

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 42, NUMBER 1

JANUARY 2012

New This Issue

- New Board Members
- Christmas Fund Raiser Results
- Membership Survey
- Osprey Project
- Montana Audubon 2012 Meeting
- Nesting Materials



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HAPPY NEW YEAR!

JANUARY 16 MEMBERSHIP MEETING



Golden Eagle

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society's January 16 chapter meeting will feature a program about monitoring migratory golden eagles. Our speaker will be Vincent Slabe who has been working out of Bozeman, MT with Raptorview Research Institute (RVRI) since 2004. RVRI's golden eagle research includes satellite tracking, blood lead level analysis, and auxiliary marking through wing tagging. Mr. Slabe will provide a summary of these efforts along with preliminary findings from the data and photos related to his work. RVRI is a 501c3 nonprofit organization founded by executive director Rob Domenech in 2004 and based out of Missoula, MT. Vincent Slabe has been working as a wildlife biologist for many years and for RVRI since its inception.

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 9, 6:00pm: Board Meeting at Nancy Wiggins' house (3016 Brentwood Lane—North off Rimrock, 1 mile west of Rocky Mountain College)

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

We will hold a YVAS fundraiser dinner at 5:45 before the January membership meeting. Dinner donation: \$6. It will be hosted by Norma Devan. Please call her to contribute to dinner and/or to make reservations at 656-6488.




☞ We're on the web! yvaudubon.org

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WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS



YVAS is pleased to welcome Dorothy Bartlett to the Board of Directors, filling the vacancy left by Mary Schvetz, who resigned to pursue a new job in Colorado. Dorothy takes over the position of Secretary. Dorothy moved to Billings with her family when she was 11, after being chased out of their home country of Hungary by the Russian occupation. She attended school in Billings and graduated from Senior High. She then attended Montana State University and later graduated from Regis College out of Denver. She spent 50 years in Colorado and worked in health care administration in Pueblo, Colorado for the last 25 years. After her retirement she moved back to Billings in 2008 and was introduced to birding by Donn. She is looking forward to being on the Audubon board.

We are fortunate to have Donn Bartlett assume a second Board position. Donn was born and raised in Billings and graduated from Senior High. He attended the University of Montana and graduated from Northern Montana College with a B.S. in Secondary Education and a major in Biology. He spent his career in various mid western and western cities in the property & casualty insurance business, with the last 18 years in California where he became responsible for the western United States. He retired early and was back in Billings within 48 hours of his retirement. This is home. Donn has served on various boards, was active in SCORE and his church. He was introduced to birding by his parents and is looking forward to serving on the Audubon board.



ALERT!!! ALERT!!!

We encourage members to put their best bird photos on the YVAS website. Please submit any photographs you would like to have posted on the website (YVAUDUBON.ORG) to Jeanette Tasey at jtasey@gmail.com. Jeanette will size the pictures and confirm the identification before they are posted.

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society Officers:

President: Bill DeMeyer, 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
 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.....open

Recycling (aluminum).....Tom Davis 656-7618

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.

CHRISTMAS FUNDRAISER



Left to right: Ruth Vanderhorst, Bill DeMeyer, Paul Hickman, Kayhan Ostovar, Helen Carlson, Robert Lubbers, and Billie Hicks

After accounting for expenses, the Christmas silent auction and dinner raised \$2,258.50 for YVAS. We are profoundly grateful to Mr. Bob Landis, who has been our keynote speaker since 1973, for his witty, charming and often poignant stories and pictures portraying wildlife in Yellowstone National Park. We also celebrated the presence of six YVAS Past-Presidents, who together with current President Bill DeMeyer, represent over two decades of outstanding leadership!



We are indebted to the following businesses and individuals for their generous support to the silent auction.

