

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 5

MAY 2020

Program Cancellation YVAS will not have a Public Program on May 18, 2020

Statewide Covid 19-related social distancing restrictions have relaxed somewhat. However the YVAS Board of Directors believe it is **not** in the best interests of our members, our Society or community to encourage a gathering together in May.

Our next normally scheduled Public Program is September 21. Keep an eye on the YVAS website <https://yvaudubon.org/> and Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/yvaudubon/> for details about that event.

Also watch the website and Facebook page for announcements about other YVAS activities that develop over the spring and summer. We look forward to making full use of opportunities for group birding trips, projects and programs as these open up when Coronavirus issues, restrictions and limitations abate.



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, May 11, 4:00pm: Board of Directors Meeting (Check with a Board member for location as it may be cancelled or digital)

Monday, September 21, 7:00pm: YVAS Public Program Series, the May 2020 program is cancelled.



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☞ We're on the web! yvaudubon.org

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

Due to Coronavirus there was no YVAS Board of Directors meeting in April 2020.

BIRDATHON 2020

Submitted by Ruth Vanderhorst

May 30 at 5pm Birdathon is scheduled to begin and will end 24 hours later at 5pm, May 31. I cannot be sure that the Birdathon will occur this year. I will communicate an update as soon as I know further details. At present, I do not feel like encouraging plans for a dinner related to the completion of the Birdathon. It seems pertinent holding the dates listed above and waiting until Covid-19 gets a little more settled out and closer to the dates before a final decision to hold the event is determined. Thank you for your cooperation and continuing enthusiasm for the Birdathon. For questions please email Ruth at erv132@charter.net

As the result of a recent Microsoft update, I lost about half of my list of email addresses of those I send field trip information. If you have not been receiving the information, please send me an email and I will add you to the list. Sorry for any inconvenience this may have caused you. -Donn Bartlett DonnBartlett@msn.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 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
 Dorothy Bartlett: 812-1008, dpadanyi@live.com
 Carolyn Jones: 670-4449, carolyn684@gmail.com
 Steve McConnell: 661-0422, mconnells@ci.billings.mt.us
 Sheila McKay: 652-7175, cell 694-7918, wjhbird@yahoo.com
 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, nwiggins83@gmail.com, 839-4461
 Field Trip Chair: Donn Bartlett, donnbartlett@msn.com, 812-1008
 Flyer Editor: Trenay Hart, yvasflyer@gmail.com, 860-1175
 Injured Raptors: Montana Raptor Conservation Center, 1-406-585-1211
 Injured Waterfowl: WJH Bird Resources, wjhbird@yahoo.com, 652-7175
 Membership Data Admin: Peter Cummins, membership.data@yvaudubon.org, 248-8684
 Mt Bluebird Habitat Project: Carolyn Jones, carolyn684@gmail.com, 670-4449 & Sue Weinreis, granpeak47@gmail.com, 855-4181
 Osprey Nest Monitor Coord: Deb Regele, debregele@gmail.com, 962-3115
 Osprey Research Coord: Marco Restani, restani@stcloudstate.edu, 425-2608
 Public Program Series: Steve Regele, smregele@gmail.com, 962-3115
 Publicity: Steve Regele, smregele@gmail.com, 962-3115; Nancy Wiggins, nwiggins83@gmail.com
 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

Board meetings and Public Program Series 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.
- YVAS Public Programs are held the third Monday of each month at 7:00pm. All meetings and programs are open to the public.

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

ALL FIELD TRIPS FOR THE MONTH OF MAY HAVE BEEN CANCELLED.

June 2, 2020	Tues.	Bluewater Creek and Bridger MT Area	Steve Regele, leader. Bring a Sack Lunch.
June 5-7, 2020	Fri. - Sun.	MT Audubon Bird Festival	See Mt Audubon website for additional information https://mtaudubon.org/ .
June 9, 2020	Tues.	Pryor Mountains-Sage Creek	Stan Heath, leader. Meet at 7:30 AM at Rocky or at 8:30 AM at the Bridger Rest Area. Bring a Sack Lunch.
Date	Day	Itinerary	Notes & Comments
June 13, 2020	Sat.	Red Lodge Area	Jerry Dalton and Stan Heath, leaders. Meet at Rocky at 7:00 AM for car-pooling or in Red Lodge at 8:15 AM at the Town Pump Conoco C-Store. Bring a Sack Lunch.
June 20, 2020	Sat.	Yellowstone River Wildlife Mgmt. Area MA State Park	Megan O'Reilly, leader. Bring a Sack Lunch.



