

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 45, NUMBER 9

SEPTEMBER 2015

CHAPTER MEETING MONDAY SEPTEMBER 21 7:00PM

The Birds of Paradise Valley - Old Chico Ornithological Society
Come join us for a scenic birding tour of **The Birds of Paradise Valley**.



Red-winged Blackbird Photo by Peter Murray

Paradise Valley is a place of transition. It has been called the first basin of the Basin and Range Province. It has also been called the last of the Great Plains. Stretching south from Livingston, the valley offers a very wide variety of habitats for birds – from creeks and riverine meanders, to lakes and ponds, from grassland and sagebrush benches to the upland slopes and forests of the Absaroka Range to the east and the Gallatin Range to the west - often within minutes of each other. Peter Murray lives above Old Chico, at the mouth of Emigrant Creek and the base of Emigrant Peak, and has been an avid photographer of birds for many years. He and his wife, Mary, have traveled widely, and birds have played an important role in choosing destinations. Peter has been exploring the Paradise Valley in search of good birding opportunities. In an effort to make birding in Paradise Valley more accessible, Peter has created a “Birds of Paradise Trail Map” to help folks find their way to the best birding stops. His “Birds of Paradise Valley” photo gallery can be found at his website: <http://pmwm.smugmug.com/>.

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, September 14, 6:00pm: Board of Directors Meeting

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



We will hold a YVAS fundraiser dinner at 5:30, before the Chapter meeting. Dinner donation: \$6. Judy Anderson has generously volunteered to coordinate. Please contact her at (406) 248-8927 before September 14 to make reservations and your dish contribution.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society has always been fortunate to have excellent Board Members and volunteers carrying out the YVAS Mission. YVAS is moving into a new season of unsurpassed monthly Chapter program presentations, and organizing wonderful birding trips. We are wrapping up another very successful and productive Osprey monitoring year, members are contributing to a bird data base at the State Library useful to many people. We also continue to implement a variety of special opportunities for the membership and to work hard on behalf of birds, their habitats and our shared environment. The dedicated, productive and outstanding work by the YVAS Board of Directors and volunteers, and the support provided by each YVAS Member, is extraordinary. None of our YVAS accomplishments would happen otherwise. Given the continued efforts of the Board and membership, we all look forward to some real good, productive, and fun times ahead!

Steve Regele

YVAS OSPREY RESCUE FUND CHALLENGE HAS BEEN MET!

In May of this year, Jean Boone made a generous \$700 donation to the Osprey Rescue Fund with a challenge to the YVAS membership to match her donation. Since that time we have received donations totaling \$1,430 from members, from Exxon Mobil Corporation through volunteer hours of a YVAS member who is also Exxon's employee, and finally, from half the proceeds of Birdathon 2015 pledges. Counting donations before the challenge, Jean's \$700, and the \$1,430 collected since, we have received a total \$2,386 in donations. Although this current challenge has been met, we welcome any additional donations, with or without challenges, to the Osprey Rescue Fund. Your donations to the Osprey Rescue Fund are fully tax deductible.

Submitted by Pam Pipal

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society Officers: AREA CODE 406

President: Steve Regele, 962-3115, sregele@juno.com

Vice-President: open

Secretary: Doreen Hartman, 697-0277, rdzlh-man@bresnan.net

Treasurer: Pam Pipal, 245-4517, ppipal@charter.net

Board of Directors:

Donn Bartlett: 252-0757, donnbartlett@msn.com

Dorothy Bartlett, 252-0757, dpadanyi@live.com

Steve Linder: 380-0073, becon1@bresnan.net

Sheila McKay: 652-7175, cell 694-7918,

wjhbird@yahoo.com

Deb Regele: 962-3115, debregele@gmail.com

Marco Restani: 425-2608, restani@stcloudstate.edu

Sue Weinreis: 855-4181, granpeak47@gmail.com

Nancy Wiggins: 651-0218, nwiggins83@gmail.com

Montana's Congressional Delegation:

Sen. Steve Daines: U.S. Senate, Wash. D.C. 20510

website: daines.senate.gov

email: senator@daines.senate.gov

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. Ryan Zinke:

website: zinke.house.gov

email: representative@zinke.house.gov

Billings: 406-702-1182 Wash, D.C: 202-225-3211

Committees and Special Assignments:: AREA CODE 406

Audubon Adventures: Jerry Dalton, daltonlj@centurylink.net

Bird Questions:

