



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 49, NUMBER 1

JANUARY 2019

January 21, 2019 Chapter Meeting 7PM

Observing the Natural World

John Carlson will share photographs and stories centered on his lifetime observing the natural world around him. John first became interested in photography over 40 years ago when his father loaned a camera to him. His father's initial investment of patience and time behind the camera with John fostered a lifelong passion for capturing images of nature in our world. John hopes to convey the same sense of wonder and appreciation for the natural world that he sees. He will weave stories into these images from journeys ranging from explorations close to home (his backyard in Billings) and the prairies in northeastern Montana to forays into Africa and Antarctica.

John is a wildlife biologist in Billings with a large federal land management agency. He grew up in Fort Peck, Montana where he was immersed in the natural world around him at an early age through a number of adventures with his dad, Chuck Carlson. He has traveled to both ends of the earth (Arctic and Antarctic Circles) always with a camera in hand.

The presentation will be at 7:00 p.m. on January 21, 2019 at Mayflower Congregational Church on the corner of Poly and Rehberg. The presentation is free and open to the public. *Submitted with photos courtesy of John Carlson.*



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 14, 4:00pm: Board of Directors Meeting

Monday, January 21, 7:00pm: Chapter Meeting

The Board invites everyone for cookies and coffee at 6:30pm prior to the Chapter meeting. Please contact Sue Weinreis [the Friday prior to the Chapter meeting](#) if you like to contribute cookies or bars.



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☞ We're on the web! yvaudubon.org

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

YVAS Board of Directors Highlights

November & December, 2018

Submitted by Sue Weinreis

- The 2019 YVAS Birdathon will be held June 1-2.
- YVAS' participation in Audubon Adventures has been discontinued because it is not being used. The Board will have further discussion to determine how to use the money in the fund.
- Beginning January 1, 2019 dues are raised by \$5 for all memberships; a general membership to YVAS will be \$25.00 and a student membership will be \$15.00.
- Marco Restani updated the Bylaws manual and Board members will be able to access it online.
- Volunteers are needed to provide cookies for the upcoming January, February, March, and April meetings. Please contact Sue Weinreis at granpeak47@gmail.com or call or text (406) 855-4181 if you can help out.

NOTICE: Bob and Carolyn Jones have space on a birding trip that they purchased at an auction. The trip is May 23-25, 2019 in the Centennial Valley in southwestern Montana. There is an available cabin at the cost of \$230.00 for a pair of folks interested in tagging along. They will be staying at the J Bar L Ranch <https://www.jbarl.com/rentals/smith-house>

Bob and Carolyn said it is a trip of birding, hiking and wildlife observation. They are willing to carpool. If you are interested call Carolyn at 406-670-4449.

Who do you call when you find an INJURED bird?

Injured Birds: Details at 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
Vice-President: Steve Linder, 380-0073, becon1@bresnan.net
Secretary: Doreen Hartman, 697-0277, rdzlhman@bresnan.net
Treasurer: Pam Pipal, 245-4517, ppipal@charter.net

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 Nancy Wiggins: 839-4461, nwiggins83@gmail.com

Montana's Congressional Delegation:

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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
 email: 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
 Baling Twine Project: Deb Regele, debregele@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, 860-0450,
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dpadanyi@live.com
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 Publicity: contact any Board Member
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 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 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, November 11, 2018 Yellowtail Dam Afterbay*Submitted by Brian Henderson*

With the threat of snow after noon, we did our best to NOT stop to identify EVERY bird along the way. We needed to get there and back reasonably early in case the roads got dangerous later. Wait was that a ... NO, we have to keep going. Hey that looked like a... Sorry! OMG look how big that hawk is – OK we're stopping! A Ferruginous Hawk reset the tone somewhat – would be neat to sit and watch the hawk work over that prairie dog metropolis – but gotta keep moving. How about that Golden Eagle flying across the road right in front of us that just lit on a nearby fence post – juvenile with the white patches? Well, ok... And with so many Rough-legs offering closeups we had to stop and admire – I mean study particular features characteristic of that species, too.

On Veteran's Day, why not stop and honor our veterans especially when our nation's symbol, a Bald Eagle is standing guard at eye level right beside the road? Thank you veterans! Umm, what's that in it's shadow? A Merlin perched only a couple of fence posts away – also paying respect to be sure! Ok, ok, moving along...