April 2020

Submitted by Dorothy Bartlett

It has been a strange spring, to say the least. Now should be the time to go on Audubon birding trips, but I think it is wise to cancel them. After all, most of us are in the high risk group.

We are very fortunate: we live in Laurel and have undeveloped land behind us with shrubs and trees, a small creek with a hill behind it, and reeds and more bushes and trees above. We have been here since last October. So let me tell you about our birds. We have a small tube feeder and a feeder house that we fill with black oil sunflower seeds and I sprinkle the "cheap" wild bird mix on the ground for the ground feeders. We also have a wire suet feeder.

Early on we saw flocks of Waxwings, such lovely birds, and the Robins hung around as well. During the colder months we began to see Juncos: Slate-sided, Oregon and Pink-sided. They stayed around in pretty good numbers until recently. Then the Pheasant started showing up. I have never gotten a good, close look at them and now I think the male is the most beautiful bird I have ever seen. The colors are so magnificent that I would love to knit something with those colors. I could never do it justice. And of course the females are lovely, too, but not as bright. They are daily visitors, with the largest group to date being two males and five females at one time.

The Flickers discovered the suet and there were several that hung around, chasing each other off for a turn on the feeder. We have seen Song Sparrows, Tree Sparrows and a Lark Sparrow. Then the Red-winged Blackbirds showed up, singing and carrying on, chasing other small birds away. Occasionally a flock of Starlings take over.

And the Chickadees. Let's not forget the Chickadees, first in the morning and last in the evening, darting in and grabbing a seed just to take it to a branch and beat the heck out of it. We love them. They are our favorite.

The troublemakers are here, too. The squirrels, athletic and persistent. We hung a Slinky on the post that holds the feeders and trimmed the bushes back so they could not jump to them. The big squirrel has learned to climb up the slinky but a smaller one is still put off by it.

And at dusk the White-tailed deer parade by. So we raised the feeders, out of reach. They still walk by daily, about six or eight of them, munching what grass and seeds they can find. We shelter in place and have groceries delivered and don't have company, but we have each other and we have the birds and critters and can't complain. We feel blessed.

EXPLORE in spite of Covid 19*Submitted by Steve Regele*

The Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society (YVAS) Popular Birding Locations Maps were recently updated. One for the Billings area, one for eastern Montana.

These are available on the YVAS Web site <https://yvaudubon.org/birding-hot-spots/>. A new addition to the maps is the inclusion of web site links to *Regional Public Lands, Recreation & Birding Opportunities* ... and ... *Interactive Web Sites for Eastern Montana Bird Observations*.

Explore the web links, during your Covid 19 restricted life style, for entertainment and to gain insights about birds, habitats, and good outdoor recreation and birding destinations.

There are virtually endless opportunities to learn more about birds, their habitat and our natural world in general and specific detail.

For example do you know that when you travel to the south side of the Pryor Mountains to bird Bear Canyon you might travel through at least 5 different native sagebrush (*Artemisia*) communities?

Check out the MT Natural Heritage Program <http://fieldguide.mt.gov/> from the options list on one of the YVAS Birding Hot Spots Maps. When you get to that MT NHP web page, at the "Search Field Guide" box type in **sagebrush**. And scroll down to "Plants".

The list includes five native sagebrush taxa you might find on your trip to Bear Canyon:

Artemisia tridentata subspecies *tridentata* - a.k.a. **Basin Big Sagebrush**. Typically over 40 in. tall and up to 9 ft.!

Artemisia tridentata subspecies *vaseyana*- a.k.a. **Mountain Big Sagebrush**. Usually less than 40 in. tall (but up to 5 ft. tall at 20 years age).

