



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.

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April 16, 2018 Chapter Meeting 7PM

Raptors of Montana: Ecology and Identification with Marco Restani, PhD

Birds of prey have figured prominently in mythology and heraldry for thousands of years, either foreshadowing the best of luck or portending the worst of omens. The size, strength, and behavior of these predatory birds captivates the imagination: they effortlessly soar the heights, seize quarry with dizzying speed, and haunt the most wild and remote of places on earth.

Raptors are difficult birds to identify. By their nature they shun a close approach, so observers must rely on size and shape more than color for identification at distance. Variation in plumage patterns can range widely within some species, which seemingly multiplies the number of identification options because different species look alike. Sitting atop the food chain also means that raptors are fewer in number, which gives birders fewer opportunities to practice learning identification.

Montana is home to nearly 20 species of diurnal raptors. Some are yearlong residents, whereas others come and go with the seasons. Our largest raptors, the eagles, are an order of magnitude heavier than the smallest, the kestrels. Raptors occupy a diversity of cover types from the prairies to the peaks, being both secretive and rare to common and obvious. This presentation will review the general ecology of Montana raptors and will provide tips to improving identification of this impressive yet vexing group of birds revered by cultures across the globe.

Marco Restani began studying Montana raptors in 1987 in the Centennial Valley, investigating red-tailed, ferruginous, and Swainson's hawks for a Master's Degree. He continued research studies on raptors by following up with a PhD on bald eagles. He spent seven summers in Greenland trekking the tundra and climbing cliffs to peregrine falcon eyries and most recently collaborates on the YVAS Osprey Nest Monitoring Project. Mystery bird photo in Greenland by Marco Restani, PhD.



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.

Friday, April 13, 4:00pm: Board of Directors Meeting

Monday, April 16, 7:00pm: Chapter Meeting

We will hold a YVAS fundraiser dinner at 5:30, before the Chapter meeting. Dinner donation: \$6. Sue Weinreis has generously volunteered to coordinate this NO HOST potluck. Please contact her [before Friday, April 13](mailto:sue@yvas.org) at 855-4181 to make reservations and your dish contribution.



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☞ We're on the web! yvaudubon.org

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

Representatives from both RBC Wealth Management and Billings Community Foundation attended the March Board Meeting and briefed the Board regarding YVAS Endowment Fund investments.

The option to pay membership dues via PayPal was restored after it was removed due to problems/confusion being experienced after the payment buttons were changed.

The Bartlett's have graciously donated a beautifully framed Osprey photograph as a fundraiser for YVAS Osprey project work. The photo will be displayed during the March, April, and May Chapter Meetings, as well as all the Osprey Orientation Meetings. Raffle tickets will be sold and the drawing will occur during the May Chapter Meeting.

Barbara Garrett, Publicity Chair, will be vacating the position in May. Thank you Barbara for providing great publicity; a replacement is desperately needed. Interested individuals can speak with any Board member regarding this position.

The Montana Audubon Center Helen Carlson Cummins Bird Garden opening celebration has been tentatively scheduled for May 20th.

Our YVAS Chapter was established in April 1953. Attend the April Chapter Meeting to help celebrate our 65 years in existence and the pre-meeting potluck for birthday cake.

YVAS's Nancy and Jim Wiggins and Tom Holt continue their involvement/coordination efforts of bluebird box building and maintenance with other organizations such as MAC, YRPA, Billings Parks and Recreation, etc.

Who do you call when you find an INJURED bird?

Injured Birds: Details at yvaudubon.org (select the "Projects" tab and then "Injured Birds") or call MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks, (M-F) 406-247-2940.

Injured Raptors: Montana Raptor Conservation Center, Becky Kean, 406-585-1211.

Injured Waterfowl: WJH Bird Resources, Sheila McKay, 406-652-7175.

