

# 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.*

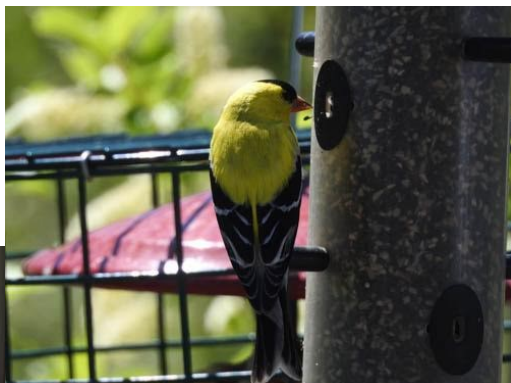
VOLUME 48, NUMBER 6/7

JUNE/JULY 2018

Jim Wiggins submitted this photo at right of Mountain Bluebird nestlings at Phipps park. The first nestlings of the season for Jim.

There is not Chapter meetings until Sept. Next Flyer will be in August, please send all your summer birding news and photos in by July 23 for that issue.

Below is Helen Carlson at the dedication of a bird garden in



her name at the Montana Audubon Center, May 19, 2018. Photos by Jim Wiggins, he also witnessed the first bird coming to the feeders in the garden. The American Goldfinch above. What a way to honor Helen and her own dedication to birding in our community. Thanks, Helen! (see page 6 of Flyer for article)



## 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.**

**Friday, Sept. 14, 4:00pm: Board of Directors Meeting**

**Monday, Sept. 17, 7:00pm: Chapter Meeting**

**We hold a YVAS fundraiser dinner at 5:30, before the Chapter meeting. Announcements of the host for Sept. dinner will be in the August 2018 Flyer.**



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

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

Well we are on summer break! Our next regularly scheduled YVAS meeting and presentation will be in September. That presentation will be about Nocturnal Birds-Birds that pass over Billings and elsewhere in Montana at night? YVAS member Mike Weber and his team, which includes friends from the MPG Ranch (<https://www.mpgranch.com/>), will report their recordings of nocturnal bird voices, identification of those, and the revealing, surprising and valuable insights about avian night travelers. In the meantime, watch for YVAS events taking place between now and September. There are a number of great bird trips, training and entertainment opportunities, and outdoor projects (trails, etc.) 'in the works' and will be detailed as the projects and opportunities further develop and finalize. Keep an eye on the YVAS website and Facebook page, in local news media, and by email for those on Donn Bartlett's (YVAS field trip chairman) bird trip and rare bird alert notification list. I and all of us YVAS Board of Directors hope your summer is excellent and, as Donn so often says, "Wishing you all good birding!"

*Submitted by Steve Regele*



At left: **Eastern Screech-owl** photo by George Mowat discovered in downtown Billings on March 9, 2018.

**YVAS Vice-President Steve Linder** reported to the Flyer that he had his first hummingbird at his feeder here in Billings on May 15, 2018. He didn't report what hummingbird it was nor did he submit a photo but hopefully he will see some more and let us know!

He also hopes you caught the PBS Nature series on Hummingbirds on May 16. If not, watch it online.

### 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)  
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#### Board of Directors:

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 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)  
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Rep. Greg Gianforte:  
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### Committees and Special Assignments: AREA CODE 406

Audubon Adventures: Jerry Dalton, [daltonlj@centurylink.net](mailto:daltonlj@centurylink.net)  
 Baling Twine Project: Deb Regele, [debregele@gmail.com](mailto:debregele@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,  
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 Recycling (aluminum): Larry Handsaker, 855-9832,  
 918 AVE C, Billings  
 Website: Deb Regele, 962-3115, [debregele@gmail.com](mailto: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 Friday of each month at 4:00pm. 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.



**Saturday, May 5 Riverfront Park***Submitted by Lois Gorseth*

Fifteen birders under the able leadership of Lois and Jerry Dalton took advantage of an absolutely gorgeous morning to enjoy the birds. It was nice to see the Pied-billed Grebes, Lesser Scaups, Common Goldeneyes, Blue-winged Teals, and Northern Shoveler in Lake Josephine. The Canada Goose Goslings were also an eye catcher.