The Yellowtail Afterbay soon reminded us the trip was not all about raptors as thousands of ducks and geese were there to greet us. Mallards and Canada Geese were there in large numbers but the fun is finding who else is out there. On this day we found some Cackling Geese, a pair of Greater Scaup plus some Lesser Scaup, Ring-necked Ducks, Am. Wigeon, Pintail, GW Teal, Bufflehead, C. Goldeneye, a Horned Grebe, and a few old Coots. Flocks of Robins and Cedar Waxwings also dazzled us as we discovered a Blue Goose (dark morph Snow Goose) pretty close down below us. Soon after that a juvenile white morph Snow Goose flew in to join the masses on the lake.

And raptors not to be forgotten, a Golden Eagle soared above the afterbay. Then after you've returned to scoping waterfowl and someone points out an eagle again, don't just assume it's the same great raptor – look twice before you declare that young Bald Eagle golden. Oops – ok, time to go!

Last stop at the afterbay was down to the treatment ponds which often reveal another species or two that we had not seen out on the afterbay. This time the new species was... Gadwalls! The ponds also had Wigeons and numerous Buffleheads. It's also yet another vantage point to look for anything else you may have missed on the afterbay – such as Redheads!

And finally, of all the things to photograph on a birding trip, Marco Restani submitted this one of a pile of recycled pre-fertilized berries and other stuff generously donated by one of the local residents.

Saturday, December 15, 2018 Christmas Bird Count*Submitted by Jim Court*

It was a warm, windy day for the Christmas Bird Count. A total of 57 species (plus 3 hawk species unknown) were seen by 47 volunteer observers and 11 feeder watchers. The count total was 23,507 birds. Canada Goose topped the list with 8,517. The most unusual bird was the American White Pelican seen by two groups in adjacent areas. Likely, the same bird. Fifteen species were seen only once and 2 species were seen only twice. Participants drove 365 miles and walked 28 miles. Forty-six mature Bald Eagles and 14 immature Bald Eagles were observed. My thanks to all who helped count. *Photos by Steve Regele at the Montana Audubon Center following the CBC of Jim Court (left) and group (right).*



RARE BIRD ALERT: Thursday, November 8, 2018 Stan Heath notified YVAS members that there was a Black Scoter at Cooney Reservoir. The following day Peter & Helen Cummings went out and observed it. Dan Casey went out on the 10th and reported that all three Scoter species were seen at Marshall Cove on the reservoir. That would be the Surf, Black and White-winged Scoters. AMAZING! On 11/19/2018 Stan Heath went back out to the reservoir and saw 2 Surf Scoters, 3 Black Scoters and 7 White-winged Scoters and a Pacific Loon. Thanks for letting us know and if you have any RARE BIRD ALERTS please send them to Donn Bartlett and he will post them via email. If you aren't already on his notification list just email him your desire to be in the loop. [Donn Bartlett @msn.com](mailto:DonnBartlett@msn.com) Photo below Black Scoter at Cooney Reservoir by Jim Sells.



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

Jan. 1, 2019	Tues	New Year's Day Annual Trip to Yellowtail Dam Afterbay	Brian Henderson, leader. Bring a Sack Lunch.
Jan. 5, 2019	Sat	Annual Eagle Midwinter Survey in lower 48 states. Yellowstone River, Billings to Columbus	Brian Henderson, leader. Bring a Sack Lunch.
Apr. 20, 2019	Sat	Exxon Ponds and Emerald Hills	ONE MILE WALK. Brian Henderson, Leader. Bring a Sack Lunch.



Individual and Group Advocacy

The YVAS 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.”

Another year gone by ... and once again in 2018 YVAS members and their Board of Directors (BOD) have demonstrated accomplishments and solid commitments in the YVAS Mission.

That includes the “activism” part of the Mission. We do that as individual members professing and acting on individual positions and preferences. We also do that through BOD actions including letters of support on behalf of all YVAS members emphasizing YVAS positions and actions promoting “*enjoyment and protection of the natural environment* “. These YVAS BOD letters, position statements and actions include contacts to State and Federal Legislators, agencies and others that have substantial influence on important matters related to the YVAS Mission. ‘Member numbers’ can have significant influence with decision makers.

