

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 49, NUMBER 2

FEBRUARY 2019

February 18, Chapter Meeting 7PM

Hummingbirds by Kathy Haigh

Hummingbirds are truly one of nature's most fascinating bird species to observe and have visit our backyards. Most of us know that the hummingbird is the world's smallest bird. But were you aware that they are able to fly forward, backward, shift sideways and even stop in mid-air? Small and quick, hummingbirds can reach speeds up to 60 miles per hour with their wings beating 78 times per second during regular flight and up to 200 times per second during a dive. The hummingbird's heart beats up to 1,270 times a minute. The favorite of many people is the hummingbird – intrigued by size, color, energy, toughness, and awesome displays at feeders. Kathy's presentation will provide fascinating information about hummingbirds and hobby knowledge including ways to attract hummingbirds to your own yard. Kathy and her husband, John, have owned and operated the Wild Birds Unlimited store located in Billings for 17 years.

Rufous Hummingbird photos below courtesy of Wild Birds Unlimited.



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, Feb. 11, 4:00pm: Board of Directors Meeting

Monday, Feb. 18, 7:00pm: Chapter Meeting

The Board invites everyone for cookies and coffee at 6:30pm prior to the Chapter meeting. Please contact Sue Weinreis [the Friday prior to the Chapter meeting](#) if you like to contribute cookies or bars.



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☞ We're on the web! yvaudubon.org

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

YVAS Board of Director Highlights January 14, 2019*Submitted by Sue Weinreis*

- Radio personality Earl Barsness has offered to advertise upcoming YVAS presentations/news during his week-day radio show, *Shadow of the Rockies*, on the Northern Sports Network
- Other advertising efforts: Steve Regele notifies of upcoming YVAS presentations, and Nancy Wiggins is responsible for reaching out to NPR, Community 7TV, KTVQ, Billings Library, KULR8. Nancy also keeps up our Facebook page. Check it out! It is full of interesting photo and articles.
- Keep your eyes and ears open for up-coming “hands-on” classes on how to use eBird; how to report bird sightings; how to sign up and use Facebook, especially the YVAS Facebook page; and maybe even some birding classes. We will only offer classes if there is interest, so contact Nancy Wiggins with your feedback.
- The Board discussed safety issues with caravan-type birding trips. For now, caravan birding trips will not be advertised on tv or radio to the general public until safety measures are in place. Ideas for making caravan trips safer: assign two leaders who travel a route in opposite directions to lead the trip; require reservations for a trip; limit the number of vehicles. Trips that meet at a specific location, such as Pompey Pillar, Riverfront Park, or Exxon Ponds, can and should be widely advertised.
- Marco Restani applied for and received a \$10,000 grant from The Wolf Creek Charitable Foundation, which will be used to help fund the Osprey Monitoring Project, for example, the purchase of a 4-year supply of bird bands. Remaining funds will be transferred to the Baling Twine Recycling Project.
- Sign Pro provided Steve R. with an estimate cost of \$274.00 to replace the vandalized Shiloh Conservation Park; the City of Billings insurance does not cover the cost. The Board moved to approve the estimate.
- The Board approved the YVAS Individual and Group Advocacy Policy, which states that YVAS will use its resources, such as time and money, specifically on YVAS activities. It limits advocacy and support on a case-by-case basis to other like-minded organizations to letters of support. The YVAS Board encourages YVAS members to individually support such like-minded groups and efforts as each member chooses.

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

Board of Directors:

Donn Bartlett: 628-5058, donnbartlett@msn.com
 Dorothy Bartlett: 628-5058, dpadanyi@live.com
 Carolyn Jones: 670-4449, carolyn684@gmail.com
 Sheila McKay: 652-7175, cell 694-7918, wjhbird@yahoo.com
 Marco Restani: 425-2608, restani@stcloudstate.edu
 Deb Regele: 962-3115, debregele@gmail.com
 Sue Weinreis: 855-4181, granpeak47@gmail.com
 Nancy Wiggins: 839-4461, nwiggin83@gmail.com

Montana's Congressional Delegation:

Sen. Steve Daines: U.S. Senate, Wash. D.C. 20510
 email Sen. Daines via his website: 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. 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

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, 860-0450,
 custertours@gmail.com
 Conservation Advisor: Steve Regele, 962-3115,
 smregele@gmail.com
 Data Base Administrator: Peter Cummins,
 membership.data@yvaudubon.org
 Facebook: Nancy Wiggins, 839-4461, nwiggin83@gmail.com
 Flyer Editor: Trenay Hart, 860-1175, yvasflyer@gmail.com
 Field Trip Chair: Donn Bartlett, 628-5058, donnbartlett@msn.com
 Membership Committee Chair: Dorothy Bartlett, 628-5058,
 dpadanyi@live.com
 Osprey Project: Deb Regele, 962-3115, debregele@gmail.com
 Publicity: contact any Board Member
 Program Committee: Steve Regele, 962-3115, smregele@gmail.com
 Nancy Wiggins, 839-4461, nwiggin83@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 Monday 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.