The Song Sparrow and House Wrens were quite vocal. The Chickadees, Cedar Waxwings, and the Northern Flickers were vocal and visible. Overhead, we saw a beautiful view of American Pelicans as well as a Broad-winged Hawk. The Yellow-rumped Warblers were numerous, but there were few Yellow Warblers. Lois Dalton spotted an Orange-crowned Warbler. The group saw about 30 species. Thanks go to Lois and Jerry!

**Thursday, May 10 An evening at Riverfront Park***Submitted by Jerry Dalton*

Mike Weber was leader for a small group of Brian Henderson, Rita Cetrone, Lois Dalton, and Jerry Dalton at Riverfront Park. The previous day there had been some rain, and Mike reported seeing a half dozen Swainson's Thrushes while walking his dog that morning. If it was a fallout of birds due to the rain, that helped us find 5 Least Flycatchers calling "che-bek" in one area south of the picnic shelter at the meeting area, and also 3 Black-headed Grosbeak, 2 Bullock's Orioles, and a Spotted Towhee in a small tree. That has rhythm almost like The Twelve Days of Christmas. All these species and 1 Swainson's Thrush we heard, were first encounters of the year for me. We also heard and saw about 25 Yellow Warblers and many House Wrens. MIGRATION going full blast!

When my 360 degree hearing no longer tells me which direction to look for a bird, it's Silent Spring inside my head, and I just don't enjoy spring and summer as much anymore. I have always appreciated the more acute hearing and eyesight of the most skilled birders willing to help the rest of us, but never as much as now. Thank you so much to Mike Weber and Brian Henderson for sharing their abilities to help us find more birds than we would on our own.

**Saturday, May 12 Lake Basin or Bust***Submitted by Mike Weber*

I wish I could say we went to Lake Basin, but with the rain and predicted muddy roads, common sense sent us North on pavement toward Broadview. Four birder's showed up on this cold and soggy day and we were not disappointed. The first pond Robert Hill spotted two Lesser Yellowlegs. Next a small lake to the East of the highway beyond mile marker 18 were at least 150 Red-necked Phalarope and a perhaps 30 Wilson's Phalarope. The Red-necked females are a beautiful bird and wowed the crowd. Along the stops we observed White-faced Ibis, Marbled Godwits, Black-necked Stilts, Long-billed Dowitchers, Wilson's Snipe, Avocets, Least Sandpipers and a Spotted Sandpiper. Several Savannah Sparrow were heard singing and a handful of Chestnut-collared Longspurs called as they flew by. A Say's Phoebe hunted from a Greasewood bush along a slough.

West of Broadview Pond is an active Bald Eagle nest, one eagle on the nest and it's mate perched nearby. We strolled down a tree-lined gravel road just South of the nest that ended at another lake. We flushed a Swainson's Thrush and a saw a Common Yellowthroat and a Yellow-rumped Warbler. A lone Double-crested Cormorant flew over the lake and there were a variety of dabbling and diving ducks.

Broadview Ponds had a small fallout of Warblers and Sparrows, and we saw perhaps a dozen each of Yellow-rumped and Clay-colored sparrow. The Clay-colored were singing their buzzy melody and a few Vesper Sparrows added there sweet voices to the avian chorus. A lone Lark Sparrow looked sullen in the drizzle. Ruddy Ducks were puffing out their chests trying to impress the females. From the water next to the highway were close looks at BN Stilts, Ibis, Avocets, Wilson's Phalaropes and numerous duck species. With a spotting scope we had close looks at a small flock of Least SP's and one Semipalmated Sandpiper.

Next stop was Spidel WPA. The creek flowing into Spidel was full and Spidel WPA was brimming. The road that borders the West side of the Lake was underwater for at least a couple hundred yards. The creek held Shovelers, Blue and

Cinnamon Teal, Pintails and a half a dozen Wilson's Snipe. In the distance a Upland Sandpiper was calling, and a Sora kept it's whinny call on repeat. A dark phase Swainson's Hawk perched on a power pole. A pair of Long-billed Curlew stalked in the stubble of a fallow field. A lone swan sat on the lake, even the keen eye of Jim Hanson could not tell the what the species was from ½ mile distant. The waterfowl that dotted the enormous lake were too numerous to count. The road was treacherous and sodden and our brave driver Trenay Hart kept us somehow from sliding into the ditch. On the way out a pair of Gray Partridge flushed from a the roadside.