George Mowat, 656-7467 gmowat@bresnan.net or

Helen Carlson Cummins, 248-8684

Birdathon: Ruth Vanderhorst, 245-5118, acrv@bresnan.net

Christmas Bird Count: Jim Court, 259-5099, C: 860-0450,

custertours@gmail.com

Conservation Advisor: Steve Regele, 962-3115, sregele@juno.com

Editor: Trenay Hart, 860-1175, yvasflyer@gmail.com

Field Trip Chair: Donn Bartlett, 252-0757, donnbartlett@msn.com

Hospitality: Audrey Jurovich, 656-2748

Injured Raptors: Montana Raptor Conservation Center, 406-

585-1211; Raptor Transport 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, debregele@gmail.com

Baling Twine Project: Lisa Bessasparis, wildlifealive@gmail.com

Publicity: Dorothy Bartlett, 252-0757, dpadanyi@live.com

Program Chair: Sheila McKay, 652-7175,

wjhbird@yahoo.com

Recycling (aluminum): Larry Handsaker, 406-855-9832

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 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.

Lake Mason Field Trip 8-8-15

Submitted by Mike Weber

Living in the semi-arid area of Montana, I am thankful for good water years like the winter of 2013-14 which filled Lake Mason. A visit there last fall verified that and this year's trip the water level appeared to be even higher! It is a double edged sword-you love the high water-but if it is too high you lack the exposed mudflats which attract migrating shorebirds, which was the case this year.

The good birding started between Roundup and the turnoff to Lake Mason as there were several loose flocks of Mountain Bluebirds with many fledglings. A wild sunflower patch held a pair of Red Crossbills. Goldfinches and a couple of Western Wood-Pewee's used the sunflower heads as perches.

When we turned off the Oil Patch Road to take the trail into Lake Mason we spotted a flock of 7 Greater Sage-Grouse that walked out of a wheat field onto the roadway. Along that road a small flock of perhaps 25 Yellow-headed Blackbirds were seen and by the time we left the flock had grown to 150! About a dozen American Kestrel were observed too.

When we set up spotting scopes near the lake's edge we were treated to a large variety of water birds. Black Terns and Franklin Gulls were airborne, fly-catching far across the lake. Ring-billed and California Gulls were scattered widely across the water. Ten American White Pelicans were spotted bobbing far away. There were at least 200 Double-Crested Cormorants. There were many hundreds of August brown ducks. Eared Grebes were very well represented and Ruddy Ducks were ample too. Sandhill Cranes were heard calling for a long time before a family of 4 was counted. White-faced Ibises were observed feeding and flying about-we had a final count of 8. Shorebirds were scarce-a few Spotted Sandpipers-already in their "spotless" basic plumage were noted on the rocky islands. A few Marbled Godwits were seen as well as a Willet. One solitary female Wood Duck looked out of place on this prairie lake. In a hayfield SE of the lake were 5 Bald Eagles. A lot of diligent searching turned up Brewer's Sparrows among the Greasewood. A Ferruginous Hawk was observed soaring and on the way out a large falcon silhouette was observed-to me its ID remains a mystery-but it is not unusual to see Peregrine Falcons in late summer hunting over prairie lakes.

The last stop was Broadview Ponds where we arrived in a driving rain. After a short while it stopped and we rewarded by seeing a nice mix of shorebirds. We watched Long-billed Dowitchers, Marbled Godwits and Black-necked Stilts probe in the muddy shallows. Some Wilson's Snipes were observed flying. The mudflats held Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, about a dozen Baird Sandpipers and a few Semipalmated and Least Sandpipers. Sora Rails were heard calling and we got excellent looks at this normally shy bird. Black Terns were close by, some flying and others loafing on a sandbar.

On the way back to Billings, Will Crain and Brian Henderson stopped to check out a Prairie Dog town and reported seeing 19 Burrowing Owls. There were close to 80 bird species noted on this trip.

