfisher made up for this as we drove along Pryor Mountain Rd. Another memorable sighting was of a flock of 20 Long-billed Curlews landing in a hay field to avoid a passing Bald Eagle. A Common Nighthawk, flying past was a surprise and we all had excellent views of an obliging Green-tailed Towhee and Calliope Hummingbird.

Lunch was at the Sage Creek Campground where Gray Catbird and Common Yellowthroat showed well. An afternoon search for woodpeckers was unsuccessful, so we had to settle for an Olive-sided Flycatcher, Ruby-crowned Kinglet and a calling, but unseen, Ovenbird. Overall the trip yielded more than 60 species of birds. Thank you, Stan, for all your efforts which were very much appreciated by the group.

**Conservation News:** Osprey nest monitors, Lisa Bessasparis and Jean Boone, have been working the Twine Awareness Table at the Gardener's Market in South Park (4:30 – 6:30 pm) on the third Thursday of each month this summer. If you get a chance, drop by and see them.

This year while banding, Marco found one nestling entangled with twine around its neck and unable to move. It was freed of the twine, injury evaluated and then banded. There have been two adult Ospreys observed with twine entangled on their feet this year. Neither of these adults were entangled in a nest or trapped on a tree limb. One was an incubating female that resulted in the abandonment of a nest with three eggs. The other was a male that has been supplying fish to the nestlings.

YVAS is still searching for a Central Twine Collection Site. Once this site is established, twine recycling can be initiated. Contact Deb Regele at 406-962-3115 or [debregele@gmail.com](mailto:debregele@gmail.com).

*Submitted by Deb Regele*

**Bear Canyon birding and recreation trail improvement**

*Submitted by Steve Regele*

Nine YVAS members and friends gathered at the south slope of the Pryor Mountains and spent the day of June 16 improving the trail condition in lower Bear Canyon. The volunteers cleared over-and-under growth, fallen branches and trees, and reworked places where erosion had made the trail difficult to use. It was a nice day and a great group of workers and friends. The Bear Canyon hiking and birding opportunities are much improved for all that!

YVAS was permitted by the US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to do the work and the USFS provided some hand tools for the group. Thanks to Jeff Gildehaus, Outdoor Recreation Planner, Custer Gallatin National Forest, Red Lodge for facilitating all this through the Forest Service office and BLM. Jeff said that some Laurel hikers have already commented complimenting the Bear Canyon trail maintenance improvement.

YVAS together with Carbon County Weed District has done weed control work in previous years and we have additional trail and weed work planned for the future. Other volunteers and government workers are also doing some real good stewardship work in the Pryor's and elsewhere on regional public lands. Watch the Flyer, the YVAS website and Facebook page for news about those efforts and support opportunities.

Working on the trail, we of course kept our eyes and ears open and were visited by about a dozen bird species. On the way out of the area we had some good sightings of Mountain Plover.

Special thanks to Robert Hill, Brian Henderson, Jim Wiggins, Tom Holt, Steve Regele, Dan Casey, Mat Regele, John Enright, and John Bradley for the June 2017 trail improvements! *Below photo of members participating by Steve Regele.*



Brian Henderson sent a message to the Flyer to be sure to THANK Steve "Machete" Regele for organizing and leading the efforts to keep Bear Canyon trail in shape!  
  
THANKS STEVE!!!!!!

**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 628-5058, donnbartlett@msn.com

<b>Aug 5</b>	<b>Sat</b>	<b>Shorebirds, Hawks, &amp; Prairie Birds 8:00 am</b>	Sack lunch. Mike Weber, leader.
<b>Aug 18-20</b>	<b>Fri-Sun</b>	<b>Bowdoin NWR</b>	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.
<b>Sept 6</b>	<b>Wed</b>	<b>Fall migrants.</b>	Meet at Riverfront Park, S. Billings Blvd. 1 <sup>st</sup> parking area on the right. 5:00 pm. Mike Weber, leader.



## Chuck and Jean Carlson – Outstanding Achievement Award



*From left to right: Chuck and Jean Carlson; Montana Audubon's Janet Ellis*

Many Montanans care about birds. However, extremely few devote the greater portion of their lives to these winged wonders. Because of their life-long devotion to birds, Montana Audubon is pleased to recognize Chuck and Jean Carlson with a 2017 Special Achievement Award.

Specifically we thank them for:

- Welcoming numerous birders, scientists, and enthusiasts of the natural world to sit around their kitchen table—to find out about local life birds while being served a meal and coffee;
- Guiding or directing visitors to places where they can observe many of the unique birds that call the 'greater Fort Peck area' home;
- Developing a bird-friendly backyard at the house they have lived in for over 50 years;
- Running the Fort Peck Christmas Bird Count for over 40 years;
- Submitting over 6,500 records to the Montana Bird Distribution database at the Montana Natural Heritage Program; and
- Submitting nearly 27,500 records to eBird as of May 24, 2017, making this information accessible to other birders.

We are privileged and proud to know Jean and Chuck—and pleased to recognize them for their outstanding work for birds, Audubon, and the state of Montana.

