

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 42, NUMBER 4

APRIL 2012



UPLAND SANDPIPER
J. Larson

APRIL 16 MEMBERSHIP MEETING

BOWDOIN NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

JESSICA LARSON, WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST

To better acquaint us with one of Montana's most outstanding National Wildlife Refuges, Bowdoin NWR, YVAS will feature Wildlife Biologist Jessica Larson. She will talk on the history, mission, and of course, the birds that make this Refuge special. Bowdoin is home to many species of waterfowl, shorebirds, pelicans, terns, gulls, grassland songbirds, raptors, grouse, and others. Each year the birds put on their show through spring migration, nesting, rearing of young, and then gather again to migrate south in the fall. However, love of birds has not always been the purpose of Lake Bowdoin and surrounding uplands. Jessica will go back in time to explain the history of how Bowdoin came to be, the progress that has been made, and what the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for Bowdoin means for the Refuge's future. Of course she will highlight birding adventures that await visitors!

Jessica has been at Bowdoin for about a year. Prior to that, she worked on the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge in La Crosse, Wisconsin, where she enjoyed the migrations on the Mississippi River, every fall. Her love for the prairie came from her two summers at Glacial Ridge NWR in northwestern Minnesota. Since moving west, she has enjoyed seeing the marbled godwits and American avocets once again.

New This Issue

- New Board Member
- ACEC Events
- Birdathon
- Bird Classes
- Conservation Grants



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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.

Saturday April 7th: Board of Directors Meeting at the DeMeyer's Cabin. Contact Bill DeMeyer for directions at demeyerb@ci.billings.mt.us

Monday, April 16, 7:00pm: General Membership Meeting

We will hold a YVAS fundraiser dinner at 5:45 before the April membership meeting. Dinner donation: \$6. The dinner will be hosted by Jeannette Davis. Please call her at 656-7618 by Saturday, April 14 to make reservations.



☞ We're on the web! yvaudubon.org

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YVAS WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBER



Shelia McKay recently joined the YVAS Board of Directors. Shelia grew up in Billings and attended Mills College and Hastings School of Law in California, where she was most recently employed with Ness Technology. Fortunately for the YVAS community she has "retired" to Billings as the owner and director of Warren J Hancock Bird Resources (WJH). WJH was started by Shelia's father, Warren Hancock and was run by her brother, Bill Hancock, until his death. Shelia is deeply interested in the Yellowstone River ecology and in rails, cranes, ducks, geese and swans, and looks forward to learning more about osprey and other Montana birds.

WJH Bird Resources, at 2753 S. 56th St. W., has 26 acres of wetland ponds and pens that provide homes for North American and exotic species from South America, Eurasia and Australia. The aviary, which is dedicated to the preservation and conservation of waterfowl focuses on bird protection, rehabilitation and education. The center houses more than 300 individual birds.

April 18: 7 PM, Community Lecture Series, Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 2032 Central Ave, Billings. Steve Hoffman, Montana Audubon Executive Director, will share the latest information on bird conservation efforts in Montana at the. He will describe recent research findings and new program initiatives conducted by Montana Audubon and its many partners. Rare and declining grassland, wetland and streamside species and habitats will be emphasized, as well as the Important Bird Area Program and preservation of habitat. Refreshments are served and all are welcome.



PREPARE FOR SPRING BIRDING by visiting the YVAS website: yvaudubon.org. Take a minute to jump start your memory by reviewing the wonderful photos of local Billings birds that have been posted by members.

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society Officers:

President: Bill DeMeyer, 406-671-7501, battie@bresnan.net
Vice-President: Steve Regele, 962-3115, sregele@juno.com
Secretary: Dorothy Bartlett, 252-0757, dpadanyi@live.com
Treasurer: Deb Regele, 962-3115, dregele@juno.com
Past-President: Kayhan Ostovar, 256-7481, kayhan@q.com

Board of Directors:

Donn Bartlett: 252-0757, donnbartlett@msn.com
 Rita Harding: 259-7586, mtroses22@bresnan.net
 Shelia McKay: 652-7175, wjhbird@yahoo.com
 Jeanette Tasey: 669-3169, jtasey@gmail.com
 Nancy Wiggins: 651-0218, nwiggins83@gmail.com

Montana's Congressional Delegation:

Sen. Max Baucus: U.S. Senate, Wash. D.C. 20510
 website: <http://baucus.senate.gov>
 email: max@baucus.senate.gov
 Billings: 657-6790 Wash. D.C.: 1-800-332-6160
Sen. Jon Tester: U.S. Senate, Wash. D.C. 20510
 website: <http://tester.senate.gov>
 email: senator@tester.senate.gov
 Billings: 252-0550 Wash. D.C.: 1-866-554-4403
Rep. Dennis Rehberg: U.S. House of Rep. Wash. D.C. 20515
 website: www.rehberg.house.gov
 email: denny.rehberg@mail.house.gov
 Billings: 256-1019 Wash. D.C.: 202-225-3211

Committees and Special Assignments:

Archives and History.....open
 Audubon Adventures.....Jeannette Davis ,656-7618
 Bird Questions.....George Mowat, 656-7467 or
 Helen Carlson, 248-8684
 Christmas Bird Count.....Helen Carlson, 248-8684
 or Billie Hicks, 962-3798
 Conservation Chair...Kayhan Ostovar, 256-7481,
kayhan@q.com
 Editor.....Nancy Wiggins, 651-0218, nwiggins83@gmail.com
 Field Trip Chairs... George and Bernie Mowat, 656-7467,
gmowat@bresnan.net
 Greeters.....Phyllis Holt 252-7373
 Audrey Jurovich 656-2748
 Injured Raptors...Jeanette Tasey 669-3169,jtasey@gmail.com
 Membership Secretary.....Joel M. Bowers, 534-3672,
 cell: 591-5635, jmba@jmba.com
 Program Chair..Shelia McKay, 656-7175, wjhbird@yahoo.com
 Recycling (aluminum) ..Will Crain, williamcrain@earthlink.net
 Website.... Tom Lyman, Tomglyman@gmail.com

Meetings are held September through May at Mayflower Congregational Church, corner of Poly and Rehberg:

- Board Meetings held second Monday of each month at 6:00pm. Board Meetings are open to entire membership.
- General Chapter Meetings are held third Monday of each month at 7:00pm. All meetings are open to the public.

JOIN IN

Spring 2012 Events at the Audubon Conservation Education Center

7026 South Billings Blvd, Billings, MT, 59101 406-294-5099
www.mtacec.org



APRIL 7 Open house at the Audubon Center from 10 AM - 2 PM! Stop by and sign out a field guide, insect net, or a pair of binoculars to help you explore the great outdoors. Free and open to all ages.

APRIL 13 Nature Night at the Audubon Center! Drop your child off for an evening of outdoor adventures with our Teacher Naturalists. Program is open to 1st – 6th grade students, and runs from 6 – 8 PM. Fee is \$15 OR \$10 per child for Friends of the Audubon Center. Call 294 – 5099 to register.

APRIL 16 Adventure in Nature School Break Camp: "Pups, Chicks, and Kits" from 8:30 – 4:30 – the world is abuzz with new life in the spring! Learn about baby animals in the wild, from where they live to how they survive as we wander in search of pups, chicks, and kits. Open to students in 1st – 6th grades. Fee is \$45/child OR \$40/child for Friends of the Audubon Center. Register by calling 294-5099.

APRIL 16 - 18 Swing into Spring this week at the Audubon Center! Evening programs for families are free for Friends of the Center (\$2/person for non-members). Programs run from 6:30 – 8 PM and include:

- Monday: Intro camping – get prepared to hike and camp this summer by learning about the tools and skills you'll need to pitch a tent, build a fire, and more.....
- Tuesday: Navigation – learn to find your way in the woods with maps, compass, and GPS. You'll never be lost again!
- Wednesday: Bear Aware – bruins abound in the Billings' area. Learn to identify black and grizzly bears, and learn how to live safely with these awe-inspiring neighbors.

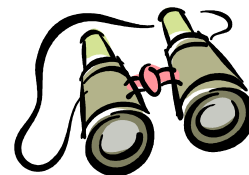
APRIL 28 Open house at the Audubon Center from 10 AM - 2 PM! Stop by and sign out a field guide, insect net, or a pair of binoculars to help you explore the great outdoors. Free and open to all ages.