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 252-0757, donnbartlett@msn.com

Sept 3	Thur	FALL MIGRANTS. Meet at Riverfront Park, S Billings Blvd. 1 st parking area on the right. 5pm.	Mike Weber, leader.
Sept 19	Sat	PRYOR MOUNTAINS. 7am.	Meet at 7am at Rocky Mountain College or Bridger Rest Stop at 8am. Sack lunch, Ruth Vanderhorst & Stan Heath, leaders.
Oct 3	Sat	STILLWATER RIVER AND COONEY DAM. 8am to 6pm.	Sack lunch, Deb & Steve Regele, leaders



Montana Audubon Center 7026 South Billings Blvd., Billings 59101
406-294-5099 www.mtacec.org

- Every Sunday – Weekend Wonders. 2-4pm. Open to all ages! \$2 fee to cover equipment use per person or free for Friends of the Center. Stop in at the Center to get your supplies or challenge for the day. No registration required.
- Saturday, Sept 26 -- Restoration Volunteer Saturday. Drop in anytime 9am-12pm. Variety of activities focusing on mulching, weeding and planting. All are welcome! Each activity has a range of intensity levels. Closed-toe footwear strongly suggested. Questions? restoration@mtaudubon.org
- Saturday, Sept 12 -- Nighthawk Adventure—Raptors. 6-8pm. All ages welcome for this family program. Join us for a nature-filled evening and a tasty snack. Fee: \$5/person or free for Friends of the Center. Register: [406-294-5099](tel:406-294-5099) or naturalist@mtaudubon.org.
- Friday, September 18, 5:30 pm -- **Evening Under the Big Sky**. Our annual fundraising event to be held at the Yellowstone Country Club. Live music from the Peach Pickers, fine dining, silent and live auctions. Tickets: Individual \$75/Table of 8 - \$550: Call 406-294-5099 or <http://weblink.donorperfect.com/EveningUndertheBigSky>
- Tuesday, Sept 29 - Nov 17. Eight-week classes: register education@mtaudubon.org or call [406-294-5099](tel:406-294-5099)
 - * Nature Nuts. 9-10am. Children 2-5 years old with a parent/caretaker. Little ones will explore nature and learn new skills. Fee \$45 or \$40 for Friends of the Center.
 - * Hands-on Homeschool Science Class. 11am-12:30pm or 1-2:30pm. Children 6-13 years old. Fee \$72 or \$65 for Friends of the Center.
 - * Eco-Splorers. 4-5:30pm. For K to 2nd and 3rd to 6th graders. Fee \$72 or \$65 for Friends of the Center.

YVAS Chapter Meeting Potlucks It has been a tradition of YVAS to offer a Potluck dinner to members and friends prior to each regular YVAS meeting as a tasty way to meet and greet fellow birders and to raise money for YVAS service projects.

Here is how it works: The host/hostess provides the main dish. Everyone else brings a dish to share sufficient to serve 6 or more people. Water and coffee are provided. The cost of the potluck is \$6.00 per person. The host/hostess are not required to pay. Dinner is served promptly at 5:45 pm. The hostess information for each month is listed on the front page of the Flyer.

We still NEED a host/hostess for April and May meetings this year. Your mission, should you decide to accept it, is to provide a main dish for two dozen people. Others will set up and clean up. *Submitted by Sue Weinreis*

The Christmas Bird Count might seem like it is a long way off...probably not to Jim Court who organizes the Count for YVAS, but it is just a few months away.

This Upcoming Events section to remind you of our Count: Saturday, December 19th, 2015 but to also inform you that the results from the 2014 115th Annual Christmas Bird Count are now available at:

https://www.audubon.org/115th-christmas-bird-count-alphabetical-index-regional-summaries?utm_source=science&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=2015-08-18_americanbirds

CONSERVATION NEWS

News from the [American Prairie Reserve](#): [“From Skyscrapers to Big Sky”](#) An intriguing story about an educational program targeting low-income students at New York City’s public schools to encourage earning college degrees. The 6 students who traveled to Montana’s American Prairie Reserve were all immigrants or children of immigrants who experienced “seeing the Big Dipper, dirt roads, campfires, Greater Sage-Grouse, and sunsets.” Read the entire story at the link.

