

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 6/7

JUNE/JULY 2019

Greetings and Happy Birding Season!

There are no Chapter Meetings until September 2019 the summer is free for all the birding you can get out of it! Please submit photos and reports as you would like to the Flyer as the next edition will be out in August. Below, left **Loggerhead Shrike** and right, **Short-eared Owl** both near Big Lake early this May *photos by Will Crain.*



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, August 12, 4:00pm: Board of Directors Meeting

Monday, September 16, 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 would 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/>

Doreen Hartman reported that the May 13 Board meeting was slim on attendance as there were many members absent with other commitments. A full update on Board activities will be in the August 2019 Flyer.



Sharp-shinned Hawk, photo submitted by Steve Linder taken in his friend's backyard here in Billings recently.

Will Crain photographed the **American White Pelican**, at right, as it was hit by a car and taken to Sheila McKay's sanctuary for treatment. After Sheila stabilized the bird it is now moving on to SLC, UT for further care and rehabilitation. It should be able to fly again, although it might be a couple of years.



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
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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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Rep. Greg Gianforte:
 email Rep. Gianforte via his website:
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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
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 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.

Saturday, April 27 Exxon Ponds and Emerald Hills*Submitted by Pam Pipal*

Nine birders, including Exxon employee, James, met at Exxon Ponds for the first birding trip of Spring. There were 28 species viewed around the grounds of Exxon, including: Myrtle Yellow-rumped Warbler, Wood Ducks, Osprey, Double-crested Cormorants, Barn, Tree, and a pair of lovely Violet-Green Swallows, Red-tailed Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Sandhill Cranes (one in flight and one striding about). Early in the trip we spotted two sub-adult Bald Eagles in one tree, and later had the joy of viewing **four** sub-adult Baldies in various years of development, also in the same tree! And there was an adult Baldie circling high above the huge nest we usually check across the Yellowstone River (there was no activity sighted at the nest itself).

Five birders continued on to Emerald Hills and spotted several Mountain Bluebirds, a Say's Phoebe, a House Finch, and back dropped by the Beartooth Mountains, a circling Turkey Vulture.

Thank you Brian Henderson for leading this trip, and for recording species and species numbers on eBird! Thanks to Jim Hansen for tidbits about the birds we saw, especially about Sandhill Cranes dueting (he suggested Googling a video of this activity!). A special thanks to James from Exxon, and to Exxon itself, for letting us bird on their grounds.

Photos by Dorothy Bartlett, the group convening at Exxon Ponds (l), Female Mountain Bluebird (r) at Emerald Hills.

**Thursday, May 16 Riverfront Park***Submitted by Mike Weber*

Dark clouds shrouded the sky and it was breezy and cool with the threat of rain. It held the birders at bay with only 4 of us risking the weather. However the park was vibrant with bird life. From the parking lot we could hear Yellow-breasted Chats, Gray Catbirds, Yellow Warblers, Black-headed Grosbeaks and American Goldfinches. As we ventured into the woods we found our only Swainson's Thrush deep in a dogwood shrub. Nearby we heard and saw our first of several Least Flycatchers and heard a Spotted Towhee singing. Brian Henderson pushed up some Orange-crowned Warblers and a female American Redstart from a thicket. Yellow-breasted Chats rattled nearby but remained hidden. Yellow warblers seemed to be everywhere singing, flitting about and chasing one another. Later on we added the Common Yellowthroat and the Yellow-rumped Warbler, both the Audubon and Myrtle subspecies. House Wren songs bubbled from the under-story throughout the evening.

The atmospheric conditions were prime for attracting a myriad of swallows, with all 6 common species that breed in Montana identified by the end of the evening. We heard several Plumbeous Vireos singing and searched for a long time before we were able to spot one high in a cottonwood. A small flock of American White Pelicans circled closely above. A couple of Swainson's Hawks soared northward. We saw at least two Hairy Woodpeckers. As the sky dimmed in the dying light of the day the Black-headed Grosbeaks picked up there singing and we saw several close up. Flocks of European Starlings, Common Grackles, Brown-headed Cowbirds and Red-winged Blackbirds clung to the dead branches of cottonwoods and created a loud cacophony overhead. We ended the evening with 42 bird species and some very happy birders.