Twine Entangled Osprey in Nest: Dr. Marco Restani, 406-425-2608 or Deb Regele, 406-962-3115

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society Officers:

AREA CODE 406

President: Steve Regele, 962-3115, smregele@gmail.com
Vice-President: Steve Linder, 380-0073, becon1@bresnan.net
Secretary: Doreen Hartman, 697-0277, rdzlhman@bresnan.net
Treasurer: Pam Pival, 245-4517, ppival@charter.net

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Montana's Congressional Delegation:

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 Billings: 406-245-6822 Wash. D.C. 202-224-2651
Sen. Jon Tester: U.S. Senate, Wash. D.C. 20510
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 Billings: 406-252-0550 Wash. D.C.: 202-224-2644
Rep. Greg Gianforte:
 email Rep. Gianforte via his website:
<https://gianforte.house.gov/contact/email>
 Billings: 406-702-1182 Wash, D.C: 202-225-3211

Committees and Special Assignments: AREA CODE 406

Audubon Adventures: Jerry Dalton, daltonlj@centurylink.net
 Baling Twine Project: Deb Regele, debregele@gmail.com
 Bird Questions: George Mowat, 656-7467 gbmowat@gmail.com
 or Helen Carlson Cummins, 248-8684
 Birdathon: Ruth Vanderhorst, 245-5118, erv132@charter.net
 Christmas Bird Count: Jim Court, 259-5099, C: 860-0450,
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 Conservation Advisor: Steve Regele, 962-3115,
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dpadanyi@live.com
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 Nancy Wiggins, 839-4461, nwiggins83@gmail.com,
 Sheila McKay, 652-7175, wjhbird@yahoo.com
 Recycling (aluminum): Larry Handsaker, 855-9832,
 918 AVE C, Billings
 Website: Deb Regele, 962-3115, debregele@gmail.com

Meetings are held September through May at Mayflower Congregational Church, corner of Poly and Rehberg, Billings, MT:
 · Board Meetings are held the second Friday of each month at 4:00pm. Board Meetings are open to all members.
 · General Chapter Meetings are held the third Monday of each month at 7:00pm. All meetings are open to the public.

Rare Bird Alert, March 3, 2018

On March 2nd Donn & Dorothy Bartlett drove north of Roundup and found 2 Snowy Owls, a life bird for them both. Donn nicely reported the birds via the Rare Bird Alerts for interested YVAS members the following day. This sparked other life bird seekers, including Deb & Steve Regele with Doreen Hartman and Robert Hill. They, too, were rewarded with sightings of the birds. Donn & Dorothy went out again on March 7 with Pam Pipal and saw the birds again. It was a life bird for Pam, too! Photos of these birds are on the back cover of this months Flyer.

Field Trip Calendar:

All field trips depart from Rocky Mountain College parking lot on Rimrock Road, adjacent to Billings Studio Theater, unless otherwise noted, and will be by car. **PLEASE DO NOT BRING PETS.** All field trips are open to the public. Passengers will share gas costs with driver when car-pooling. Do make sure you check all field trips with listing in flyer each month for any changes. Binoculars and birding books are available on loan at the field trips
FIELD TRIP CHAIR: Donn Bartlett 628-5058, donnbartlett@msn.com

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|-----------------------------------|------|---|--|
| 4/7/2018 | Sat | Exxon Ponds and Emerald Hills | Leader TBD. ONE MILE WALK. Sack lunch. |
| Mid-Late April | | Pryor Mountains | LEK Viewing plus additional birding. Leader TBD. |
| 5/5/2018 | Sat | Riverfront Park. S Billings Blvd, 1st parking area on the right. | Sue Weinreis, leader. Meet at Riverfront Park. 8:00 a.m. to noon. FAMILY ORIENTED OUTING. |
| 5/10/2018 | Sat | Riverfront Park. S Billings Blvd, 1st parking area on the right. | Mike Weber, leader. Meet at Riverfront Park. 5:30 p.m. |
| 5/12/2018 | Sat | Lake Basin | Mike Weber, leader. 5:30 p.m. Sack Lunch. |
| 5/15/2018 | Tues | Stillwater River and Woodbine Area | Ruth Vanderhorst, leader. 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Sack Lunch. |
| 5/13/2018** DATE CHANGE | Sun | Pryor Mountains, Bear Canyon Birding/Hiking (DATE CHANGE from 5/19 to 5/13) | Trenay Hart, leader. Meet at Rocky at 6:00 a.m. or at the Bridger Rest Area at 7:30 a.m. to hike into Bear Canyon. Sack Lunch. |