*Photo of Mike Weber, Jim Hansen and Robert Hill at Broadview ponds by Trenay Hart.*

We finished the day atop the Rimrocks at a friends feeder and watched Red Crossbills, Chipping Sparrows and saw a Spotted Towhee. A Evening Grosbeak briefly called. We ended the day with 86 species of birds observed.

**Tuesday, May 15 Stillwater River and Woodbine Area***Submitted by Peter Cummins*

Four cars set out for the Stillwater river for a day's birding in sunny weather. Starting at 64<sup>th</sup> Street before heading off to Columbus to bird at Itch-Ke-Pee state park, sadly the feeding station operated there is no longer in existence. Nevertheless some good birds were seen, including American Dipper & Spotted Sandpiper, the Yellow Warblers played hard to see. Further on we were able to see 5 Sandhill Cranes being harried by a sixth, they had probably flown over its territory.



Castle Rock revealed the Calliope Hummingbird for the 20th successive year, giving good views. The campground revealed Ruby-Crowned Kinglets & a Gold-en-Crowned Kinglet was briefly heard. A total of 57 species were seen or heard. Many thanks to Ruth Vanderhorst for an interesting & enjoyable trip.

*Photo at left of **Belted Kingfisher** taking flight at Fisherman's point and the faithful **Calliope Hummingbird** at Castle Rock below both by Dorothy Bartlett.*

**Sunday, May 20 Bear Gulch***Submitted by Carolyn Jones*

Our little band of 3 left Billings at 5:30 AM on a beautiful spring morning. The drive to Bear Gulch, west of Grass Range, was stunning! Sunrise on the greenest landscape we'd seen since Scotland. Birding in the Gulch yielded 23 plus species of birds and 8 ticks. Cliff swallows filled the sky and we spent some time watching the feeding display. Cat birds and spotted towhees dominated the marshy creek bottom. A very vocal bullocks oriole chattered from the tree tops. We were finished birding before noon and went back to the car, had our picnic lunch, and leisurely drove home.

**Tuesday, May 22 Pompey's Pillar and Captain Clark Fishing Access***Submitted by Dorothy Bartlett*

We were a small group of five led by Donn Bartlett and starting in cool overcast weather. The sun came out while we were at the first stop, Captain Clark's. The birds were quite active and cacophony of sounds was delightful. The Yellow-breasted Chat led the chorus, taking us on some wild goose chases with the way he mimics other birds. We identified some Chimney Swift and White-throated Swift flying around the giant tree in the middle of the access. Gray Catbirds and House Wrens were plentiful and we heard a Belted Kingfisher who would not show himself. The highlights of the Pompey's Pillar stop featured great looks at Lazuli Buntings, a Bullock's Oriole, and Least Flycatcher. We saw many other species, including two busloads of grade school kids being shepherded by our newest board member, Carolyn Jones, who volunteers at Pompey's Pillar. *Photo of Gray Catbird by Dorothy Bartlett.*





**Saturday, May 26 Bridger Creek***Submitted by Dorothy Bartlett*

Stan Heath led a good sized group of birders through Bridger Creek. They saw lots of birds a few swallows are highlighted below at left a Violet-green Swallow and right a Barn Swallow. No reports of any woodpeckers but maybe one of the crowd had one and didn't fess up? Below are some pictures by Steve Regele.