News from [The Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#) “Splitting Feathers: One Backyard Hummingbird Species Becomes Two”

Tail-feather shape and the sounds the feathers produce during courtship played major roles in distinguishing the Inaguan Lyretail as a separate species from the Bahama Woodstar. Read the entire story at:

http://www.allaboutbirds.org/one-backyard-hummingbird-species-becomes-two/?utm_source=Cornell%20Lab%20eNews&utm_campaign=d0d3e354f8-Cornell_Lab_eNews_2015_8_10&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_47588b5758-d0d3e354f8-306985437

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks has recently updated the bird check list for the Yellowstone Wildlife Management area near Pompey's Pillar and it is now available online at:

<http://fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/wOma/siteDetail.html?id=11181201>

Osprey Project Update

One of YVAS' Osprey monitors this year is Sean Ellis. (Photo with Dr. Marco Restani left, George Mowat middle, and Sean on the right. Note Sean is the only compliant member wearing his hard hat.) Sean monitored one of the two new Osprey poles and platforms Yellowstone Valley Electric installed along River Road. He, along with 25 other YVAS Osprey Monitors faithfully posted their observations beginning April 1.

A couple weeks later, Sean observed a pair of Ospreys building their new nest on the new platform. By May 11th incubation was underway; but for undetermined causes, the adult Ospreys had abandoned the nest by July 1st. It is not uncommon for a nest to be abandoned due to infertile eggs, a severe storm that may damage eggs, predation, human activity that gets too close or even young

adult birds that are inexperienced.

Even though his nest was not successful, Sean was able to attend a banding at another nearby nest on July 20th. Here he had a chance to observe and experience banding up close with Dr. Marco Restani. As he does at all bandings, Dr. Restani explained the meaning behind the silver and the green bands he is licensed to use along the Yellowstone River. Among other points, Dr. Restani demonstrated the methods for applying the bands, taking measurements, recording data and estimating the age of the nestling.

Sean is 16 years old and is completing requirements for the Eagle Scout rank through Boy Scout Troop No. 7. In March 2015, Yellowstone Valley Electric Coop installed two new poles and platforms along River Road to help alleviate problems with Ospreys nesting on active power poles. Sean, along with a couple other Boy Scouts, assisted in building the platform and tying small branches on the platform.

Submitted with Photo by Deb Regele

Osprey Monitors End of Season Celebration

Cool rain threatened the potluck picnic planned for Aug. 18 at the home of Deb and Steve Regele but we were saved by sunshine and warming temperatures. Great food, great people and good stories along with Marco's wit and the Regele's warm hospitality led to a very successful and fun time. Celebrating a record-breaking year in terms of numbers of banded offspring and new fledglings the party offered the opportunity for monitors to meet, sometimes for the first time, the people who have communicated their observations all season on a dedicated computer site. No unhappy faces were seen. Special thanks to Marco Restani PhD and to Deb Regele who administered the program. Thank you to all the monitors as well.

Submitted by Ruth Vanderhorst Photo at right Deb Regele



With Gratitude another Osprey Project year is reaching a close to it's season. This appears to be YVAS' biggest conservation project to date. However we do have a few other ongoing projects and plan to have significant updates on those in future Flyer publications. (It just has to be reported when the Ospreys aren't in town!)

Here's the link to the Hellgate Osprey Nest Webcam in Missoula. Unfortunately, this year the eggs were destroyed in a hail storm but worthy of saving in your favorites for next season's birds.

http://cams.allaboutbirds.org/channel/27/Hellgate_Ospreys/

A link to A Big Year Reading List: <http://www.allaboutbirds.org/10-great-books-on-birds-a-big-year-reading-list/>

THE CREATIVE CORNER

See the website for full color photos.

You Can't Get There from Here

By Ogden Nash

Bird watchers top my honors list.

I aimed to be one, but I missed.

Since I'm both myopic and astigmatic,

My aim turned out to be erratic,

And I, bespectacled and binocular,

Exposed myself to comment jocular.

We don't need too much birdlore, do we,

To tell a flamingo from a towhee;

Yet I cannot, and never will,

Unless the silly birds stand still.

And there's no enlightenment in a tour

Of ornithological literature.

Is yon strange creature a common chickadee,

Or a migrant alouette from Picardy?

You can rush to consult your Nature guide

And inspect the gallery inside,

But a bird in the open never looks

Like its picture in the birdie books-

Or if it once did, it has changed its plumage,

And plunges you back into ignorant gloomage,

That is why I sit here growing old by inches,

Watching a clock instead of finches,

But I sometimes visualize in my gin

The Audubon that I audubin.

Submitted by Jim Sells



American Flamingo, Yucatan Peninsula, North of Campeche, Mexico.
Photos by Robert Hill from a recent fishing/birding tour.