2011 Christmas Fundraiser/Silent Auction Donations

INDIVIDUALS

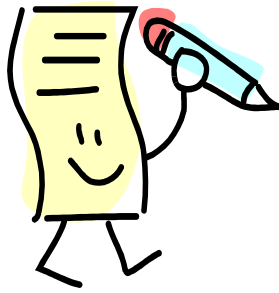
Phyllis and Jim Hansen
 Deb Mattern
 Bill DeMeyer
 Jeanette Tasey
 Bob Landis
 Ellen Knight
 Lois Dalton
 Ruth Towe
 Karen Tanner
 Deb Regele
 Jean Boone
 Steve Degenhart
 Don Tilzey
 Will Crain
 Claire Oakley
 Ann Shesne
 Rita Harding
 Dorothy Bartlett
 Nancy Wiggins
 Jeannette and Tom Davis
 Karen Tanner
 Stenharve Deget,

BUSINESSES

Wal-Mart
 Anytime Fitness
 Tractor Supply, Laurel
 Sanctuary Spa
 Simply Wine
 Audubon Center, MT Audubon
 Wild Birds Unlimited
 Montana Mills
 Tractor Supply, Heights
 Ace Hardware, Heights
 Joy of Living
 Evergreen IGA (13th West)
 Gainans
 S Bar S Building Supply
 Billings Hardware
 Ace Hardware, 32nd Street
 Billings Army/Navy Surplus
 Chalet Market
 Evergreen IGA,
 Simply Wine

December 20, 2011 Financial Report Balance of Funds

Operating Fund	Audubon Adventure	Osprey Project	River Cleanup	Endowment Fund
\$15,392.90	\$989.44	\$810.41	\$1,526.93	\$38,099.67



MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

Included in this issue of the Flyer is the YVAS Membership Survey. It was designed to help the Board of Directors explore ways to improve participation in activities and to better meet member needs and expectations. If you haven't already completed a copy of the survey or if you have additional comments, please complete the enclosed form and drop it off at a chapter meeting, give it to a YVAS Board member, or fold and mail it to: YVAS, PO Box 1075, Billings, MT 59103.

SUMMARY OF YVAS OSPREY PROJECT FOR 2011

Submitted by Monty Sullins



Osprey on nest in Absarokee

Photo by Starr Stevens

The spring and early summer of 2011 was a tough time for people and wildlife. A cold, wet spring followed by major flooding, muddy water, and an oil spill on the Yellowstone provided a real challenge for breeding Osprey. Some of the nests that were used and productive in 2010 were not used or did not fledge any young this year. Although the power companies and co-ops had to remove some nests from power lines, several new nesting platforms were erected and will hopefully be used in the coming years.

YVAS partnered with Northwestern Energy to erect an Osprey nesting platform at the Audubon Conservation and Education Center. It was installed too late to be used this last year, but hopefully it will be used for Osprey nesting in 2012. If so, a video camera is planned to be installed for close-up observation of all nesting activity and young Osprey chicks. Sincere thanks to all those who assisted with that installation.

This year, 24 Osprey nests were surveyed for breeding, nesting and production of young. The results are as follows:

- 10 nests fledged 18 Osprey chicks.
- 7 nests had Osprey activity in the spring but no young were seen.
- 2 nests were removed.
- 4 nests had no activity at all.
- 1 nest was occupied by Canada geese.

Two of the chicks were very late in development by August, and it is unknown if they reached full-fledged status. Moving the fledgling survey up into mid-July instead of August definitely helped locate more chicks on the nests at fledging time. The production of 18 Osprey chicks in 2011 compares to 17 in 2010. It is not possible to know the full effect of the spring/early summer flooding on the nest success of the breeding Osprey in 2011, but the total number of chicks was nearly the same in both years. Evidently, the Osprey were able to find enough food for successful nesting in adverse conditions.

Plans for the coming year for the chapter Osprey project will include continued nesting surveys and locating any new nest sites. Installation of any new nesting platforms will have to wait until more funds are available. These platform installations are quite expensive – about \$1600 each.

Sincere thanks to all those who contributed their time and monies in conducting the Osprey project activities. We will need survey volunteers again for the upcoming Osprey breeding season.

NEWS FROM THE AUDUBON CENTER



- January 2 Registration opens for the Audubon Center's Adventures in Nature Afterschool and School Break Camps, Hands-on Home School Science classes, and Nature Nuts Pre-school program. Classes begin the week of January 30. For more info and a registration form, visit www.mtacec.org or call 204 – 5099.
- January 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 \$10 per child. Call 294 – 5099 to register.
- January 16 Amazing Adaptations School Break Camp from 8:30 – 4:30: Learn how animals survive during our cold, snowy winters in Montana. Open to students in 1st – 6th grades. Fee is \$40/child. Register by calling 294-5099.
- January 22 Free Weekend Wonders family program from 1:30 – 3 at the Audubon Center. Learn about Winter Weather with a National Weather Service Meteorologist, including how winter precipitation forms, how it's forecast, and how best to stay safe from its hazards. Open to all ages; Call 294-5099 to register.