Artemisia tridentata subspecies *wyomingensis* - a.k.a. **Wyoming Big Sagebrush**. Usually less than 20 in. tall (up to 3 ft. tall at 20 years age).

Artemisia nova - a.k.a. **Black Sagebrush**. About 6 - 20 in. height.

Artemisia arbuscula -a.k.a. **Dwarf Sagebrush**. About 4 - 16 in. height.

All the above taxon have 'trident' i.e. three-tipped leafs. Leaf sizes range from very small to pretty big.

While the MT NHP web site itself is generally just loaded with data, *Artemisia tridentata* subspecies *vaseyana*/Mountain Big Sagebrush is one taxa that will lead you into researching other web sites for abundant details: MT NHP says: "*We do not yet have descriptive information on this species. Please try the buttons above to search for information from other sources.*" Try that - click on the "NRCS PLANTS Profile" button. You will be taken to the NRCS (impressive) web site at the *A. tridentata* subspecies *vaseyana* page and distribution map. In the left of the page at "General Information" select "Characteristics" and "Plant Guide" for intricate details. At the top select "Images" for good photos.

These five "Sagebrush" communities are not only very different from one another but the bird and other wildlife species and populations that frequent them and depend on them can be surprisingly different too!

If you visit the MT NHP or NRCS web sites and look at their sagebrush species/habits photos you might recall birds you have seen associated with the different sagebrush communities. For example: In the very tall sagebrush (Basin Big Sagebrush) areas you might have found Green-tailed Towhee, Mountain and Black-capped Chickadee, or Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. These tall sagebrush communities are common in the canyon land bottoms of Bear Canyon. In the very short stature and sparse sagebrush communities (Black Sagebrush) you might have seen Mountain Plover, Horned Lark or longspurs. These sagebrush communities are common along Gyp Springs Road southeast of Bear Canyon. In the mid stature sagebrush types maybe Sage Thrasher and Sagebrush Sparrow, as well as numerous other birds. Such sagebrush communities occur along Railbed Road, and Helt Road.

You can spend a graduate degrees worth of time and study learning what the MT NHP and NRCS web sites alone have to offer, but you can also glean some quick and valuable insights as well.

And this just touches on one of the links and countless learning opportunities available from the YVAS birding hot spots map links.

While away some Covid 19 restricted time by exploring these web sites and the amazing information and recreations these web sites will lead you to.

From the YVAS Popular Birding Locations Maps:

Regional Public Lands, Recreation & Birding Opportunities:

- MT Fish Wildlife & Parks recreation and Fishing Access Sites <http://fwp.mt.gov/recreation/visitFwpSite.html>
 - MT Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation (MT DNRC) public recreation regulations and lands <http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/trust/recreational-use-of-state-land>
 - USDI Bureau of Land Management public recreation lands <https://www.blm.gov/visit>
 - USDA Forest Service public recreation lands <https://www.fs.usda.gov/recmain/custer-gallatin/recreation>
 - Billings City Parks <https://www.billingsparks.org/park-finder/>
- NOTE - See <http://svc.mt.gov/msl/mtcadastral/> for Private, State and Federal Lands ownership Interactive Map.