The YVAS BOD is occasionally asked to financially support legislative lobbyists of other non-governmental organizations (NGO’s) with missions similar to YVAS. Rather than that the YVAS BOD is often signatory to specific letters and efforts of other organizations and agencies consistent with the YVAS conservation, activism, education and natural environment protection goals. The YVAS BOD encourages YVAS members to individually support such like-minded groups and efforts as each member chooses. However, the YVAS BOD is unanimous in its decision to spend its time and the YVAS organization’s financial resources specifically on YVAS work, rather than in shifting YVAS membership dollars to legislative lobbyists of other NGO’s. That is not to say that YVAS does not provide financial support on a case-by-case basis to efforts of other NGO’s. We do, but YVAS financial support is limited to that case-by-case basis rather than in a carte blanche manner to other NGO’s. The YVAS BOD members also personally contribute as much time as possible directly to YVAS and secondarily to direct support of efforts and goals of other NGO’s.

Also on the ‘activism’ note, you may have previously seen a March 2015 Article by Rita Harding “Finding Your Wings ... And Voice” that has been residing on the YVAS web site. That commentary is as relevant now in gearing up for the 2019 Montana Legislative Session, etc., as it was in 2015. You can check that out at <http://yvaudubon.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Rita-H-MT-Legislat-2015-031815.pdf> or by going to <http://yvaudubon.org/> then selecting “Publications”, then “Editorials and Opinions” and then click on the article title. (12/12/18 Note: The “send a message” option at this and other YVAS web links will be updated when the 2019 Montana Legislative Session convenes).

On other Mission related fronts in 2018, YVAS made possible over 2 dozen scheduled birding trips and 8 top notch presentations arranged and hosted by YVAS members. 2018 was also a productive year for YVAS accomplishments in education - e.g. a YVAS grant to the Human Resources Development Council (Billings) for participants to take advantage of outdoor education and conservation offerings of the Montana Audubon Center in Billings (MAC); YVAS members direct support and help to MAC; several high quality bird information signs crafted and installed in outdoor public places around Billings; raising awareness about the hazards of baling twine and waste of non-renewable resources; and other YVAS education-related accomplishments as well. Page 4 of the September issue of the “Flyer” includes a more detailed summary of some YVAS work: <http://yvaudubon.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Sept-2018-Flyer.pdf>

2019 is sure to be another good and active year for YVAS. Thanks to all you YVAS-ers for making that a reality!

Submitted by Steve Regele

What is the Collective Noun for a Group of Birds?*Submitted by Pam Pipal*

Most birders are familiar with ‘gaggle of geese’ or ‘murmuration of starlings’, but what about other groups of birds? “Thought to have originated from hunting manuals, the practice of inventing collective nouns for birds has since evolved into a sport all its own, with new words striving to perfectly capture the essence of each bird.” [Quote taken from the description of the book, “A Conspiracy of Ravens: A Compendium of Collective Nouns for Birds” on Amazon’s web-site] Here are terms for groups of a few familiar birds, mostly taken from ‘Into the Air,’ The official Blog of Backyard Chirper, with a few taken from Google searches:

Cormorants: gulp**Cranes:** herd, sedge**Crows:** murder, congress**Ducks:** Raft, brace, paddling, raft**Eagles:** convocation, aerie**Geese:** gaggle (on the ground), skein (in flight), plump (flying close together)**Grouse:** covey, pack**Gulls:** colony**Hawks:** boil, cast, kettle, lease**Hérons:** siege, sedge**Ibises:** colony**Jays:** band, party, scold**Magpies:** charm, congregation, gulp, murder, tiding, tittering, parliament**Mallards:** flush, puddling, sord, suit**Owls:** parliament, stare, wisdom**Pelicans:** squadron, scoop, pod**Pheasants:** bouquet, nye, nide, nest, head**Pigeons:** kit**Plovers:** congregation, stand, wing**Ravens:** congress, unkindness, conspiracy**Starlings:** chattering, cloud, congregation, murmuration, clattering**Swallows:** flight, gulp**Swans:** wedge, team, lamentation, bank, bevy, drift, eyrar, flight, whiting, ballet, regatta, gargle**Turkeys:** gang, rafter, gobble, posse, raffle**Vultures:** wake, venue**Woodpeckers:** descent**Wrens:** herd, chime**Black Vulture spotted for the first time in Montana**(Article from **The Montana Standard** by Gary Swant)

The official list of bird species for Montana until recently was 433. A new species was added in September (2018)– the Black Vulture. It was found in the Choteau area by two local birders and remained in the area for about a week. The other two vultures in North America are the California Condor and the Turkey Vulture.