Saturday, May 4 Riverfront Park*Submitted by Dorothy Bartlett*

Sue Weinreis led a group of 8 birders around the park starting at 8AM on a cool but pleasant day. We saw Barn Swallows in the parking lot and started down the main path south of the lake. It was not too long before Sue led us away from the mail trail and followed a narrow trail among the trees, bushes and undergrowth that was alive with chirps, tweets and bird song. It was such fun. We saw and heard Song Sparrows, a noisy Northern Flicker, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Black-capped Chickadees, House Wrens and others. The lake offered a pair of Wood Ducks and a Western Grebe while American White Pelicans were spotted flying overhead. To me the sounds, sights and smells of the forest were a real treat on a spring morning. Pam Pipal kept the list of sightings; thank you, Pam. *Photos below by Dorothy Bartlett. Song Sparrow on the left and Western Grebe on the right.*

**Saturday, May 18 Comanche Basin Area***Submitted by Mike Weber*

Nine birders dressed in winter wear headed North on this soggy day so we could be on pavement and off the muddy roads. Comanche is the rail stop and grain elevator North of Billings on the way to Broadview. Just East of Acton on an alkali flat we saw our only peeps of the day, a small flock of Semipalmated Sandpipers. Here we got good views of American Avocets probing in the shallow water. Eastern and Western Kingbirds were perched on the greasewood shrubs east of the flats. A Long-billed Curlew was spotted cruising over the horizon.

Ducks ruled the day with Ruddy Ducks (some witnessed them doing a mating dance), Canvasback, Redheads, Lesser Scaup, Pintail, Gadwalls, Northern Shoveler, American Widgeon, Blue-winged, Green-winged and Cinnamon Teal all very common. There were flotillas of American Coots and numerous rusty colored Eared Grebes that were close enough to see their red eyes. A few Pied-billed Grebes. Scattered along the stops were numerous Black-necked Stilts, we saw perhaps a dozen or more. At one spot we counted over 25 Long-billed Dowitchers. In many ponds we saw small groups of Wilson's Phalaropes chasing each other in courtship. We observed a handful of Ring-billed Gulls and 4 handsome Franklin's Gull with its black head and bright crimson bill. At one stop a Chestnut-collared Longspur sang through the snow flurries as we strained to see its plumage through a spotting scope.

The multitudes of swallows we observed was impressive! The majority of which were Cliff Swallows, the next most common seen were Barn Swallows. We also saw Violet-green, Tree, Rough-winged and a few Bank Swallows. It was mesmerizing to watch them dart over Broadview Pond in a snowstorm. Broadview is also where we took shelter from the 34 degree day in a cafe and coffee shop and counted the morning birds which numbered just over 50 species.

About a mile West of Broadview Ponds is a tree lined gravel road. On the way there we observed a pair of Willets, their white-striped wings flashing as they took flight. Near the start of this road is an active nesting pair of Bald Eagles. We walked the tree lined road which had a good fallout of Kingbirds, Chipping, Vesper and Clay-colored Sparrows.

As the road terminated near a pond, a brush pile held a Brown Thrasher, a Gray Catbird and nearby trees were several Yellow Warblers. We had a brief respite where the snow stopped and the sun threatened to break from the clouds. For several minutes, the air rang with birdsong from White-crowned and Vesper Sparrows, an Orange-crowned Warbler and a trio of brightly marked male Bobolinks. The Bobolink was my favorite bird of the day. The pond was crowded with Double-crested Cormorants, countless ducks and noisy Red-winged and Yellow-headed Blackbirds. The tremolo call of the Long-billed Curlew echoed from a nearby fallow slope.

For me these last moments were both surreal and sublime. A pair of rusty-colored Sandhill Cranes broke the reverie as they leapt into the grayness in a trumpeting duet. We ended the trip there with 71 species.

Sunday, May 12 Bear Canyon*Submitted by Trenay Hart*

A dozen hikers met 7:30am at Jim Bridger Park in Bridger, MT on a perfect spring morning to hit the trail at Bear Canyon and do some birding. Some of the folks who arrived early at the meeting site were already birding the area around the park and ticking of species galore. The most exciting found were Cassin's Finches a life bird for a number of people in the crowd.

There was a bit of wrangling to keep people on task of getting to the trailhead for a timely start, for which I am not apologizing. This is a hiking trip not a birding tour. Thanks for everyone's understanding at my bossiness!

I wasn't in charge of the bird list so I have no idea on the count for the day but we did manage the trifecta of wrens: Rock, Canyon, and House Wrens. We got the desired rarities and specifics to Bear Canyon: Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and Gray Flycatcher. This year the only warblers were Yellow-rumped, Yellow, and Orange-crowned. No vireos surprised us but it has been a "cold spring" interjected Stan Heath.

We finished the 4 mile round trip hike around 2pm and others took off to seek the Mountain Plovers and Sagebrush Sparrows at other local in the Pryor Mountains but no reports on their success. Thanks, Brian H. and Stan H. for ID help.

