



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 50, NUMBER 1

JANUARY 2020

YVAS Program January 20, 2020, 7:00 PM Brian Martin, The Nature Conservancy

Brian will overview The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in Montana and detail efforts in Montana's Northern Great Plains to retain functioning natural habitats, with an emphasis on bird conservation. Implementing strategies that benefit both people and nature is central to TNC work across Montana. Brian will be discussing permanent conservation of over 100,000 acres of private grassland in eastern Montana, enhancing management on 295,000 acres of ranchland through its Matador Ranch Grassbank, and use of the Endangered Species Act's "Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances" to conserve habitat for sage-grouse and four species of grassland songbirds.

Brian is the Montana Grasslands Conservation Director for TNC. He started working for TNC in 1989 in North Dakota, and has spent the past 25 years working all across Montana. He received a B.S. in Range Science from North Dakota State University and a M.S. in Range Science from New Mexico State University. He currently lives in Red Lodge with his wife, Kathy. *Photos courtesy of Steve Regele.*



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, January 13, 4:00pm: Board of Directors Meeting

Monday, January 20, 7:00pm: Chapter Meeting

The Board invites everyone for cookies and coffee at 6:30pm prior to the Chapter meeting. Please contact Lois Dalton @ 406-656-3656 [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/>

YVAS Board of Director Highlights December 16, 2019*Submitted by Sue Weinreis*

- A representative from HRDC attended the YVAS Board meeting to report on the YVAS grant they received in 2019 to allow low-income individuals, ages 16-22, to participate in Montana Audubon Center activities. More than 15 individuals and families were able to take part in one or more activity. The most popular one was learning to make a willow fishing pole, then using it to catch, clean, and cook fish. Other activities enjoyed by the young people were making art from natural objects; learning to identify and use native plants; and talking a nature walk.
- The Bird Trip Committee met at the home of Donn and Dorothy Bartlett and scheduled many and varied bird trips for 2020, including some trips to new areas, as well as many of the old, familiar places and events. Watch the Flyer for monthly birding trips and events.
- Doreen Hartman ordered YVAS business cards from Costco to advertise our Twine Collection and Recycling Site, its location, a contact number and email, and location in Laurel. These will be distributed at events, such as fairs, stock shows, and home shows.
- A beautiful, framed wooden feather will be offered for silent auction at the January 20th YVAS Chapter meeting. There is a minimum bid of \$50.00 for this item.

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 Pipal, 245-4517, ppipal@charter.net

Board of Directors:

Donn Bartlett: 812-1008, donnbartlett@msn.com

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

Sue Weinreis: 855-4181, granpeak47@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

Birdathon: Ruth Vanderhorst, erv132@charter.net, 245-5118

Christmas Bird Count: James Court, custertours@gmail.com, 860-0450

Conservation Advisor: Steve Regele, smregele@gmail.com, 962-3115

Facebook: Nancy Wiggins, nwiggin83@gmail.com, 839-4461

Field Trip Chair: Donn Bartlett, donnbartlett@msn.com, 812-1008

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

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Injured Waterfowl: WJH Bird Resources, wjhbird@yahoo.com, 652-7175

Membership Data Admin: Peter Cummins, membership@yvaudubon.org, 248-8684

Mt Bluebird Habitat Project: Carolyn Jones, carolyn684@gmail.com, 670-4449 & Sue Weinreis, granpeak47@gmail.com, 855-4182

Osprey Nest Monitor Coord: Deb Regele, debregele@gmail.com, 962-3115

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

Program Committee: Steve Regele, smregele@gmail.com, 962-3115

Publicity: Steve Regele, smregele@gmail.com, 962-3115

Recycling (aluminum): Larry Handsaker, 918 Avenue C, Billings, 855-9832

Recycling (baling twine): Deb Regele, debregele@gmail.com, 962-3115

& Doreen Hartman, rdzlhman@bresnan.net, 697-0277

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

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, September 7 Bridger Creek*Submitted (later than October Flyer publish date) by Jeanne Olson*

Ten of us met in Columbus to begin our late summer birding trip to Bridger Creek, led by Stan Heath. Regular YVAS members were joined by a couple who had driven over from northeastern North Dakota for the weekend hoping to find a Lewis's Woodpecker. Lewis's Woodpecker and Red-headed Woodpecker are the 2 main target birds for this trip.