CONSERVATION NEWS

Year of the Bird By now, most of you have probably read that 2018 is being celebrated as the “Year of the Bird.” If you are like me, you took it in stride and just figured it was another good reason to cherish birds and go birding, right? Well, I soon got a phone call from one of our favorite YVAS Chapter Members asking me what this “Year of the Bird” was all about. Okay, so now I got curious and did some homework. Here is what I “surfed up” on the web - in a nutshell.

The National Audubon Society, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, National Geographic, Bird-Life International and more than 50 other partners joined together to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the **ratification** of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) between the United States and Canada (however signed by England). Now, if this is sounding somewhat familiar and like something that was commemorated not that long ago, you are right. Two years ago the 100th anniversary of the 1916 **signing** of the MBTA, was also observed. So it appears we get to celebrate this wonderful Act not once but twice!!

Even though the MBTA was signed in 1916, it was not actually ratified by President Woodrow Wilson until 1918 when the necessary two-thirds of the Senate approved the MBTA as required by the U.S. Constitution for International Treaties.

Up until 1916, nongame bird species were being hunted for their feathers, captured, killed or sold. Their numbers were decreasing dramatically. The MBTA was created to save these nongame species of native birds from being pursued. But it doesn't end there. In 1936, the U.S. passed a similar act with Mexico to ensure that all birds, including nongame species, have full protection all across North America. Yes indeed, the MBTA is reason to celebrate - twice!!

Submitted by Deb Regele



Photos of **Snowy Egret** fishing off the jetty at Port Aransas, TX taken this winter by member Jim Sells.



A Tough Winter for Canada Geese in Part of Montana

When I flew my part of the Midwinter Waterfowl Survey on January 3, 2018, we had recently gotten 15 inches of snow on top of the few inches we already had. I still came up with an estimate of nearly 60,000 Canada geese along the Bighorn River plus the Yellowstone between Billings and Miles City. Many of the geese were sitting out in the middle of open, snow-covered fields along the Bighorn, without a speck of food to be found in the entire field. I was hoping they would soon leave to head south, but many of them didn't. Later in January, there was a warming period, but all that did was put a hard crust on the snow. I checked some fields in the next few weeks, and the geese were still there.

Then, in February, in addition to the cold weather, the snow kept coming, with Billings reaching 84 inches, and with 36 inches in February alone. Some geese found food around livestock operations, and some found sugar beet piles or sugar beet waste material. I started getting reports of dead or very weak geese in early March, with most of the problems being along the Bighorn River. I picked up a few dead geese on March 7, and geese that should have weighed 10 pounds weighed less than 5 pounds, one of them 4 pounds, 6 ounces. They were surviving on their fat and breast muscle tissue.

Some geese hung around calving areas in hopes of finding food, and a few of those got trampled by cows protecting their calves, because the geese were too weak to get out of the way. I don't know what the total number of dead geese will be, but I expect it will be in the hundreds at least. I really appreciated the livestock producers who involuntarily "hosted" some of the geese without complaining. They were getting some damage to their silage and hay, but they tolerated it because they knew how hard up the geese were.

I didn't especially enjoy shoveling out my driveway and two cars day after day, week after week. But, I never had to go to bed hungry, especially not for two months in a row!

Submitted with photo by Jim Hansen; Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks



RAFFLE OF FABULOUS, BEAUTIFULLY FRAMED OSPREY PHOTO!