Submissions to the Flyer are needed. It is a challenge for one person to gather enough material to make an informative Flyer each month. Pieces for the Conservation and Nesting Materials sections are greatly encouraged.

Submit to: yvasflyer@gmail.com

Preferably in Word Document.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE NEWS The YVAS Membership Committee focuses on recruiting new members, maintaining existing membership and communicating with members. The committee consists of Dorothy Bartlett, Doreen Hartman, Steve Linder, Marco Restani, Nancy Wiggins and Joel Bowers. Contact information is on page 2 of this Flyer. The Committee is working with MSUB to take part in a fall event for new students, to familiarize them with local volunteer and participation opportunities. YVAS will have a table at this function with literature about projects and representatives to talk to students. If you would like to be part of this activity, please contact Dorothy at dpadanyi@live.com. YVAS has developed a brochure titled "Birding in Billings", which contains a list of YVAS activities and a map of popular birding spots in Billings. We also have business cards with our mission, website and a place for you to write your name. If you would like to have some of these to help you recruit new members or TO spread the word about who we are, contact Dorothy at dpadanyi@live.com or 252-0757. As you invite your friends and neighbors to join YVAS, the following information may be useful: Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society membership is \$20 per family per year (you can pay multiple years to save you hassle), and all the money stays in Billings for birding and conservation projects, programming, and the Flyer. YVAS is an independent, local entity with a relationship to National Audubon. (ACEC and Montana Audubon are totally separate organizations.) *Submitted by Dorothy Bartlett*

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 September. 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. Contact Membership Secretary Joel M. Bowers at 534-3672 or jmba@jmba.com with any questions.



SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER
David & Ruth Torrence	Jerry & Lois Dalton
Phil McBride	Ted & Patty Lechner
Luanne Ricks	Ruth Vanderhorst
Nancy Auren	Rita Harding
Eunice Scheuring	Jeanne Olson
Lisa Bessasparis	Dana Murphy
Judy Rich	
Ann Shesne	

No new Members in August. Would you like to receive **one free year of YVAS membership**? The Membership Committee is offering a free membership renewal to any current member who enrolls two new members with \$20 YVAS memberships. Contact Dorothy at dpadanyi@live.com or 252-0757 for directions.



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 (electronically). 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
 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 family Chapter benefits. Make check payable to **Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society** for \$20. If applying for a new or renewing student membership, make check for \$10 and indicate academic affiliation.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Email Address _____

Do you want to receive the Flyer electronically?
 YES NO

Send this application and your check to:

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society
 P.O. Box 1075
 Billings, MT 59103-1075



**YELLOWSTONE VALLEY
AUDUBON FLYER**

P.O. Box 1075
Billings, MT 59103-1075

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YVAS Bird of the Month: Black Rosy-Finch



Photo credit: Jacob Spendelow, All About Birds

Bird of the Month: Black Rosy-Finch

The Black Rosy-Finch is a bird of the high mountains in the central United States. It nests above treeline, and is often the bird that nests at the highest elevation on a particular mountain.

Black Rosy-Finches are among the least studied of North American birds because of the inaccessibility of their alpine habitat generally and their nest sites on cliffs in particular. Reflecting this, actual nests had been reached by only three researchers as of 2002.

Adapted from All About Birds.

We, however, are lucky to be in close vicinity of where many of these birds breed. Megan O'Reilly, Wildlife Biologist with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks is a regional point person with the survey that aims to remove the BLRF off the Species of Greatest Inventory Need (SGIN) list. There is still time to help collect much needed data as the survey runs through 2016. Megan O'Reilly contact: moreilly@mt.gov See YVAS website to download the survey methodology, data sheets and participate!

Submitted by Trenay Hart

WANTED

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks needs your help! Little is known about the Black Rosy-Finch during the breeding season. We do know that they can be found in rocky areas near summits and alpine snow fields; usually above 10,000 feet in elevation. Perhaps this is why we know so little! It can be difficult to conduct formal surveys for these birds given the frequent stormy weather in the mountains and the amount of time it takes to get to some of these locations. Please help future survey work by reporting your sightings. If you positively identify a Black Rosy-Finch, particularly during the summer breeding season, please email Megan O'Reilly at moreilly@mt.gov with a GPS location or map reference of the sighting, a brief description of the location and any other pertinent information. Thanks to all who have been searching already we really appreciate your help!

Submitted by Megan O'Reilly, Wildlife Biologist