



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 44, NUMBER 3

MARCH 2014

CHAPTER MEETING MONDAY, MARCH 17, 7:15PM

YELLOWSTONE RIVER OSPREY RESEARCH

RENEE SEACOR



For the past two years the Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society has contracted with Rocky Mountain College to provide a student intern to assist in YVAS Osprey Project activities. In the summer of 2013 Renee Seacor took over the Osprey project from intern Cameron Sapp, who was graduating. Renee moved to Billings in August 2011 to attend Rocky Mountain College, where she is pursuing a degree in Environmental Science. The primary goal of the Osprey Project is to evaluate the health of the Yellowstone River ecosystem by monitoring a sentinel species, the osprey. She carried out the work in collaboration with YVAS nest monitors. During this time she also conducted two independent research projects on the Yellowstone River Osprey population. The first study looked at foraging behavior and reproductive success of osprey along the Yellowstone River. The second research project was on the distribution and abundance of baling twine around osprey nests. This research was conducted because we have previously observed baling twine entanglement as a major source of mortality for nesting osprey (10% in this population). This paper was accepted for publication in the Canadian Field Naturalist.

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.

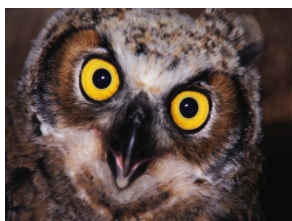
Monday, March 10 , 6:00pm: Board of Directors Meeting

Monday, March 17 , 7:00pm: General Membership Meeting

We will hold a YVAS fundraiser dinner at 5:45, before the membership meeting. Dinner donation: \$6. Dorothy Bartlett has generously volunteered to host. Please contact her at 252-0757 or dpadanyi@live.com before **March 14** to make reservations and tell her what you will bring.



☞ We're on the web! yvaudubon.org



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FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

- **In February**, the Board of Directors announced that it had approved funding a YVAS Conservation Grant of \$1,000 to be applied toward the cost of a camera and web-enabled viewing for a bald eagle nest in Miles City. With support from numerous community partners and the help of this YVAS grant, they worked diligently to get the camera in place before the eagles arrive for nesting season.

YVAS is pleased to tell that the eagle cam is now installed; we should have viewing access once all is up and running, and the eagles return. Here are a few bald eagle facts from <http://blog.nwf.org/2014/02/bald-eagle-cam-watch-decorah-hatchlings-grow-up-live/>:

1. Bald eagles are solitary, but monogamous animals. Although they spend winters and migrations alone, bald eagles maintain the same breeding pair year after year. If one dies, the survivor will find a new mate.
2. Bald eagles hold the Guinness World Record for building the largest bird's nest. The record nest measured over 9 feet wide and 20 feet deep, and was estimated to weigh more than 4,000 pounds. The nest must be large and sturdy enough to hold the eaglets as they grow, and to handle the commotion as they learn to fly.
3. There are typically 1-3 eggs in a clutch. The average clutch size is two, while four is considered rare. Bald eagles lay their eggs on a staggered schedule. As a result, the chicks hatch at different times, sometimes with a few days in between. The eggs are incubated for about 35 days, a duty shared by both male and female eagles. During incubation, one of the parents is almost always on the nest. They do this to protect the eggs from predators and other threats.

- **Last summer** high winds toppled the large osprey nest atop a live power pole at the Laurel Osprey Outpost along Highway 212 south of Laurel. Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society's members started a special fund for the establishment of a safe nesting pole/platform free of electrical wires. Osprey nests on live poles create an unsafe situation for both osprey and people when dangling sticks and bailing twine cause power outages and ignite fires. YVAS and the Yellowstone River Research Center at Rocky Mountain College will share the costs of establishing a new nesting pole/platform. The property owners are very supportive and have given their permission. Yellowstone Valley Electric Cooperative will build the nesting pole and provide the equipment and manpower needed to install the nesting pole/platform. The hope is to get the new nesting pole installed before the osprey return at the end of March. A big thank you goes out to all who donated their time and money toward this conservation effort.