**Saturday, May 19 Birding at Brinton's Quarter-Circle Ranch IBA***Submitted by Deb Regele*

For anyone who has not been to the newly designated 600-acre IBA located at the Brinton Quarter-Circle Ranch near Sheridan, Wyoming, it is a must for birders! On Saturday, a group of YVAS birders drove to Big Horn, Wyoming and met a group of Bighorn Audubon Society birders and friends for a morning of fabulous spring birding at the IBA. Jackie Canterbury (President) and Tina Toth (member) of the Bighorn Audubon Society led the enthusiastic group. 32 species of birds were easily seen at the Brinton IBA within an hour or so. Included were Broad-tailed Hummingbirds, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, lots of singing Yellow Warblers, Western Kingfisher, Spotted Sandpipers, Wood Ducks, Spotted Towhees, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Ruby-crowned Kinglets and even a pair of Ospreys at a new nesting platform although they haven't quite made THE commitment. And no Eurasian-collared Doves, House Sparrows or House Finches were seen that morning.

Vistara Parkam hosted the second hour of the morning's birding for the group at her amazing bird sanctuary which is also her home. Here we were treated to a Green-tailed Towhee, Spotted Towhees, zillions of Pine Siskins, Cassin's Finches, Red Crossbills, and Evening and Black-headed Grosbeaks (and delicious cookies!).

For those of you that attended the March YVAS Chapter meeting, Jackie Canterbury was the featured speaker. She extended a warm invitation for YVAS to visit and bird at the Brinton IBA so of course we did! The Ranch is open to the public for birding from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. the third Saturday of each month. There is also an excellent Bistro that is open for lunch with a gorgeous view for additional bird watching.

**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](mailto:donnbartlett@msn.com)

6/1 - 2/2018	Sat & Sun	Birdathon	Contact Ruth Vanderhorst 406-245-5118.
6/5/2018	Tues	Clark Fork WMA-Bluewater Fish Hatchery-Fromberg Area	Steve Regele, leader. Sack Lunch.
6/8-10/2018	Fri & Sat	MT Audubon Bird Festival	See Mt Audubon website for additional information.
6/12/2018	Tues	Pryor Mountains-Sage Creek	Stan Heath, leader. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at Rocky or at the Bridger Rest Area at 8:30 a.m. Sack Lunch.
6/16/2018	Sat	Red Lodge Area	Jerry Dalton and Stan Heath, leaders. Meet at Rocky at 7:00 a.m. for car-pooling or at 8:30 at Lions Park in Red Lodge. Sack Lunch.
6/17/2018	Sun	Yellowstone River WMA State Park	Megan O'Reilly, leader. Sack Lunch.



**Saturday, April 21 Exxon Ponds***Submitted by Robin Manfredi*

On Saturday, April 21, Brian Henderson led a group of sixteen birders on the annual trek to Exxon Ponds. We were met and accompanied by a representative from Exxon. It was a beautiful day for a walk, and there were plenty of birds out and about including a couple of Sandhill Cranes and several Ring-necked Pheasants. We also had fly-bys from Great Blue Herons throughout the day, and we saw two American White Pelicans that looked to be riding the thermals quite high in the sky.

Canada Geese were in abundance, as were ducks. Species of duck observed included Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Common Goldeneye, Mallard, Ruddy Duck, and one Wood Duck. At one point we came across a female nesting Canada Goose, who flew away and left her very warm egg for us to pass around while Don Bartlett told us about how the goose lays one egg a day until she has a full clutch. During this time, her body produces a hormone that causes her downy feathers to fall out, giving the nest a soft lining. The goslings are ready to leave the nest as soon as their own downy feathers are dry and fluffed up.

Out on the big pond we also saw American Coots, an Eared Grebe and (the highlight of the day) an immature Double-crested Cormorant perched and posing for the scopes and photographers. Nearby were a half-dozen adult Cormorants socializing on the shore.

Male Red-winged Blackbirds were calling, singing and showing off their colorful epaulets. They have arrived ahead of the females to stake out their territories in the reeds around the ponds and irrigation ditches. Other birds we saw or heard were Mourning Doves, Northern Flickers, one Red-shafted Northern Flicker, Black-billed Magpies, Black-capped Chickadees, European Starlings, many, many Song Sparrows, Common Grackles, one lonely American Robin and one swallow we did not positively identify.

Raptors were also around in the form of one Bald Eagle, one Red-tailed Hawk and Osprey, which could often be heard but not seen.