APRIL 21 Fourth Annual Earth Day Celebration! Join us to plant trees, pick up trash, hike, and clean up our nursery. Work and fun begin at 9:30 AM. Volunteers will be rewarded with a free BBQ lunch at noon. Come for an hour, or the whole day. Bring water, work gloves, and the whole family. No fee for participation. Event takes place rain or shine!

APRIL 24 Free evening lecture on the geology of the Yellowstone region with Dr. Derek Sjostrum from Rocky Mountain College. 7 – 8 PM. No registration required.

May 3, 10, and 17 HELEN'S 36th YEAR of SPRING BIRDING CLASSES.

The first three Thursdays in May: May 3, 10, and 17, from 8am to 3pm, our own Helen Carlson will help sharpen our bird identification skills in the field at birding hot spots around Billings. The 3-class series is \$25 per person, which will go to benefit the YVAS Audubon Adventures Program. Call Helen at 248-8684 to register. Plan to car pool, bring binoculars, sack lunch and warm clothes—just in case.....



YVAS BIRDATHON 2012



- **WHEN?** Saturday, June 2, 5 pm to Sunday, June 3, 5 pm
- **WHAT?** An annual competition among teams of volunteers who solicit sponsors to raise funds. Teams compete to identify the greatest number of species and to raise the most funds.
- **WHY?** To raise funds to support YVAS programs:
 - Osprey Program
 - - Habitat Restoration
 - - Environmental Education

To promote bird watching for fun.

To promote protection and appreciation of nature.

- **WHO?** Teams of two or more birders who will participate during the scheduled hours. Teams should include at least one experienced birder who can identify species reliably.

Supporters who will pledge funds to teams for YVAS.

- **HOW?** Teams register to participate using the attached form. The form is also available on the website at www.yvaudubon.org. A \$5.00 entry fee per team member must accompany the completed form. Forms are to be mailed to:

Treasurer, Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society, PO Box 1075 Billings, MT 59103

- ⇒ Team members should seek as many sponsors as possible to raise funds. A form for sponsors with name, address, and phone number is available.
- ⇒ Team members are responsible for obtaining the completed forms and turning them in to the Treasurer. Teams may collect funds contributed and turn them in as well along with the form.
- ⇒ Teams are to bird during the prescribed hours together. They are to record the name of each species identified and present the list for compilation at the end of the birding period on June 3. One Birdathon list will be compiled. Donors may pledge donations based on the number of compiled number of birds identified or a flat amount. More information about a compilation event will be available in the May issue of the Flyer. Questions concerning the event may be addressed to Ruth Vanderhorst, acr@bresnan.net.

Montana Prairie Tour ~ Join MA ~ May 18-20

Join Montana Wilderness Association and Montana Audubon on this prairie tour which will include hiking opportunities and wildlife viewing with biologists from the World Wildlife Fund, C.M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge, American Prairie Reserve, and Montana Audubon. Camp at the American Prairie Reserve's Buffalo Campground. We will gather on Friday night and conduct multiple hikes and tours Saturday, which will be repeated Sunday. Experience the American Prairie Reserve with its bison herd, the Burnt Lodge Wilderness

(Continued on page 5)

Study Area, and the Mickey/Brandon Butte proposed wilderness area in the C.M. Russell Wildlife Refuge. The prairie this time of year is beautiful with good opportunities for viewing sage and sharptail grouse at their dancing leks. Other species to view include prairie dogs, burrowing owls, prairie birds, raptors, water fowl, elk, antelope, and big horn sheep. Folks who cannot attend the whole weekend are still welcome, but plan on staying at least one night. Cosponsored by the American Prairie Reserve and Montana Audubon. More details about this trip are at www.wildmontana.org .(406) 443-7144.

Wings Across the Big Sky

June 8–10, 2012, Kalispell, Montana

Spotlight on Flathead Audubon's Conservation Education Program

Flathead Audubon seeks to promote awareness and appreciation of the natural world through its Conservation Education Program. This program is the *only* staffed, locally independent program in the Flathead Valley that provides nature-based education free of charge. Close to five thousand children, youth and adults have been served during the past year through its community, family and school-related programs. And, it all happens with only one part-time, visionary education coordinator.

Flathead Audubon is striving to make the position of Conservation Education Coordinator sustainable for years to come. That's why Montana Audubon will be showing its support for this valuable program by sharing proceeds of the festival raffle, as well as dessert and live auctions at Saturday evening's banquet. And that's why we thank you for joining us in these lively fundraising events!