The day was overcast with a promise of rain. And it seemed there was going to be little promise of birds. To paraphrase one of Steve Regele's comments: "We saw some birds, unidentified, flying away into bad light." Humm. That kind of summed up our birding along the early stretches of Bridger Creek road. But the further we drove, the better the birding became: highlights were a Golden Eagle, Belted Kingfisher, Red-eyed Vireo, and Cassin's Vireo, constantly singing just like he would in May. Colorful birds were Orange-crowned Warbler, American Redstart, Wilson's Warbler, Western Tanager, and American Goldfinch. Cedar Waxwings were everywhere. One observer commented they were as thick as the grasshoppers, which were also everywhere.

Once we were on the stretch of road that takes us to the area where we most commonly see the Lewis's Woodpeckers, we were doubly rewarded by seeing both of our target woodpeckers at the same stop. There was a family of Red-headed Woodpeckers along with a family of Lewis's Woodpeckers all flying nearby and perching on snags, also nearby, we all got good looks of adults and juveniles. Diana from North Dakota was thrilled—she had her scope on 5 Lewis's Woodpeckers all in the same tree. This was a life-bird for her. We all celebrated, and then headed out to the open road that drops us down into the Stillwater River and the end of our trip. On our way out of the canyon, we saw a fat and richly-colored Black Bear slowly making his way up the hill. What a nice bonus. We avoided the rain, we ended up seeing 42 different bird species, and we all had a great day out at Bridger Creek. Thanks Stan and all participants.

Saturday, November 9 Yellowtail Afterbay*Submitted by Brian Henderson*

The trip to Yellowtail was threatened by a winter storm due to arrive late in the day and when we arrived at the Afterbay it was very windy and overcast making it feel like the weather was indeed on the way. Amazingly, it somehow turned out to be an excellent day with generally light winds and temperatures in the 60's!

The Afterbay hosted a few thousand birds including a wide variety of ducks (13 species), Canada and Cackling Geese, Pied-billed and Western Grebes, a few Coots, and 4 Tundra Swans. We also found an American Dipper hiding in plain sight on the orange floats that guard the mouth of the canyon below the dam. Great Blue Heron and Belted Kingfisher were absent from the Afterbay but we found them not too far away along Warman Loop sharing the Big Horn Canal with Muskrats Suzie and Sam. (I hope y'all enjoy that ear worm for the rest of the day like I did - Thanks, Dan!)

This is always a good trip for raptors and this time Red-tailed Hawks were the most numerous hawks along the roads. We also saw a few Rough-legged, a Ferruginous, and a Sharp-shinned Hawk, Bald and Golden Eagles, numerous American Kestrels, and a Prairie Falcon to top off a total species count of 37. There were 15 participants.

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 812-1008, donnbartlett@msn.com

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|---------------|------|--|---|
| Jan. 11, 2020 | Sat. | Annual Eagle Midwinter Survey in lower 48 states. Yellowstone River, Billings to Columbus. | Brian Henderson, leader. Bring a Sack Lunch. |
| Feb. 29, 2020 | Sat. | NEW TRIP-winter birding around Billings. | Carolyn Jones, leader 8:00 AM to noon. |
| Apr. 25, 2020 | Sat. | Exxon Ponds and Emerald Hills | Brian Henderson, leader. Bring a Sack Lunch. ONE MILE WALK. |

The full 2020/2021 Field Trip Calendar is enclosed with this Flyer for reference to more upcoming trips.



Another great YVAS year - one going and a new one coming!*Submitted by Steve Regele*

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society (YVAS) began in April of 1953 and is a membership-driven 501(c) (3) independent nonprofit all-volunteer organization. The Society has no paid staff and minimal business expenses. We do sponsor important and valuable projects. Every dollar YVAS takes in goes directly to such work. Most programs and outings are free to the public. The Board of Directors continues to be good stewards of the YVAS Mission and fiduciary responsibilities.

Programs and Projects

Presentations by exceptionally qualified and talented speakers about birds and conservation, free to the public
 Birding trips (also free to the public) to choice areas and with proficient birders
 Bird data contributions to Cornell Lab of Ornithology, MT Fish Wildlife & Parks, MT Natural Heritage Program, USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, etc.
 Osprey monitoring and rescue
 Recycling - baling twine <http://yvaudubon.org/osprey-monitor-project/>
 Assistance and grants to aspiring birders and conservationists
 Injured raptor transport assistance
 Publication of the our newsletter (The Flyer), web site and Facebook page
 Creating and placing bird and habitat information signs at parks and other public places
 Blue bird nesting box monitoring, maintenance and installations
 YVAS members and officers Mission-related work including collaborative efforts with other NGO's, government agencies, academia, private land owners and companies, and citizens
 Public lands trail and weed control work
 Maps and other assistance to those seeking bird information and birding hot spots
 Reporting information pertinent to the YVAS Mission through public and commercial media

None of this happens without Supporting Members. Please help by maintaining your YVAS Supporting Membership and by bringing in new members. A YVAS Membership application is available in this Flyer, or see <http://www.yvaudubon.org/> for membership applications and more information.