At the end of the morning, as we walked back to the gate, we saw a herd of at least fifty White-tailed Deer and around ten Painted Turtles sunning themselves on logs in the water.

Most of the group headed to Lockwood for a lunch break and a look around. We were rewarded with great views of a pair of Mountain Bluebirds and a few House Finches. Thank you to Ruth Vanderhorst for leading us there.

We would like to extend many thanks to Exxon for allowing us to bird on their grounds, to Brian Henderson for leading the outing, and to Jim Hansen for sharing his insight about bird biology and behavior.

**A Bird Garden “Without Borders”**

The Helen Carlson Cummins Bird Garden at the Montana Audubon Center was officially dedicated Saturday, May 20. Carolyn Sevier opened the dedication program by thanking Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society and Wildbirds Unlimited for partnering with the Montana Audubon Center on this project. Carolyn wonderfully described the Bird Garden as a “garden without borders.” Kathy Haigh, owner of Wildbirds Unlimited, and Steve Regele, President of YVAS, each spoke followed by the guest of honor, Helen Carlson Cummins. Helen reminded us that it takes people with a common interest to make a difference even if it is for just one person.

The Bird Garden “area” has three new informational signs. YVAS sponsored the “Common Feeder Birds” sign. Wildbirds Unlimited sponsored the “Thoughtful Bird Feeding Station” sign. And MAC created the Bird Garden area map and will soon be installing another sign with the name of the new garden. Carolyn invited people to visit and wander around the Helen Carlson Cummins Bird Garden and explore the MAC at any time.

It may be a bird garden without borders but it is not a bird garden without birders! *Submitted with photo by Deb Regele*

**“Who Dat?”** Dorothy Bartlett took this photo outside of Big Horn, WY and asked Steve Regele what in the world is this bird? She was tickled by his response and submitted it for us all to enjoy.

Per Steve Regele: The bird is a **Guinea Fowl**. They are endemic to the continent of Africa and rank among the oldest of gallinaceous birds. The insect- and seed-eating, ground-nesting birds of this family resemble partridges, but with featherless heads. The helmeted Guinea Fowl has been introduced in East Africa, West Indies, US, Britain and India, where it is raised as food or pets. I see them at rural homes and farms, etc. Occasionally, it is different to see a ‘free ranging’ Guinea Fowl!!



### RENEWALS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Larry Handsaker and Helen Carlson encourage you to keep all your aluminum cans from all those summer BBQ's you will be throwing and donate them to YVAS for the many projects they support. Larry accepts donations at his home: 918 AV C and so does Helen, 519 Highland Park Dr. Larry is willing to pick up cans if you give him a call at 406- 855-9832.

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 June and July. 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 the Data Base Administrator: Peter Cummins at [member-ship.data@yvaudubon.org](mailto:member-ship.data@yvaudubon.org) with any questions.



**MAY remaining renewals:** Mike Griffin, Kathy Snell.

**JUNE Renewals:** Rita Cetrone, Nancy & Dale Detrick, Mary Fitzpatrick, Claudia Janecek, James King, George & Bernie Mowat, Bernard Rose, Jim & Jeanie Sells.

**JULY Renewals:** Judy Fenton, Trenay Hart, Donna M Lance, Liz Yorgason, Grace Blair.

#### 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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Dorothy Bartlett submitted this photo, at left, of her fellow birders on the Stillwater River trip. Above left, Sandhill Cranes mating dance at Kearney, NE by Jim Sell, Mar '18

### YVAS Birds of the Month

#### Lark Sparrow

This large sparrow has long, rounded tail with white corners is easily identified while driving down any gravel road at this time of year. It's repertoire of song is amazing and melodic. 91% of it's 7.5 million population spend some part of the year in the US breeding. Non-breeding time is spent in Mexico.

Dorothy Bartlett took this beautiful photograph (below) during the Pompey's Pillar field trip this year. It is perfect! If you don't know this common summer sparrow it's about time you become familiar as they are delightful.



Lake Elmo Osprey photographed by Jim Sells on May 19. Pretty cool seeing the bird catch and then dine on a fish! Thanks, Jim.