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society Officers:

President: Steve Regele, 962-3115, sregele@juno.com
Vice-President: open
Secretary: Dorothy Bartlett, 252-0757, dpadanyi@live.com
Treasurer: Deb Regele: 962-3115, dregele@juno.com

Board of Directors:

Donn Bartlett: 252-0757, donnbartlett@msn.com
 Cameron Sapp: 406-702-1138, csapp@wildmontana.org
 Steve Linder: 406-380-0073, becon1@bresnan.net
 Bill DeMeyer: 671-7501, bademeyer@gmail.com
 Shelia McKay: 652-7175, cell 694-7918, wjhbird@yahoo.com
 Jeanette Tasey: 669-3169, jtasey@gmail.com
 Nancy Wiggins: 651-0218, nwiggin83@gmail.com

Montana's Congressional Delegation:

John Walsh: U.S. Senate, Wash. D.C. 20510
 website: <http://walsh.senate.gov>
 email: senator@walsh.senate.gov
 Billings: 406-657-6790 Wash. D.C.: 1-202-224-2651
Sen. Jon Tester: U.S. Senate, Wash. D.C. 20510
 website: <http://tester.senate.gov>
 email: senator@tester.senate.gov
 Billings: 406-252-0550 Wash. D.C.: 1-866-554-4403
Rep. Steve Daines: U.S. House of Rep. Wash. D.C. 20515
 website: www.rdianes.house.gov
 email: steve.daines@mail.house.gov
 Wash, DC: 202-225-3211

Committees and Special Assignments:

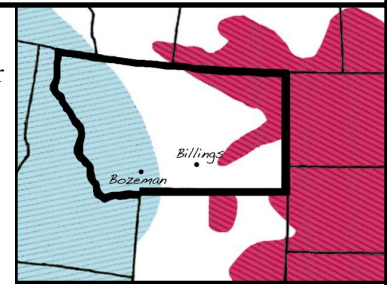
Audubon Adventures: Jeannette Davis, 656-7618
 Bird Questions: George Mowat, 656-7467 or
 Helen Carlson Cummins, 248-8684
 Christmas Bird Count: Jim Court, 259-5099, C: 860-0450,
 custertours@gmail.com
 Conservation Chair: Steve Regele, 962-3115,
 sregele@juno.com
 Editor: Nancy Wiggins, 651-0218, nwiggin83@gmail.com
 Field Trip Chairs: George and Bernie Mowat, 656-7467,
 gmowat@bresnan.net
 Hospitality: 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
 Osprey Project: Deb Regele, 962-3115, dregele@juno.com
 Publicity: Dorothy Bartlett, 252-0757, dpadanyi@live.com
 Program Chair: Shelia McKay, 652-7175, wjhbird@yahoo.com
 Recycling (aluminum): Larry Handsaker, 406-855-9832
 Website: Tom Lyman, Tomglyman@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 6:00pm. Board Meetings are open to the entire membership.
- General Chapter Meetings are held the third Monday of each month at 7:00pm. All meetings are open to the public.

CONSERVATION NEWS

MONTANA RAPTOR CONSERVATION CENTER (MRCC) Under the guidance of Jeanette Tasey, YVAS works with MRCC to transport injured raptors to Bozeman for treatment. In 2013, YVAS had the opportunity to bring home to Billings and release, four Eastern Screech Owls from the Center. Bozeman is home to neither the Eastern nor the Western Screech. The Center's location just misses the cut-off line where this bird can be found (see map). Both species are almost identical in size, shape and behavior. Only 7 to 9 inches in length, this little owl is a year-round resident of eastern Montana. Their preferred diet consists mainly of rodents and small mammals but, when food is scarce, they will consume whatever is readily available. This lengthy list includes insects, snakes, frogs, worms, small fish, and songbirds. When desperate, they've also been known to eat birds as large as grouse and ducks. Most injured or sick birds of prey are admitted to the Raptor Center for human-related causes. The most common injuries result from automobiles, wind turbines and window collisions, which cause head trauma, broken bones and internal injuries. Lead and mercury poisoning from tainted rodents and gunshot digested from the remains of hunted carcasses can cause a painful, lingering death if not treated. Many raptors are brought to the Center with gunshot wounds, badly torn wings and feet from tangles with barbed-wire fencing, and excruciating animal trap-related injuries. Contact with power lines is also common, and causes electrical burns, neurological damage and oftentimes death. Of the 150+ injured raptors admitted to the MRCC each year, Jeanette and her fellow drivers transported approximately 25 of them, with the hope of seeing them released into the wild. This unique opportunity of setting a rehabilitated, wild creature free again is an extraordinary experience! Very special thanks goes to George Mowat, Billie Hicks and her daughter Leanne Royse, for their devoted and continued help. If anyone is interested in joining our network as a volunteer driver, please contact me @ 406-669-3169. Thank you to Jeanette Tasey



Boundries of the Western (blue) Screech Owl and the Eastern (pink) in Montana



Release of a more mature Eastern Screech Owl February 2013 with YVAS past president Ruth Vanderhorst. He departed with confidence.