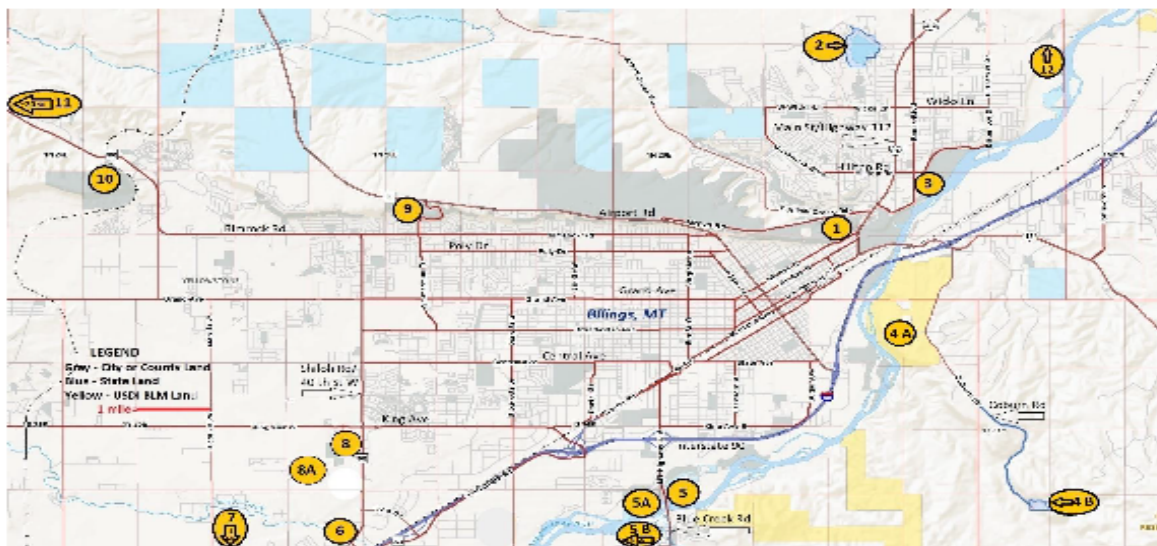
Interactive Web Sites & Eastern Montana Bird Observations:

- Cornell Lab of Ornithology eBird <https://ebird.org/explore>
 - Mt Natural Heritage Program <http://fieldguide.mt.gov/>
- More Information at <https://yvaudubon.org/>

Best wishes for excellent health, birding and recreation to you all.



Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society
Popular Birding Locations near Billings, Montana



Map Legend

- Swords Park
- Lake Elmo State Park
- Two Moon Park
- 4A. Four Dances Special Recreation Management Area
- 4B. Pictograph Cave State Park
- Riverfront Park NE of YR Bridge
- 5A. Norms Island & MT Audubon Center NW of YR Bridge
- 5B. "Walkabout Park" MT DNRC Land SW of YR Bridge
- Zoo Montana
- 56th Street Ponds & 72nd Street Ponds Area
- Shiloh Conservation Area
- 48th Street Ponds
- Zimmerman Park
- Phipps Park
- Lake Basin US and MT Bird Management Areas (~30 miles NW of Billings)
- Dover Park

Regional Public Lands, Recreation & Birding Opportunities:

- MT Fish Wildlife & Parks recreation and Fishing Access Sites <http://fwp.mt.gov/recreation/visitFwpSite.html>
 - MT Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation (MT DNRC) public recreation regulations and lands <http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/trust/recreational-use-of-state-land>
 - USDI Bureau of Land Management public recreation lands <https://www.blm.gov/visit>
 - USDA Forest Service public recreation lands <https://www.fs.usda.gov/recmain/custer-gallatin/recreation>
 - Billings City Parks <https://www.billingsparks.org/park-finder/>
- NOTE - See <http://svc.mt.gov/msl/mtcadastral/> for Private, State and Federal Lands ownership Interactive Map.

Interactive Web Sites & Eastern Montana Bird Observations:

- Cornell Lab of Ornithology eBird <https://ebird.org/explore>
 - Cornell Lab of Ornithology eBird Yellowstone County <https://ebird.org/region/US-MT-111/hotspots?yr=all&m=>
 - Mt Natural Heritage Program <http://fieldguide.mt.gov/>
- More Information at <https://yvaudubon.org/>

A Look Back on Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society*Submitted by Deb Regele*

When YVAS was first formed in 1953, it was originally named the Billings Audubon Society. The first meeting was organized by Professor William Hoheisel at Eastern Normal College, now Montana State University at Billings, with 150 people in attendance. They elected Carson E. Bechtel, President; Theodore A. Topper, Vice President; Miss Winifred Stull, Secretary; and Dr. Raymond E. Smalley, Treasurer.

This new Chapter was made up of a very committed and active group of pioneers. Bird trips and monthly programs were popular then just as they are today. 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.

Records show that the Billings Audubon Society first participated in the Christmas Bird Count on December 29, 1953, recording 2,500 birds. The first Bulletin for the Billings Audubon Society was issued in October 1970 by Billie Hicks who was then President and served 5 terms. Today the newsletter is called the *Flyer*.