Tuesday, January 1, 2019 New Year's Day **Yellowtail Dam Afterbay**

Submitted by Jeanne Olson

Happy New Year! January first was cold. And with the snow Billings and all surrounding areas recently received, the roads were less than optimal for holiday cruising around. Thus, only four of us met at the Rocky parking lot for the YVAS annual New Year's trip to Yellowtail Dam Afterbay (our leader, Brian Henderson, Will Crain, Stan Heath and Jeanne Olson). Out on Old Hardin Road, Brian's car was registering -19 degrees, while Stan's car recorded a more moderate -14. But there was no wind, so, hey, no added wind chill. And a number of stops produced some nice first of the year birds: Sharp-tailed Grouse up in a tree, a Prairie Falcon giving us good looks by staying put on a fence post, and a lovely, pale Ferruginous Hawk, posing on a power pole. We saw flocks of Horned Larks, but no Snow Bunting joined them. Three Western Meadowlarks, however, were hanging out on fence wire, just like in the halcyon days of summer.

Down at the Afterbay, it warmed up to +8 degrees. Not quite the 27 degrees promised, but we weren't complaining. And, again, no wind. Lots of ducks and gazillion Geese: Canadian Geese with some Cackling Geese too. Most ducks were the usual suspects: lots of Mallards, American Wigeons, and Common Goldeneyes. There were also some Ring-necked Ducks, Buffleheads, Northern Pintails, and a Hooded Merganser. With persistent scoping, we did eventually find a couple Barrow's Goldeneyes. Other notable birds around the Afterbay were a small group of Brown Creepers and a Golden-Crowned Kinglet. We saw several American Tree Sparrows all along our route, and two Gray Partridges in the barrow pit on our way back to St. Xavier.

Heading back to Billings, we started on a back road from St. Xavier to Pryor, hoping to see Snow Buntings. Well, the wind here was howling, as a local weather newscaster often puts it, "like a Big Dog." A few miles in on a 40-some mile road, we encountered a particularly nasty snowdrift; we successfully ploughed through but not knowing what lie ahead wisely decided to turn back and head for Billings on the Interstate. The wind never let up and snow was drifting on I-90, but we all made it safely back home.

The day was cold, the roads were icy and snowy, but I think I can speak for all four of us that it was a fun and successful day of birding. We saw 36 species total. Not a bad way to begin 2019.

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

Apr. 20, 2019	Sat	Exxon Ponds and Emerald Hills	ONE MILE WALK. Brian Henderson, Leader. Bring a Sack Lunch.
May 4, 2019	Sat	Riverfront Park. S Billings Blvd, 1st parking area on the right.	8:00 AM to Noon. FAMILY ORIENTED OUTOING. Sue Weinreis leader.
May 12, 2019	Sun	Pryor Mountains, Bear Canyon Birding/Hiking	Meet at Rocky at 6:00 a.m. or at Lions Park in Bridger at 7:30 a.m. to hike into Bear Canyon. Trenay Hart, leader. Bring a Sack Lunch.
May 16, 2018	Thurs	Riverfront Park. S Billings Blvd, parking area on the right near the covered picnic facility.	Mike Weber, leader
May 18, 2019	Sat	Lake Basin	Mike Weber, leader. Bring a Sack Lunch.
May 21, 2019	Tues	Pompey's Pillar, Fishing Access Sites	7:00 a.m. Robert Hill, leader. Bring a Sack Lunch.
May 25, 2019	Sat	Bridger Creek	Meet at Itch-Kep-Pe Park in Columbus at 8:00 a.m. Stan Heath, leader.
May 28, 2019	Tues	Stillwater River and Woodbine Area	7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Ruth Vanderhorst, leader. Bring a Sack Lunch.