Please note: While we encourage membership in the National Audubon Society (NAS), and that NAS 'regional' membership does include affiliation with YVAS, it is not the same as a YVAS supporting membership.

YVAS membership fees together with donations and grants received in 2019 greatly advanced projects and programs. The YVAS Board of Directors, and I'm sure all the members, appreciate your support - including the generous donations and all the individual members work that went into applying for and receiving grants. We look forward to the many benefits of 2020 financial and volunteer work contributions. Thanks too to all the YVAS members and non-members that contributed so much to programs and projects in 2019!

Best wishes for a 2020 full of wonder and sensational birding.

Gyr Falcon Carved Feather*Submitted by Pam Pipal*

A carved Gyr Falcon Feather enclosed in a glass-covered 8" by 16" frame, donated by Ann Shesne, will be presented **once again** at the January Chapter meeting for silent auction. This feather is carved from Basswood (wood from a Linden Tree, a popular Billings Parks' tree). The artist, William Rogers



Jennings, states, "The texture and color are applied with a reostat (sic) controlled wood burning tool. There is no paint or stain used in finishing." Ann acquired the Feather after sighting a Gyr Falcon on a tour of the Northwest Territories in 1996. The recipient of the Feather will receive information on this tour.

Twine Collection & Recycling Site (TCRS) Update*Submitted by Deb Regele*

Last month Patagonia announced their Action Works Matching Donation Grant opportunity to those nonprofit organizations that had received one of Patagonia's recent Environmental Grants. This included YVAS' Twine Collection & Recycling Project! Even though notice was short and the giving period lasted only 2½ weeks, numerous individuals kindly donated a total of \$7,350 with \$750 of it designated for the Osprey Nest Monitoring Project. Patagonia will be matching qualifying donations. With these donations and the matching grant, arrangements will begin in 2020 for twine recycling bins to be placed at one or two stockyards in Billings. Republic Recycling will prepare the bins and provide the monthly transfer of the twine to the TCRS. This is a new and an exciting pilot project for all involved!

As of December 20, 2019, over 9,000 pounds of clean baling twine have been delivered and stored at the TCRS. This includes deliveries from as far away as Bozeman and Cody. Frequently sacks of clean twine are found at the TCRS gate or in the TCRS shed. The TCRS is currently operating under winter hours. Appointments can be made for dropping off twine by calling and leaving a message at 406-591-8606 or emailing yvas.twine.recycle@gmail.com. More information is available at the YVAS website on the Home Page and at <https://yvaudubon.org/baling-twine-recycling/>

Thank you again to all who generously donated through Patagonia Action Works and those who have donated time. This project wouldn't be happening without you!

**Saturday, December 14 Christmas Bird Count #120***Submitted by Jerry Dalton*

Fog challenged birders in Billings on December 14, 2019, for the 120th Christmas Bird Count organized by National Audubon Society. Higher elevation spots like Emerald Hills and Four Dances Natural Area in Lockwood had the most fog. 42 field observers came out, and 7 additional feeder watchers participated. The species list total was 60, including 3 species added during count week. The count week is 3 days before and 3 days after count day, December 14.

A special thank you to the Montana Audubon Center team who took on 3 count segments in the urban area, area #5 between the rims and Grand Avenue, area #6 between Grand and Montana Avenue/Laurel Road, and area #10, the combined North Park and South Side areas. 22 species were listed by Carolyn Sevier, Emily Chilcoat, Jan Shorthill, and Jennifer Walker, of the MAC team.

Of the 76 CBC count years of YVAS participation since the early 1940s, highest ever counts this year were made of:

- Cackling Goose, 236 birds, recorded in 7 count years, from 1-236 birds
- Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk, 7 birds, recorded in 4 count years, from 1-7 birds
- Downy Woodpecker, 39 birds, recorded in 72 count years, from 1-39 birds
- Blue Jay, 34 birds, recorded in 38 count years, from 1-34 bird

Black-capped Chickadee, at 297 birds this year, was not even close to the record high of 522 in 1985.