Chuck and Jean received this award during the Wing's Across Big Sky Montana Audubon Festival in June. The information and photo above are used with permission from Janet Ellis at Montana Audubon. Congratulations to these amazing YVAS members!



**Short-eared Owl** photo by Jim Sells during Wing's Across Big Sky field trip to the Shonkin' Sag near Highwood, MT.

Jim sent in some fun facts about owls:

1. Many species have asymmetrical ears. When located at different heights on the owl's head their ears are able to pinpoint the location of sounds in multiple dimensions.
2. Owls can rotate their necks 270 degrees. A blood-pooling system collects blood to power their brains and eyes when neck movement cuts off circulation.

[Audubon.org/news/11-fun-facts-about-owls](http://Audubon.org/news/11-fun-facts-about-owls), for more!



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. 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 Data Base Administrator: Peter Cummins, [membership.data@yvaudubon.org](mailto:membership.data@yvaudubon.org), w/ questions.

**AUGUST Renewals:** Donn & Dorothy Bartlett, Darlene Ellis, Louis Hanebury, Cindy Meccage, Sherlene Robinson-O'Dea, Bruce Waage, Mike & Heather Weber.



**Helen Carlson remembers her birding friend Billie Hicks** I first met Billie in the early seventies, when she was President of the YVAS, and I was living in Bozeman at the time. She was a tough act to follow in this role.

Billie, Bebe Fitzgerald and I, along with other members of Gordon Weber's harem went on many enjoyable birding trips, Billie always did the driving, she was the best driver, and a wonderful person to be with. We covered a lot of ground both in and out of Montana and saw plenty of birds, it certainly added to my Life List.

I have many wonderful memories of the times we were together and of the tremendous fun we had. I will treasure them. It was an honor to know her. God bless you and Thank you.

A memorial is planned for Billie at the Montana Audubon Center, Saturday, Sept. 16 at 9AM.

***FWP completes acquisition of Grant Marsh WMA addition***

**BILLINGS** — Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks recently completed acquisition of a 425-acre addition to the Grant Marsh Wildlife Management Area seven miles north of Hardin. The property is expected to open to the public by Sept. 1, 2017.

The property, along the west bank of the Bighorn River, is adjacent to the existing Grant Marsh Wildlife Management Area and fishing access site.

FWP recommended purchase of the property with management goals of riparian wildlife habitat conservation, upland habitat enhancement primarily for white-tailed deer and pheasants, and providing substantial public hunting and recreational opportunities.

Following a public hearing and extensive opportunities for public comment, the Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission and the state Land Board approved the purchase this past spring and the sale recently closed.

Signage and other work on the property are necessary before it is available for public access. No new parking area nor approaches from Highway 47 are planned before the public opening. All parking will be on the existing FWP property with only walk-in access to the new 425 acres.

*Submitted by Robert Gibson of MT FWP*

**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





**YELLOWSTONE VALLEY  
AUDUBON FLYER**

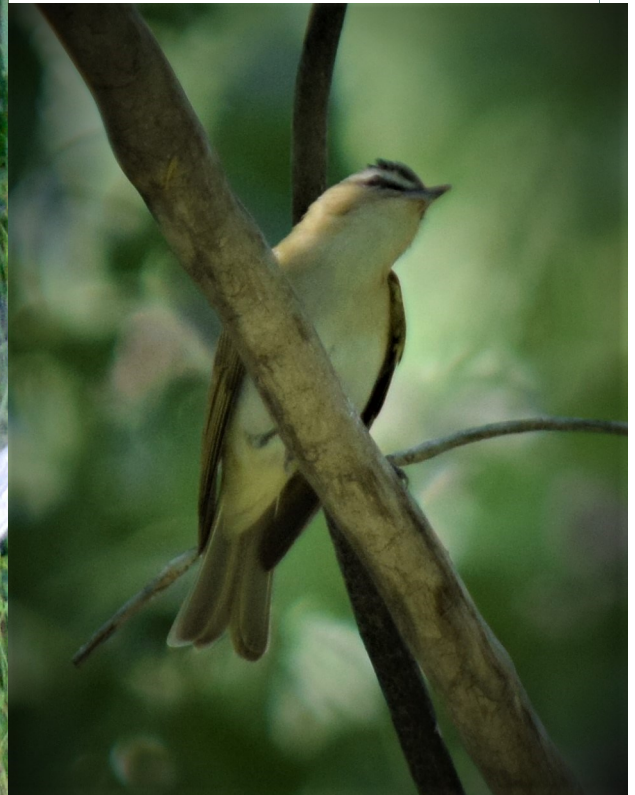
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Left: **Ovenbird**.  
Riverfront Park,  
*photo by Will  
Crain during  
BIRDATHON.*



Left: **Sandhill Crane** with a colt in the foreground, look closely in the grass near the forward leg of the adult. *Photo by Barbara Garrett taken during Red Lodge Field Trip.*

Top: **Red-eyed Vireo**, during BIRDATHON at Riverfront Park. *Photo by Will Crain.*