Montana Audubon: 2012 *Wings Across the Big Sky*

Field Trips and Keynote Speaker, Peter Sherrington

It's not too early to begin planning for your June vacation. During winter, when birds are sparse, it's easy to dream of long summer days and abundant birds. Where you will find plenty is in beautiful Flathead Valley. Come join us for **Montana Audubon's Annual Bird Festival, this year co-hosted by Flathead Audubon Society, June 8–10 at the Hilton Garden Inn in Kalispell.**

However, while birders and outdoor enthusiasts plan for summer, raptor experts were keeping track of spectacular fall migrations, and are now crunching the numbers from those counts. **Peter Sherrington is one of those experts, and we're thrilled to have him as our keynote speaker this year!** Peter is a geologist/paleontologist who in 1992 gave up a career in the oil industry to study Golden Eagle migration in Alberta's Rocky Mountains. He is the founder and Research Director of the Rocky Mountain Eagle Research Foundation and currently lives in the hamlet of Beaver Mines, Alberta. After Saturday morning's field trips, you will want to join us for Peter's lunchtime keynote, "Twenty Years of Golden Eagle Migration Studies in the Alberta Rockies: the Big Picture Begins to Emerge."

In addition to our keynote topic, we are keeping with our theme, "Birding and Conservation: The Crown of the Continent," by featuring two pre-festival workshops on Friday, June 8th (more on these next month). **As for field trips, we have 28 planned!**—14 each on Saturday and Sunday—guided by knowledgeable birders and naturalists familiar with the species and their habitats in the Flathead Valley, Glacier National Park and the surrounding area. Here is just a brief sampling of some of those trips to contemplate as you look forward to the upcoming Bird Festival:

- **Glacier National Park** is the jewel of the Crown of the Continent, where birding is unique and worthwhile. We'll focus on neotropicals and the spectacular Harlequin Duck, exploring various habitats on the west side of GNP from lush riparian areas to dense forest, from meadows to rushing streams. We'll walk along McDonald Creek looking and listening for warblers, vireos, flycatchers and ducks including Townsend's Warblers, Warbling Vireos and possibly a Pileated Woodpecker.
- **Biking and Birding on the Rails to Trails to Somers.** Dan Casey, of the American Bird Conservancy, will lead a level 15-mile round trip on the new Rails to Trails system from the conference hotel. You'll encounter riparian shrublands, wetlands, grasslands, and forest, with target species including Clay-Colored

(Continued on page 6)

Sparrow, Spotted Towhee, Nashville Warbler, Willow Flycatcher, Calliope Hummingbird and more. A pastry shop stop in Somers will refuel the return trip to Kalispell.