Montana Audubon will host its 20th annual Wings Across the Big Sky bird festival at the Cottonwood Inn, in Glasgow on June 7th-9th, 2019! This longstanding, community event celebrates Montana's native bird species and typically draws hundreds of wildlife enthusiasts from across the state and beyond. For 2019 the festival lead sponsor is American Prairie Reserve (APR).

Numerous field trips are in the works that highlight the remarkable grassland habitats of Montana's highline. The keynote address will be presented on Friday evening by Sean Gerrity, American Prairie Reserve founder, who will discuss the importance of the project to Montana's grassland birds and other species. Additional speakers will discuss conservation issues affecting this ecologically unique region. Native prairies are some of the most threatened habitats on earth: in North America, just over one-percent remains undeveloped. Montana's glaciated plains landscape contains large areas of intact grasslands along with the stunning and fragile birdlife these habitats support. Montana Audubon is proud to host its 20th bird festival in this beautiful, wildlife-rich area of our state.

There are many other fun activities to choose from at Wings Across the Big Sky including a Saturday evening banquet, Montana Audubon's annual conservation awards, "Nature Adventure Tour" silent auction, "Cakes for Conservation" fundraiser and more. For more information, visit the "Outreach" section of Montana Audubon's website: www.mtaudubon.org or call 406.443.3949.

Observing the Natural World presentation - rescheduled

Due to unfavorable weather conditions and City of Billings travel advisories the Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society cancelled a presentation by John Carlson planned for January 21, 2019. John has graciously agreed to reschedule his presentation about "**Observing the Natural World**". Please join him together with his exceptional photographs and stories on September 16, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. at Mayflower Congregational Church on the corner of Poly and Rehberg. The presentation is free and open to the public. Cookies and coffee will be served between 6:30 and 7 pm. The weather is pretty certain to cooperate for that show!

Keep an eye on the The Flyer (YVAS newsletter), YVAS Facebook, Billings Gazette and at yvaudubon.org for reminders, or contact Steve Regele at (406)962-3115 or smregele@gmail.com for information about that rescheduled presentation.

CONSERVATION NEWS

Wolf Creek Charitable Foundation Awards Grant to YVAS

Submitted by Deb Regele

Wolf Creek Charitable Foundation has awarded YVAS' Osprey Nest Monitoring Project and Twine Recycling Project \$10,000. These funds will enable YVAS to purchase needed supplies and services such as: three hundred green metal bands for banding Yellowstone River Osprey nestlings and bucket trucks to assist with the banding and rescuing of Ospreys entangled in twine at nesting sites. Grant funding will also provide for safe pole/platform units at locations where Ospreys continue to nest on dangerous utility poles and for reimbursement of mileage expenses for Dr. Marco Restani as he bands, monitors, and rescues entangled Ospreys. Remaining funds will be transferred to the Twine Recycling Project as needed.

The generous donation by Wolf Creek Charitable Foundation and others (see the November 2018 Flyer) will enable YVAS' Osprey Nest Monitoring and Twine Recycling Projects to continue its data gathering, banding, and ongoing research and conservation efforts.

Changes to the delivery of the Flyer (newsletter)

Submitted by Nancy Wiggins

The YVAS Board of Directors is always trying to evaluate how effective they are in communicating with Chapter members and the community at large. Outside of monthly Chapter meetings, the Flyer (newsletter) has traditionally been the 'messenger', having been mailed through the Post Office for over 60 years. My how things have changed! Social media has made us rethink things dramatically, and now less than 100 copies of the Flyer are sent through the Post Office every month, down from a 600 all-time high.

The Flyer and other YVAS messages can now be found on the website yvaudubon.org, Facebook, and emails resulting in significant cost savings to YVAS. But has it also resulted in some members losing touch because they don't have access to or knowledge of computers?

The YVAS Board is looking to identify what education members might need to make them proficient on the website, Facebook and emails with the thought that the old paper Flyer could be eliminated in the future. YVAS has the opportunity to provide computer training to respond to what members identify as their needs prior to making any changes to the delivery of the Flyer. Please contact Nancy Wiggins 406-839-4461, nwiggins83@gmail.com if you have any comments or need help in accessing the website or navigating Facebook.

Wintering Areas of Ospreys Banded Along the Yellowstone River Submitted by Marco Restani

Migration has long inspired and perplexed naturalists. How do birds know when it's time to leave? How do they find their way to wintering areas? How do they find their way back to breeding areas? Despite feelings of attachment, each autumn it's time for us to share 'our' Ospreys with those living farther south.