Spring has sprung, the first Osprey has been sighted in our area, and the Osprey Nest Monitors are ready to jump into action.

To celebrate the "season", we are raffling a gorgeous Jeanette Tasey photograph of mama Osprey bringing a fish to the family. The picture below does not do justice to this beautiful addition to your home or opportunity of gifting it to another bird lover.



This is a YVAS fundraiser and we hope you will support it by purchasing raffle tickets at \$1 each or six for \$5. Tickets are available at YVAS meetings in April and May, as well as the training meetings being held for Osprey Nest Monitors in Billings, Miles City and Livingston. If you are unable to attend one of these meetings, you can mail a check to:

YVAS, PO Box 1075, Billings, MT 59103.

We will put your name and phone number on the number of tickets you wish to purchase and enter them in the drawing. The drawing will be held at the Chapter Meeting May 21, 2018. Be generous please, members, and support YVAS Osprey Project.

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 March and April. Please use the application form below (include your email address) and submit it, along with a check, to any Board Member or mail it to the address on the application when it is time to renew. Contact the Data Base Administrator: Peter Cummins at member-ship.data@yvaudubon.org with any questions.



MARCH and APRIL Renewals: (March) Judy Baxter, Patricia Crisp, Ernest McKenzie, Steve Regele, Claudia Reitz, and Sandra M. Teller. (April) Jeff DiBenedetto, Angus & Margie Fulton, Suzidee Hansen, Judi Knapp, Colleen Model, Judy A. Weddel, and Sandra Abraham.

HAPPY 65th ANNIVERSARY TO YVAS

1953: LOCAL AUDUBON SOCIETY FORMED

150 people attended the first meeting to organize the 'Billings Audubon Society' at the Eastern Normal College (now Montana State University Billings) on Tuesday, April 21, 1953. Organized by Professor William Hoheisel, forty seven of those present became charter members and they elected Carson E. Bechtel, President; Theodore A. Topper, Vice President; Miss Winifred Stull, Secretary; Dr. Raymond E. Smalley, Treasurer. This was a very committed group of pioneers. Careful records were kept from the start by Theodora Smith, describing field trips and observations along Airport Road, Alkali Creek, Huntley and Laurel. The photos from field trips in the 1950's could pass for today, except for the vintage Chevrolets and Fords. Lecturers and films were popular at monthly meetings; the first Christmas bird count December 29, 1953, accounting for a reported 2500 birds, was recorded in detail. Whooping Cranes were seen in May 1972 at the Wildlife Refuge at Medicine Lake, when the Billings Gazette reported that there were only 30 of the big birds left in the United States'. Some things haven't changed. It appears from materials in the YVAS archives at Parnly Billings Library that the first Bulletin of the organization was issued in October, 1970, by Billie Hicks, who was then President and served 5 terms; postage was 6 cents! Helen Carlson took over the leadership in 1976 and it has been passed down since then. As the Billings Audubon Society grew to represent more members throughout the area, the Board of Directors proposed changing the chapter's name to the 'Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society' in September 1974. Can anyone identify those picnicking in the photo??

Submitted by Nancy Wiggins, excerpted from her article in the August 2010 Flyer.



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





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Snowy Owls. Left upper photo by Robert Hill on March 3 and lower photo by Dorothy Bartlett on March 7 (her second trip to see the birds) north of Roundup see pg. 3 of this Flyer for info.

YVAS Bird of the Month???

Submitted with photo by member Karen Heil.



The real YVAS Bird of the Month

Snowy Owl

The above **Snowy Owl** was photographed by Robert Hill on March 3, 2018 north of Roundup. We don't have a good handle on when the birds head back to their breeding grounds in the very remote, barren reaches of the high arctic, but that they typically start leaving the Lower 48 in March. Some have been reported as late as June.

The female owl builds the nest directly on the tundra and can have a clutch size from 3-11 eggs. Small mammals, particularly lemmings are the main meal for these white beauties. *Submitted by Trenay Hart and adapted from All About Birds*