I traveled to Choteau with my wife the day after the original sighting and found the Black Vulture in a large cottonwood tree roosting with 10 Turkey Vultures. I went back the next morning and the bird was still in the roost and did not leave until 8:30a.m. Vultures have the ability to fly long distances in search of food and it would be nearly impossible to find them while they scavenge for food. We were fortunate to have known where they roosted at night through eBird.

Now, two of North America’s three vultures, the Black and Turkey have been seen in Montana. The Turkey Vulture summers in Montana as well as most of America and winters in Mexico and the southeast United States. There were 2,248 records of the Turkey Vulture with the Montana Natural Heritage Program so they are fairly common.

There are 22 species in the world, seven in the new world (north and South America) and 15 in the old world (Europe and Africa) with most of the old world species found only in Africa. Interestingly, no vulture species have been recorded in Australia.

Turkey vultures can be separated from Black Vultures by a number of traits. The most obvious is the red head in the adult TV and the gray head in the BV. This was the second life bird Gary added to his list this year in Montana, the other was an Indigo Bunting near Billings.

Gary Swant presented at a YVAS Chapter meeting in 2015 about his Montana “Big Year” where he saw 329 species. For the rest of the article on the Black Vulture see the Montana Standard’s website.

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 JANUARY. 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 membership.data@yvaudubon.org with any questions.

JANUARY Renewals: (Remember this year dues have been raised by \$5.00) Don & Judy Allen, Stanley Bruce, Jim Court, Larry Handsaker, Doreen Hartman, Karen Heil, Stephen C Linder, Gerald Moore & Joy Mallard, Linda Pickard, Bobby Purcell.

DECEMBER Renewals: Charles & Candace Allen, Barbara Miner, Marcia L Regele.



HELP WANTED

The YVAS mission is “to promote enjoyment and protection of the natural environment through education, activism, and conservation of bird habitat”. Volunteers are essential for YVAS to succeed in that mission. We will publish monthly in the Flyer where volunteers are needed. Please consider helping out..

Publicity Chair Job Opening

Our YVAS Publicity Chair Volunteer Position is open! We are looking for an individual with great communication skills, is an extrovert, enjoys working with the community– and of course, is good at writing and presenting new ideas. Exciting changes and growth are in YVAS’ future– a dynamic and energetic individual is needed for a few hours each month to help us share our news and presentations. YVAS members interested in volunteering to fill this position are invited to speak to any Board member. Volunteer and make a difference!

Pre-Chapter Meeting Cookies

Volunteers are needed to provide cookies for upcoming meetings. Please contact Sue Weinreis at granpeak47@gmail.com or call or text (406) 855-4181 if you can help out.

Articles for the Flyer

Please submit anything you find related to birds or birding to the Flyer for publication. Please remember to put your submissions in a Word or Google Document, Times New Roman Font size 11. Trenay wants to edit not transcribe! Submit to: yvasflyer@gmail.com

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 \$25. If applying for a new or renewing student membership, make check for \$15 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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At left, **Black-capped Chickadee** and **Downy Woodpecker** photos by *Adrienne Baker* one time YVAS member and local birder. These were taken at the MAC this fall. At right, photo by *Robert Hill* **Osprey** with it's catch near Ennis the first week of October 2018.



YVAS Birds of the Month Harris's Sparrow

This showstopper of a sparrow graced the yard of Karen Heil, near Edgar, MT this late October. She was elated to have the largest sparrow pay a visit. It breeds in Canada and nowhere else in the world.

The oldest recorded Harris's Sparrow was 11 years, 8 months old when it was recaptured and released during branding operations in Kansas in 1983!

This bird was named after Edward Harris, a friend of John J. Audubon, who collected the specimen in 1843. Though it was first collected by Thomas Nuttall in 1834 and named "Mourning Finch".

Submitted by Trenay Hart and adapted from All About Birds, Photos by Karen Heil