Release of the smallest Eastern Screech Owl July 2013 with Nancy Wiggins. With no one to follow, she was not so confident.



Release of two juvenile Eastern Screech Owls November 2013. The elder bird was the bolder bird, the younger bird followed the example.

HAPPY 40TH BIRTHDAY TO THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT!

Learn More About Osprey And Become an Osprey Monitor

Between the 1950's and the early 1970's, populations of brown pelicans, bald eagles, peregrine falcons, white pelicans, golden eagles, ospreys, and numerous other birds species had declined significantly. Some species were on the verge of extinction. In December 1970, the Environmental Protection Agency was established by President Nixon. In 1972, the use of DDT in the United States was banned by the Environmental Protection Agency. On December 28, 1973, the Endangered Species Act was signed by President Nixon and went into effect in 1974. Thanks to the Endangered Species Act, many of the bird species that had reached critical numbers have rebounded including many we see in Montana. The bald eagle, peregrine falcon, and osprey have now become familiar sights along the Yellowstone River.

OSPREY Photo by
George Mowat

Dr. Marco Restani will be hosting a class on the ecology, biology, and behavior of osprey. The presentation will focus on the protocol for monitoring osprey nesting sites and data collection. This class

is free and open to everyone. You do not need to be a YVAS Osprey Monitor to attend. YVAS is looking for first timers, second timers, and old timers! The class will be held at Rocky Mountain College in the Bair Science Building at 5 p.m. on Thursday, April 3, 2014. To reserve a seat in the class, contact Deb Regele at 406-962-3115

(dregele@juno.com). If you are interested in monitoring an Osprey Nesting Site this spring and summer, again contact Deb Regele or come to the YVAS Chapter Meeting on March 17th at the Mayflower Church. The only requirements are a commitment to monitor your osprey nest, to return a completed data sheet in August, and attend the above program.

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT (GBBC), which took place in February, is one of the largest, single event citizen science counts, where birdwatcher's around the world participate. Part of the GBBC is a photography contest where the most talented bird photographers are invited to submit their works. A consistently recognized winner in this event is one of our own, YVAS Board of Directors member, Jeanette Tasey. In 2013 Janette had a dozen photographs accepted for the Gallery and she won three top awards. Her photo of a Grey-crowned Rosy Finch is part of the GBBC 2010 home page. Much to her credit, it was also used in numerous Audubon Society flyers and papers nationwide. The website is <http://birds.audubon.org/gbbcgallery/view?photographer=tasey&title=> Jeanette's winning images include:



ROCK PIGEONS



WILD TURKEY AT FEEDER



WILD TURKEY



GREY-CROWNED ROSY FINCH



MARK YOUR CALENDARS

THE WHITE BIRDS ARE COMING

Each spring Freezout Lake hosts big numbers of migrating white birds: Tundra Swans, Lesser Snow Geese and Ross's Geese, while they are traveling between their wintering grounds in California to the nesting colonies in the arctic. In migration, substantial numbers flock together to present often impressive spectacles. Freezout Lake Wildlife Management Area, near Fairfield, Montana, provides the prime stopover point between California and prairie Canada. The agricultural fields east of the lake provide feed for the geese, and the swans feed on vegetation in the ponds. A visit to Freezout in March can be spectacular.

When should you visit? The migration is somewhat weather dependent, but as a rule swans arrive first as the first open water shows early in March, and numbers peak in the third week of the month. The Snow Geese begin to arrive in mid March and generally peak the last week of the month. Ross's Geese are found in the goose flocks late in March and by mid April half of the white geese are Ross's. In 2013 the swans peaked on 20 March at 6084 birds; the white geese peaked early on 20 March at more than 70,000!