One-way travel distance between breeding areas along the Yellowstone River and wintering areas varies between 1500-3000 miles. The Gulf Coast, arcing from Florida all the way down to the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico, is the primary winter destination for Yellowstone Ospreys.

INSERT MAP HERE IF POSSIBLE, or wrap text around map?

MAP LEGEND: *Each dot on the map represents an Osprey encounter, which include photos, observations, carcass discovery, etc. (see the Feb 2018 Flyer for a story about the Miami bird).*

Some tidbits:

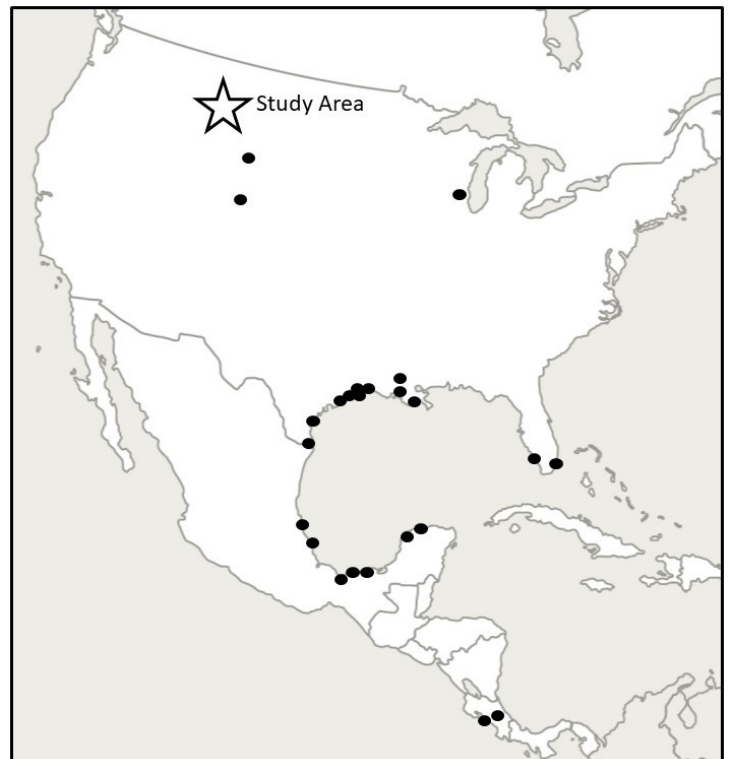
- One Osprey banded near Columbus has been photographed in Texas every winter since 2014, sometimes perched in the same tree!
- Ospreys do not (necessarily) migrate together or even winter in the same general area. Of two siblings banded in 2017, one wintered in Louisiana and one wintered 750 miles farther south across the Gulf of Mexico in Veracruz during winter 2018-2019!
- Eighteen Ospreys were encountered alive and well, two were shot, and two had only their bands and a few feathers discovered. Two birds became injured, were rehabilitated, and then released.

Ospreys in Montana begin autumn migration the end of August and reach their wintering grounds after a 2-3 week journey. They fly an average 185 miles per day, stop to feed and rest, and stay grounded during poor weather. Ospreys migrate most by gliding, taking advantage of favorable tailwinds and thermals, thereby saving energy.

There is no indication that Osprey families travel as a group. Juveniles navigate using a combination of a genetically determined internal map and compass, and perhaps by following other Ospreys. Researchers tagging juvenile Ospreys along the East Coast discovered that they use the Earth's magnetic field to determine their spatial position while flying across the featureless seascape from New England to South America! Females tend to leave breeding areas before males and winter farther south than males, which is a common pattern in birds. The thought is that males winter farther north to cut their spring migration travel time so they can get back to the breeding area to claim a territory.

Migratory birds confront three major challenges – energetic demands, weather dangers, and predation pressure. The amount of time Ospreys spend on spring and autumn migration totals only about 15-20% of the year. However, twice as much mortality occurs during that relatively short time period than during the longer stationary phases of the annual cycle (i.e., breeding and wintering). In fact, one study in Europe found that Osprey daily mortality rates were 6 times higher during migration than other times of the year. About 70% of juvenile Ospreys die before they reach breeding age (3-years old), so it appears that much of this mortality occurs during migration.

If YOU find yourself traveling anywhere along the Gulf Coast or in Central America, please examine the legs of every Osprey you see. We would love to get a long-distance encounter report from you.



A Few Definitions

By Charles Finn

The love of bird watching
is the love of things wild and free.
It is the round happy face of the
chickadee, the tall elegant steps of
the heron, the first darting curve of
a swallow parting the dawn.