Lowest ever counts were made of:

- Green Winged Teal, 1 bird during count week, recorded in 14 count years, from 1-91 birds
- Hooded Merganser, 1 bird, counted in 25 count years, from 1-73 birds
- Pied-billed Grebe, 1 bird, recorded in 15 count years, from 1-3 birds
- Bohemian Waxwing, 1 small flock during count week, recorded in 56 count years, from 1-3933 birds
- Song Sparrow, 1 bird during count week, counted in 72 count years, from 1-63 birds
- Pine Grosbeak, 2 birds, counted in 8 count years, from 1-42 birds

Thank you so much to all who volunteered and made coordinating the effort so easy. Jim Court will be back next year. For complete results of all CBC count areas statewide and nationwide, see christmasbirdcount.org. For Billings CBC current and historic results back to 1974, see yvaudubon.org/birds

The Departments of the Interior and Commerce have released the new Endangered Species Act regulatory reform package. Below is National Audubon Society's official statement taken from their NAS' Chapter Leader Update, dated August 16, 2019.

Submitted by Deb Regele

**“New Endangered Species Act Rules Will Weaken Protections for Birds
and Other Imperiled Wildlife**

Final regulations diminish science-based decision-making and will reduce protections for birds.

By National Audubon Society
August 12, 2019

WASHINGTON – The final Endangered Species Act (ESA) regulatory reform package, released today by the Departments of the Interior and Commerce, fails the most important measure of any changes to a bedrock environmental law by marginalizing science-based protections for wildlife.

“As a whole, the rule changes are political, unwise, and will only increase litigation. They tip the balance in decision-making against vulnerable wildlife and undermine incentives for effective conservation,” said Sarah Greenberger, senior vice president for conservation policy at the National Audubon Society.

While some of the new rules are reasonable – including making it easier to direct resources to conservation projects by speeding up consultation requirements for federal projects that are beneficial to species – other changes would severely weaken protections for imperiled species.

The most egregious of the new changes would allow the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to consider the economic costs of listing a species – something expressly prohibited under existing law. Other changes will make it much more difficult to provide any protections to newly listed “threatened species” or to designate the “critical habitat” species need to recover. The new rules also allow the FWS to ignore the dire effects of climate change on imperiled species – effects we are seeing with greater regularity, such as hurricanes that jeopardize the Piping Plover.

“While Audubon could have supported some changes that may improve implementation while speeding up support for at-risk wildlife, these damaging new rules will weaken protections for imperiled species and include language that is wholly contrary to the law,” said Greenberger.

The ESA is our nation's most powerful tool for protecting wildlife. Protections provided by the Act have succeeded in preventing the extinction of 99 percent of the species listed and benefitted many others that depend on the landscapes it's helped to protect. The ESA has helped numerous species recover, including the Peregrine Falcon, Bald Eagle, and Brown Pelican, and set many other species on the path to recovery.”

https://www.audubon.org/news/new-endangered-species-act-rules-will-weaken-protections-birds-and-other?ms=network-eng-email-ea-x-engage-ment_20190816_chapter_leader_&utm_source=ea&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=engagement_20190816_chapter_leader&utm_content=

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 JANUARY. 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.



JANUARY Renewals: Erin Baker, Jim Court, Jerry & Lois Dalton, Larry & Janice Handsaker, Karen Heil, Aiko Kawano, Gerald Moore & Joy Mallard, and Linda Pickard.

DECEMBER (outstanding) Renewals: Patricia Clayton, Will Crain, Catherine Frazer, Cecil E. Gubser, Carol A. Mick, Gail speck, Jack & Carol Sterling, and Nic Vermeulen.

NOVEMBER (outstanding) Renewals: Arleen Boyd and Gordon Cox.

LOOKING FOR SUGGESTIONS

Submitted by Dorothy Bartlett

The YVAS Board is seeking suggestions for topics for future monthly programs. We work hard to alternate the topic of programs from birding to conservation and most of our programs are well received and attended. Sometimes we run short of ideas and would love suggestions. Have you been to a program you especially enjoyed, is there a topic you would like to delve into more deeply, are there specific birds you would like to know more about? The lovely box, pictured, will be at the back of the room at each meeting with paper and pens. Please tell us what kind of program you would like to attend. You can also suggest places you might like the Birding Field Trip Committee to consider for a future outing. Or anything else! We look forward to hearing from you.



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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YVAS Bird of the Month

Rough-legged Hawk

This long-winged, northern raptor is seasonally seen in our region. It leaves its' breeding territory of the far northern tundra for the winter to our delight.

Identification of all hawks is a challenge but some tips for picking this gem out are as follows: perches at the edges of tree branches and tops of trees (places a Red-tailed Hawk is too heavy to perch), shaggy feathers on legs, smaller bill than the Red-tailed Hawk, characteristic dark patches on undersides of wings seen while in flight, and hovers, kestrel-like, flapping wings while looking down for prey.

Submitted by Trenay Hart, adapted from All About Birds website with photos by David Bell (L) and Brian Sullivan.