Friday Evening's Entertainment

Professor Avian Guano's "Migration Magic"

Professor Avian Guano, the world-renowned, eccentric German professor of ornithology, will instruct and entertain us with his bird-brained slant on our neotropical avian friends. These "snowbirds" spend half their year in the tropics and half their year living with us in Montana. He will also answer some seemingly whacky questions, the answers to which are indispensable for every well-informed birder, including the following:

- How much food does a tiny kinglet need to stay at their required 111-degree body temperature through the fall, winter and spring?
- How many nests does a male wren make just to get female attention, and why does she then have extra-marital affairs?
- How do happenings in Colombia, Brazil and Mexico affect our quality of life here?

Plus a Bird Calling Contest!

Professor Avian Guano will also share his legendary mimicry of bird songs and be one of three judges for our bird-calling contest. Come prepared to be the first to recognize the good professor's imitations as well as to demonstrate your own bird calling prowess! Prizes will be awarded on the spot for the most accurate AND the most "loony" songs.

Call for Montana Audubon Award Nominations!

"Over the fruitful earth and across the sea goes the bright gleam of noble deeds." –Pindar

We are now seeking nominations for 4 awards that will be given at the annual meeting in Kalispell. The awards acknowledge individuals who exemplify a commitment to birds, other wildlife, and habitat conservation. The awards will be given for Conservationist of the Year, Environmental Educator of the Year, Special Achievement, and Lifetime Achievement Award. To nominate your candidate, please call the Montana Audubon office to request an award nomination form or download the form from our website at www.mtaudubon.org/about/awards.html. To be considered for this year's award, nominations and all supporting material must be postmarked no later than May 23, 2012. All nominations and supporting material should be sent to Montana Audubon, PO Box 595, Helena, MT 59624, or by fax: (406) 443-7144. The award ceremony will take place on June 9th at Montana Audubon's Bird Festival in Kalispell. Questions? Contact Janet Ellis at 406-443-3949 or jellis@mtaudubon.org.

CONSERVATION GRANTS AWARDED



YVAS annually awards Conservation Grants to eligible educational institutions, groups, or individuals with a sound project that meets the YVAS mission: to promote enjoyment and protection of the natural environment through education, activism, and conservation of bird habitat. This year an award of up to \$1000.00 was available.

Several very worth applications were received for the grant and the Board of Directors voted to divide the \$1000 award between two applicants: the Montana Raptor Conservation Center and the Environmental Science Bird Conservation and Research Class at Rocky Mountain College.

The Montana Raptor Center in Bozeman was awarded \$500 towards the cost of equipment to test birds of prey that exhibit symptoms of lead toxicity to determine if treatment is needed. Rocky Mountain College students were awarded \$500 towards a project to assess and establish reproductive rates of osprey on the Yellowstone River in the Laurel/Billings area by looking at fledgling success rates and testing blood samples. Both recipients are asked to submit a written report to YVAS about their projects within a year of the award date and are asked to present results at a general membership meeting.

BIRDING IN BOZEMAN



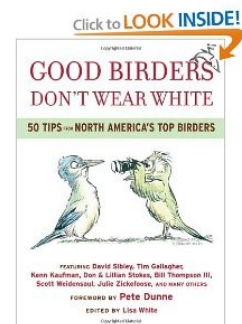
Billie Hicks and Will Crain went birding a couple a weeks ago in Bozeman and saw only 9 species, mostly Black-billed Magpies; leaving Lewistown on the back rural route produced little but one Townsend's Solitaire and an Osprey. Monday, March 12th we saw 27 species between Rockvale, Red Lodge, and Cooney Dam, where we found a Northern Shrike at the north end. Open water at the south end was populated with Common Goldeneye, while Western Blue Birds were seen along the foot of the Beartooths adjacent to Red Lodge Creek. An 'almost' Snowy Owl sighting east of Roberts turned out to be a