The geese go to feed east of the Area twice each day. They leave Freezout at sunrise and return in the late mornings, 10:30 to 11:00 AM. The second feeding flight begins late afternoon and they return after sunset. Between meals they loaf on the Area's ponds, often providing nice views. The dawn fly-out can be spectacular and the late morning fly-in can be even more so. Freezout's roads provide excellent access to view the birds. You can call 406-467-2646 for an automated message regarding the status of the migration at Freezout. Two Tundra Swans at Freezout were reported February 21 this year before it started snowing hard - what early birds! Thank you to Mike Schwitters, Upper Missouri Breaks Audubon, Great Falls, MT 59403

SATURDAY, MARCH 22 "DUCK DAY": Learn your waterfowl or just come and enjoy them at WJH Bird Sanctuary. Meet at Rocky at 8 a.m. and carpool, or come to WJH (2753 S 56th Street W) between 8 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. The gate will open at 8 a.m. The tours will go in rain or snow or sun, and will end around noon. Contact George Mowat at 656-7467, gmowat@bresnan.net, or Shelia McKay at 652-7175, cell 694-7918, wjhbird@yahoo.com with any questions.

TUESDAY, APRIL 8 SHARP-TAILED GROUSE FIELD TRIP: Sharp-tailed grouse viewing with Bruce Waage of the NRCS. Don't miss this special opportunity to witness these declining species that are unique to western plateaus and prairies. The trip will depart from Rocky Mountain College parking lot on Rimrock Road adjacent to the Billings Studio Theater at 5AM. Bring the usual warm clothing, plan to carpool and maybe a stop for breakfast. Contact Jim Court 259-5099, C: 860-0450, custertours@gmail.com.

MAY 31-JUNE 1, 2014 BIRDATHON

HOLD THIS DATE; JOIN THE FUN! DO SOMETHING FOR OUR CHAPTER AS WELL.

FORM OR JOIN A TEAM FOR BIRDATHON 2014. (Call or email Ruth at 245-5118 or acrv@bresnan.net)

JUNE 6-8, 2014

“WINGS ACROSS THE BIG SKY “

BEST WESTERN GRANTREE INN, 1325 N 7TH, BOZEMAN, MT.

Montana Audubon bird festival is excited to once again feature a diverse array of Saturday afternoon speakers to educate and inspire us. We will host break-out sections from highly regarded researchers, conservationists, and bird aficionados. The hardest part will be choosing which talk to see!

- Montana's nesting Ospreys and toxins
- Sage-Grouse conservation
- Bird migration in the Middle East
- A new "Field Guide to Birds in a Changing Climate"
- Bridger Raptor Migration Project
- Birds, Beetles, and Burns

Continued on page 6

SATURDAY AM AND SUNDAY FIELD TRIPS see details at www.mtaudubon.org

SA1 / SU1 East Gallatin Recreation Area
 SA2 / SU2 Headwaters
 SA3 / SU3 Mount Ellis
 SA4 / SU4 Paradise Valley Spring Creeks
 SA 5 / SU5 Pass Creek and Rocky Mountain Road Bluebird
 Trail Monitoring and Banding
 SA6 / SU6 Spanish Creek
 SA7 / SU7 Trail Creek
 SA8 / SU8 Triple Tree Trail
 SA 9 Storm Castle Creek
 SA10 Deep Creek and Paradise Valley
 SA11 Digital Bird Photography
 SA12 Family Birding Trip at Cherry River
 SA13 Headwaters State Park Area
 SA14 Historic Bozeman Walking Tour
 SA15 Kelly Canyon
 SA16 Livingston Hotspots
 SA17 Lower Madison River Valley
 SA18 Pine Creek/ Paradise Valley
 SA19 Willow Creek
 SA20 Old Town Road and Milligan Canyon

SU9 Storm Castle Peak
 SU10 Cottonwood Reservoir and Shields Valley
 SU11 Ennis Lake
 SU12 Lewis and Clark Caverns State Park
 SU13 Mission Creek
 SU14 Sweet Grass County Prairie Tour
 SU15 Kelly Canyon and Battle Ridge
 SU16 Warm Springs Wildlife Management Area
 SU17 Yellowstone's Northern Range
 SU18 Pine Creek-Paradise Valley
 SU19 Willow Creek

Plan now to attend and learn about the amazing world of crows from our keynote speaker, and then hear from our break-out speakers regarding birding in far-flung places, as well as our Montana concerns and interests including the osprey, sage-grouse, raptors, forest birds in burned forests, and how birds will fare with our rapidly changing climate. Make your reservations soon at the hotel directly, at 1-406-587-5261. Be sure to tell them you're with the Bird Festival group to get the special rate! Online registration will be available on March 5th at www.mtaudubon.org.