For many of us bird watching is a flash of
movement in the trees, a finger extended and
pointed, then the swing and focus of binoculars.
It is a small gasp—recognition—or the
confused comparison of similar species.
It is good stories shared with good friends.

Bird watching—like anything, like everything—is a microcosm
of the whole. I learned this from the song sparrow's song,
from the winter wren pointing its tail, from the strong pump
of the osprey's wing, from the loons calling me out and into the night.

Bird watching is not a sport or a hobby or an occupation, it is a
participation in the living world. It is the egg, the found feather.
It is the owl, hooked beak dappled in blood, and the young downy
chick on the edge of its nest. It is flight and fancy and singing,
yes, all singing, in the arching light of the dawn.

Charles Finn is a freelance writer living in Stevensville. His essays have appeared in Big Sky Journal, Montana Magazine, High Country News, Open Spaces and Northern Lights. He also writes the monthly wildlife column "Common Miracles" for the Missoula magazine, Inside The Garden City.

Watercolor painting courtesy of Deborah O'Connor Clow (www.lovedogdesign.com).

The poem, at right, is submitted by Jim Sells, long time member of YVAS who enjoys reading (Missoula published) Montana Naturalist Magazine where he found this gem.

DISCONTENTED TURTLE DOVES

By David Omen

Turtle doves would make good lobbyists
Two show up every day at my house
An unhappy pair sitting on a big branch
First looking at the three bird feeders I made
Then looking hard at me in the window
Appearing to be very mad at me
They seem to be saying something.
It is about how bad I make bird feeders
Eating off the ground they calm down
They actually may be thanking me



English Sparrows, submitted by Adrienne Baker. We are hoping a Coopers Hawk is lurking in the vicinity!!!

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 February. 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.



FEBRUARY Renewals: (Remember this years dues have been raised by \$5.00) James Hansen, Charles W. Paris.

JANUARY (outstanding) Renewals: Don & Judy Allen, Stanley Bruce, Larry Handsaker, Stephen C. Linder, Bobby Purcell.

HELP WANTED The YVAS mission is “to promote enjoyment and protection of the natural environment through education, activism, and conservation of bird habitat”. Volunteers are essential for YVAS to succeed in that mission. We will publish monthly in the Flyer where volunteers are needed. Please consider helping out..

Publicity Chair Job Opening

Our YVAS Publicity Chair Volunteer Position is open! We are looking for an individual with great communication skills, is an extrovert, enjoys working with the community– and of course, is good at writing and presenting new ideas. Exciting changes and growth are in YVAS’ future– a dynamic and energetic individual is needed for a few hours each month to help us share our news and presentations. YVAS members interested in volunteering to fill this position are invited to speak to any Board member. Volunteer and make a difference!

Pre-Chapter Meeting Cookies

Volunteers are needed to provide cookies for upcoming meetings. Please contact Sue Weinreis at granpeak47@gmail.com or call or text (406) 855-4181 if you can help out.



Articles for the Flyer

Please submit anything you find related to birds or birding to the Flyer for publication. Please remember to put your submissions in a Word or Google Document, Times New Roman Font size 11. Trenay wants to edit not transcribe! Submit to: yvasflyer@gmail.com

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
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 \$25. If applying for a new or renewing student membership, make check for \$15 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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Billings, MT 59103-1075

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On a recent trip to Ormond Beach, FL with his family, *Will Crain* got this photograph of a **Black Phoebe** obviously standing his ground on the IBA signage.

YVAS Bird of the Month

Coopers Hawk

Christmas Day 2018 George Mowat had this sleigh runner grace his backyard branches. The fearsome accipiter inhabits deep forests to leafy subdivisions and backyards.

Often surprising its prey by flying behind and then over an obstruction. This bird feeder lover can take prey as big as bunny's (but really loves Eurasian Collared Doves) to tiny Black-capped Chickadee's. If one takes up residence in your yard, and you don't want to share the responsibility for the deaths of some of our most charming birds, you can take down your feeder for a few days and the hawk will move along, that is unless you can train the hawk to only take the English Sparrows!

Conservation has looked good for the Coopers Hawk as numbers are stable from mid-1960 until today with breeding populations at 700,000 with 89% of those birds spending some time in the United States.

Thanks, George for the wonderful photo of this local raptor.

Submitted by Trenay Hart, adapted from All About Birds website.