very white Northern Harrier! Thank you to Will Crain

BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE
PHOTO BY WILL CRAIN

NESTING MATERIALS

“Good Birders Don't Wear White: 50 Tips From North America's Top Birders”, Lisa White Editor. In these 50 light and fun original essays, the biggest names in birding dispense advice to birders of every level, on topics ranging from feeding birds and cleaning binoculars to pishing and pelagic birding. Whether satirizing bird snobs or relating the traditions and taboos of the birding culture, each essay is as chock-full of helpful information as it is entertaining. This collection of essays, by 50 contributors (David Allen Sibley and Don and Lillian Stokes are probably the most well-known), supplies 50 tips for bird-watching, and here are a few: take field notes, hug your tour leader, think like a migrating bird, linger even after you have listed a bird, play fair when sharing a scope, go birding in bad weather, go birding with kids, learn birds songs, and keep your binoculars clean. Experienced bird-watchers will be familiar with most of these tips, but the book is a delight to read and will generate new enthusiasm for the hobby. The 25 black-and-white line drawings are hilarious. *George Cohen Copyright © American Library Association.*



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. 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
 Attention: Membership Secretary
 P.O. Box 1075
 Billings, MT 59103-1075

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society
 Recruitment Code: C0ZN500Z
 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 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
 Attention: Membership Secretary
 P.O. Box 1075
 Billings, MT 59103-1075



WHOOPS!!

Is it time for you to become a YVAS member or renew your chapter membership?

PLEASE CHECK THE MAILING LABEL ON YOUR FLYER. IF IT SHOWS "YVAS JAN 12" BELOW YOUR NAME, THEN YOU ARE A SUPPORTING CHAPTER MEMBER WHOSE MEMBERSHIP EXPIRES IN JANUARY 2012. IF YOU ARE NOT A MEMBER OR YOUR MEMBERSHIP HAS EXPIRED, HELP US OUT BY JOINING OR RENEWING NOW WITH YOUR CHECK FOR \$20, USING THE FORM ON THE RIGHT. YOUR MEMBERSHIP HELPS FUND THE PUBLICATION OF THE FLYER ALONG WITH OTHER ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE MANAGEMENT OF OUR CHAPTER.

Membership Information

Although the National Audubon Society gives complimentary membership in our chapter as a benefit, no dues come to us. We strongly encourage you to join YVAS as a Supporting Chapter Member, which is offered for \$20 a year. Use the application form above to join as a Supporting Chapter Member or to renew your Chapter Membership.

1. **Moving???** Let us know as early as possible when you plan to move. The Post Office does charge us a fee for returned flyers. Include your old address as well as your new address so we can track you. You may write, call, or email the information to the Membership Secretary.
2. Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society offers Supporting Chapter student memberships for a reduced rate of \$10 a year. If you applying for a new student membership or are renewing a student membership, make sure you indicate your academic affiliation in your application . Joel Bowers, Membership Secretary



**YELLOWSTONE VALLEY
AUDUBON FLYER**

**Non-Profit Organization
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P.O. Box 1075
Billings, MT 59103-1075

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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. 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.

- **Apr 21 (Sat) EXXON PONDS AND EMERALD HILLS. 8 a.m. to early afternoon.** Sack lunch. One mile walk. Ron Kuhler and George Mowat, leaders.
- **May 5 (Sat) LAKE BASIN 8 a.m.** Sack lunch. Mike Weber, leader.
- **May 3,10,17 (Thurs) HELEN'S BIRDING CLASSES.** See April Flyer p.4 for details
- **May 12 (Sat) MEET AT RIVERFRONT PARK at 8:00 a.m.** Half day. George and Bernie Mowat, leaders.
- **May 17 (Thur) MEET AT RIVERFRONT PARK. 5:30 p.m.** Mike Weber, leader.
- **May 19 (Sat) STILLWATER AND WOODBINE AREAS. 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.** Sack lunch. Ruth Vanderhorst, leader.
- **May 26 (Sat) POMPEY'S PILLAR. 7 a.m. to early afternoon.** Sack lunch optional. Ruth Vanderhorst, leader.
- **June 2, 5 pm Saturday to Sunday, June 3, 5 pm. BIRDATHON.** See April Flyer p. 4 for details
- **June 2 (Sat) BILLIE HICKS'S HOUSE. 6:30 a.m. at Rocky or 7:00 a.m. at Billie's house.** Brunch. Singing birds. Summer Fundraiser--\$7.50. **RESERVATIONS REQUIRED by Thursday night.** . Phone Billie at **962-3798**
- **June 5 (Tues) MEET AT PICTOGRAPH CAVE. 5:30 p.m.** Ruth Vanderhorst, leader.



FIELD TRIP CHAIRS: George and Bernie Mowat 656-7467