CALL FOR MONTANA AUDUBON AWARD NOMINATIONS!

Please nominate a deserving person for their work for conservation and/or Audubon! Montana Audubon is now seeking nominations for awards that will be given away at the June annual meeting in Bozeman. The awards acknowledge individuals who exemplify a commitment to birds, other wildlife, and habitat conservation. This year awards will be given for: Conservationist of the Year, Environmental Educator of the Year, Special Achievement, Citizen Scientist of the Year, and Lifetime Achievement Award. To nominate your candidate, please visit our website at www.mtaudubon.org/about/awards. To be considered for this year's award, nominations must be submitted no later than May 23, 2014. Nominations can be submitted by email or mailed to Montana Audubon, PO Box Helena, MT 59624, or by fax: (406) 443-7144. Questions? Contact Janet Ellis at 406-443-3949 or jellis@mtaudubon.org.



NESTING MATERIALS

- Visit www.mtaudubon.org *On Birding* -- Bird-of-the-Month, which professionally features a bird-of-the-month or other musings about birding, courtesy of naturalist and writer David Cronenwett. Visit David's blogspot: A View from Aerie Mountain.
- Visit www.allaboutbirds.org to brush up on your spring birding skills. Get identification tips to help you figure out where to begin your birding.
- Visit www.birds.cornell.edu to watch a fluffy albatross chick grow up on Cornell Labs newest webcam. It may not seem like nesting season to most of us, but it is for Laysan Albatrosses in the Hawaiian islands. Webcams began streaming the action from a nest on Kauai last week, just as a little gray-and-blond chick emerged from its shell. By July this chick—which weighed less than a glass of water at hatching—will grow into a bulky brown-and-white bird with a nearly seven-foot wingspan. To raise their chick, the two parents will range across the Pacific, traveling as far as Alaska or Japan to bring back meals of digested squid. The camera captures incredible details of the birds' plumage—including the soft, almost airbrushed shading of the adults' faces and the frizzy down of the chick. Watch the cam; if you see a dark screen, bear in mind that dawn in Hawaii is at around noon Eastern time, or 9 a.m. on the West Coast.

National Audubon Society
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
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 family 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 EXPIRED IN JANUARY 2012. IF YOU ARE NOT A SUPPORTING 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 families \$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
PRST STD
U.S. POSTAGE
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BILLINGS, MT
PERMIT NO. 27

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. **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.

FIELD TRIP CHAIRS: George and Bernie Mowat 656-7467

Mar 22	Sat	DUCK DAY: LEARN YOUR WATER-FOWL AT WJH 8 a.m. to noon	Meet at Rocky Mountain College at 8 a.m. or at WJH (2753 S 56th Street W) between 8 and 8:30 a.m. See page 5 of this Flyer. George Mowat and Shelia McKay leaders.
Apr 8	Tue	SHARP-TAILED GROUSE VIEWING 5 A.M. TO 10 A.M.	Meet at Rocky Mountain College. See page 5 of this Flyer. Jim Court and Bruce Waage, leaders.
Apr 12	Sat	EXXON PONDS AND EMERALD HILLS. 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.	Sack lunch. <u>One Mile Walk</u> . Ron Kuhler and George Mowat, leaders.
May 3	Sat	LAKE BASIN 8 a.m.	Sack lunch. Mike Weber, leader.
May 10	Sat	MEET AT RIVERFRONT PARK at 8:00 a.m. S Billings Blvd, 1st parking area on right,. Half day.	Half day. George and Bernie Mowat, leaders.
May 15	Thur	MEET AT RIVERFRONT PARK. 5:30 p.m.(See above location)	Mike Weber, leader.
May 17	Sat	STILLWATER AND WOODBINE AREAS. 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.	Sack lunch. Ruth Vanderhorst, leader.