- **A Walk through the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area.** This trip will be a pleasant morning wander through this 442-acre undisturbed riparian forest habitat on the Flathead River managed by Flathead Audubon, where over 80 species of birds can be seen, including Red-eyed and Warbling Vireos, Bullock's Oriole, Vaux's Swift, Black-headed Grosbeak, and Calliope Hummingbird. Along the river we may see Wood Duck, Common Goldeneye, Spotted Sandpiper, Bank Swallow and Great Blue Heron.
- **Bison, Birds and Blooms of the National Bison Range.** This tour of grasslands, uplands, and stream-side thickets of the Bison Range will reveal abundant wildflowers and a remarkable diversity of birds, from Bullock's Orioles to Golden Eagles, from Rock Wrens to Western Wood-Pewees, and from Lazuli Buntings to Lewis's Woodpeckers. We will also get to see bison calves frolicking in the meadows. We will walk along the trails in the picnic area and along the Jocko River. The panoramic view from the top of the Bison Range encompasses the Mission Valley to the north, the magnificent Mission Mountains to the east, and a long view of the Flathead River to the south.
- **Birding by Ear on the Way to Tally Lake.** Explore a wide variety of habitats on the way to Tally Lake, Montana's deepest lake. At the campground one can see every warbler species found in northwestern Montana. Neotropical migrants such as American Redstarts, Wilson's Warblers, Northern Waterthrush, and Fox Sparrows inhabit the streamside thickets. Townsend's Warblers and Western Tanagers sing in thick conifer stands nearby, and Common Loons and Bald Eagles breed along the shore. This trip will focus on both bird identification in the field and birding by ear.
- **Lost Trail National Wildlife Refuge.** Formally a working ranch, being returned to its original habitat, it is one of the best places to see grassland and riparian birds up close. The road through the Refuge wanders along wet meadows where Wilson's Snipe, Brewer's Blackbirds, and Vesper Sparrows sit on fence posts next to the road. The abundant songs and calls of various warblers and flycatchers can be heard from the thickets along the road. Dahl Lake, a large shallow lake on the Refuge, has breeding populations of Black Terns, Ruddy Ducks, Grebes—Red-necked, Pied-billed, Horned, and Eared—and Sandhill Cranes. Overhead we are likely to see Golden and Bald Eagles soaring on the wind as both species breed here. For more information please contact Montana Audubon Bird Festival Coordinator, Larissa Berry at lberry@mtaudubon.org or 406-443-3949, or any Board Member of Flathead Audubon.

NESTING MATERIALS

Book Review of: The Owl and the Woodpecker by Paul Bannick



Hairy woodpecker
Photo by Will Crain

As I walked through the Sundance Recreation Area on Thiele Rd., I spotted this woodpecker. As it lit on a tree, I stopped beneath the canopy of trees to take a photo; to my surprise a big great horned owl was disturbed and flew out—thankfully to a better location for its portrait.

At the Parmly Billings Library the next day, I bumped into a book that beckoned to be checked out. It's an in-depth look at the relationships of all 19 owls from 2 different families and 10 genera in North America, and the 22 Woodpeckers of the Picadae family which inhabit North America. The author has beautiful photos of each, in addition to hands-on stories of their lives together,. This supportive interaction makes life in the various terrains possible.



Great horned owl
Photo by Will Crain

Owls are the primary beneficiaries of woodpecker nesting cavities; the pileated woodpecker excavations support at least 20 different species of owls. Of course not all owls nest in trees and a woodpecker could be a meal, but the interface of the two species is quite interesting. The acorn woodpecker is a 'group brooder' - a group of females laying in the same nest. Author Bannick takes each species beyond that blurb in the bird identification books and fleshes out the highlights of its existence in the wild. One of the main points of this book was the importance of identifying trees and the connections between elevations and tree species in that search for America's owls and woodpeckers. The book also comes with a downloadable CD of all the calls of each species. Thank you to Will Crain

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**

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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.

JANUARY FIELD TRIP ON SHORT NOTICE to Jeanette Tasey's home. Featured birds are 100s of Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch, abundant Wild Turkeys, Pinyon Jays, and others. Bring your camera! For information and if you wish to be notified a day or so ahead of time, phone or email George and Bernie Mowat: gmowat@bresnan.net or 656-7467. This trip is dependent on the weather.



- **Jan 1 (Sun) NEW YEAR'S FIELD TRIP.** 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sack lunch. Yellowtail Dam Afterbay. Helen Carlson, leader.
- **Jan 7 (Sat) ANNUAL EAGLE MIDWINTER SURVEY** in Lower 48 States. 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- **Yellowstone River: Billings to Columbus.** No Host Lunch. Brad Hall or George Mowat, Leader.
- **Feb 4 (Sat) WINTER WANDERERS FIELD TRIP -- 9 a.m. to dark. FUNDRAISER**-Rare winter birds. **Progressive birding and eating.** A day that provides breakfast, lunch and dessert stops as well as bird watching and lots of good conversation and fun. Cost is a donation of \$15.00 or more. **Reservations mandatory by Thursday, Feb 2nd. Call Ruth Vanderhorst for reservations and information at 245-5118.**
- **Apr 21 (Sat) EXXON PONDS AND EMERALD HILLS.** 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sack lunch. One mile walk. Ron Kuhler and George Mowat, leaders.

FIELD TRIP CHAIRS: George and Bernie Mowat 656-7467