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

June 1&2, 2019	Sat & Sun	Birdathon	Contact Ruth Vanderhorst 406-245-5118.
June 4, 2019	Tues	Bluewater Creek and Bridger MT Area	Steve Regele, leader. Bring a Sack Lunch.
June 7-9, 2019	Fri - Sun	MT Audubon Bird Festival	See Mt Audubon website for additional information https://mtaudubon.org/ .
June 11, 2019	Tues	Pryor Mountains-Sage Creek	Meet at 7:30 a.m. at Rocky or at 8:30 A.M. at the Bridger Rest Area. Stan Heath, leader. Bring a Sack Lunch.
June 15, 2019	Sat	Red Lodge Area	Meet at Rocky at 7:00 a.m. for car-pooling or in Red Lodge at 8:15 at the Town Pump Conoco C-Store. Jerry Dalton and Stan Heath, leaders. Bring a Sack Lunch.
June 16, 2019***DATE CHANGE***	Sun	Yellowstone River WMA State Park	Megan O'Reilly, leader. Bring a Sack Lunch.

AT PRESENT THERE ARE NO FIELD TRIPS SCHEDULED IN JULY. ALERTS WILL BE SENT VIA EMAIL OF ANY IMPROPTU TRIPS. CONTACT DONN BARTLETT IF YOU ARE NOT ON THE FIELD TRIP BIRDERS EMAIL LIST.



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

YVAS' Twine Collection & Recycling Site Opening in June!*Submitted by Deb Regele*

An Open House for the public combined with an Orientation for volunteer workers at the Twine Collection & Recycling Site (TC&RS) will be Monday, June 10, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. Project volunteers will be on hand to answer questions.

The TC&RS is located 2 ½ miles north of Laurel on the west side of Buffalo Trail Rd. Or, ¾ of a mile north of the intersection of Laurel Airport Rd with Buffalo Trail Rd. See the map below for more details. The grids represent 1 mile.

Beginning Friday/Saturday, June 14 and 15, the TC&RS will be open to the public for twine drop-offs. The current operating schedule for 2019 is the second and fourth Friday/Saturday of each month, May through October, and from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. During this time, volunteers will be on hand accepting clean, dry baling twine.

Like all recycled plastics, the twine will need to be 90% to 100% clean. Net wrap (mesh) is not being accepted since it is one of the most difficult plastics to clean.

Volunteers are still needed to work shifts. For more information, contact Deb Regele at debregele@gmail.com or 406-962-3115 and leave a message.

**Night Flight Recording Update** *Submitted by Mike Weber*

We started our spring recording campaign April 7th, a couple weeks early this year in hopes of possibly hearing Long-billed Curlews; and it paid off with 4 recordings of the Curlews so far. We have had some big nights with several hundred calls recorded. The night of May 24th for example was a big Thrush night with over 300 Swainson's Thrush were recorded. We have had a number of peeps, Upland Sandpipers, Solitary Sandpipers and Soras. Sparrows make up the bulk of our recording and some nights will have 7 Sparrow species. This is all preliminary data. MPG ranch continues to use our data in their research. Our goal is to share the data and have it accessible to all members.



Short-eared Owl, Wheat Basin area, photo by John McNeal. May 19, 2019

In late May 2019 YVAS members Robert Hill and Will Crain helped out during Independent Elementary School (Roundup & Lake Elmo kids attend this district) "Outdoor Day" at Riverfront Park. Robert and Will lead a segment on Birding and introduced the kids to the Avian theater that's out there and hopefully sparked an interest in the natural environment. They reported that there were many parents of the students at the outing as well.

Interestingly, Dr. Doyle, a MSU Bozeman professor, gave the full entourage; a window to the past, when the Crow Indians inhabited the area explaining how important trade was between various tribes using Crow language and signing. They also experienced Crow songs and drumming. Group and **Barn Swallow** photos by Will Crain.



RENEWALS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

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 JUNE and JULY. 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 membership.data@yvaudubon.org with any ques-



JUNE Renewals: Jean Boone, Rita Cetrone, Nancy & Dale Detrick, Brenda Dunham, James King, Brenna Moloney, George & Bernie Mowat, and Jim & Jeanie Sells.

JULY Renewals: Trenay Hart, Donna M Lance, and Liz Yorgason.

MAY (outstanding) Renewals: Louise Cenatiempo, Mike Griffin, Gerrie Mooney, and Janet Weisz.

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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Brilliant photo of a **Sora** by member *John McNeal* on an early morning trip to Wheat Basin/Big Lake May 19.

YVAS Bird of the Month

Yellow-rumped Warbler

Regional differences occur with this bird, however, *Will Crain* photographed both subspecies on the same day out near Broadview on a recent birding trip. We live in an area where the two subspecies overlap. Hybridization can also occur in the overlapping zone. The “Myrtle” Warbler (white throat) of eastern US and Canada, and the “Audubon’s” Warbler (yellow throat) of the mountainous West are seen below.

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