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. This was officially recorded in early 1976 as Helen Carlson took over the leadership and YVAS has continued in its mission "to promote enjoyment and protection of the natural environment through education, activism, and conservation of bird habitat."

Archived records originally kept at the Billings Parmlly Library are now kept at Rocky Mountain College's library.

Over the last 67 years, YVAS has been fortunate to have had a very supportive membership including countless members with strong interests in birding and bird data, conservation of habitat, activism, education for all ages, and most of all, in having fun.

The current president of YVAS, Steve Regele, has kept the Chapter not only on course since 2013, but kept the momentum going. Other past presidents of YVAS include but are not limited to:

Bill DeMeyer	Robert Lubbers	Helen Carlson Cummins
Ruth Vanderhorst	Paul Hickman	Bebe Gitzgerald
Kayhan Ostovar	Barbara Jaquith	Billie Hicks
Georgia Frazier	Virginia Atkins	Theodora Smith
Kathy Haigh	John Bross	Don McDonald
Carson E. Bechtel		

Many thanks to Ruth Vanderhorst, Helen Carlson Cummins, Robert Lubbers, and George and Bernie Mowat for playing the memory game, "Who Can Name the Most YVAS Past Presidents."

Much of the YVAS history was adapted from archived material I had on hand. The RMC library is currently closed due to Covid-19.

Twine Collection & Recycling Site

Summer hours at the Twine Collection & Recycling Site will begin in June, not May as scheduled, due to Covid-19. The TCRS will be operating under the winter schedule in May. During this time, twine donors can leave a message at 406-591-8606 and we will return the call to arrange a date and time for the delivery. We will be open for general twine deliveries beginning Friday, June 12th and Saturday, June 13th. Check the YVAS website for additional updates.

Summer hours will be in effect from June to October, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., the second and fourth consecutive Friday/Saturday of each month.

Additional TCRS information can be found on the YVAS website (yvaudubon.org) under Projects. For additional information or if you would like to volunteer, contact Deb (debregale@gmail.com or 406-962-3115) or Doreen (rdzlhman@bresnan.net or 406-697-0277).

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 MAY. 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 questions.

MAY Renewals: Marco Restani and Deborah Drain.

APRIL (outstanding) Renewals: Angus & Margie Fulton, Judy Weddel, and Kristie Kristie.



Find Your Favorite Hot Spot

Submitted by Pam Pipal

It's never too late to hone your birding skills, and concentrating on a single favorite place to bird may just be what you need to do that. This may be your own back yard, or someplace else close to home; a little park, or a pond that you pass in your normal routine, either by driving by, or walking by; or somewhere near your place of work that you can visit before work or on your lunch break.

One student of Helen Carlson Cummins, our teacher of birding classes for nearly 40 years, began using Two Moon Park in Billings, MT, to expand his birding skills. Starting early in the year, as each new species would come to Two Moon, either by sight or sound, the student would learn each new bird.

A couple of local birders sometimes go to Mountview Cemetery as one of their hot spots around Billings. With its variety of established trees, and open areas, a wide variety of species can be seen. (E-bird shows 47 species and 33 check-lists for all years of record for this Hot Spot.)

My personal favorite is Lake Elmo. There I can walk my dogs, monitor the Osprey nest for our Osprey Project, and enjoy the birds of the day. Today (April 22) I found 17 species, including (drum roll please) Yellow-headed Blackbirds! (My target bird today, the Osprey, was nowhere to be seen.) I keep a log of species I see there and can look back over the years (since my first year of birding, 2013) to see when I first saw what. The earliest I saw a Red-winged Blackbird there was March 3 (2016). Soon I'll be looking for Yellow-Rumped Warblers!

In summary, don't let your day go by without enjoying the birds around you. They bring a peerless dimension of joy to life!



Blue Jay, at left, from *Dorothy Bartlett's* yard in Laurel, MT. Arm chair birding isn't too bad at their home.

Mountain Bluebird, at right, from *Will Crain* on a recent outing he and Mike Weber covered some ground searching for birds around Billings and Broadview.



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

PayPal option is also available for renewing or joining YVAS. It can be found on the YVAS Website under Memberships.





**YELLOWSTONE VALLEY
AUDUBON FLYER**

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

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

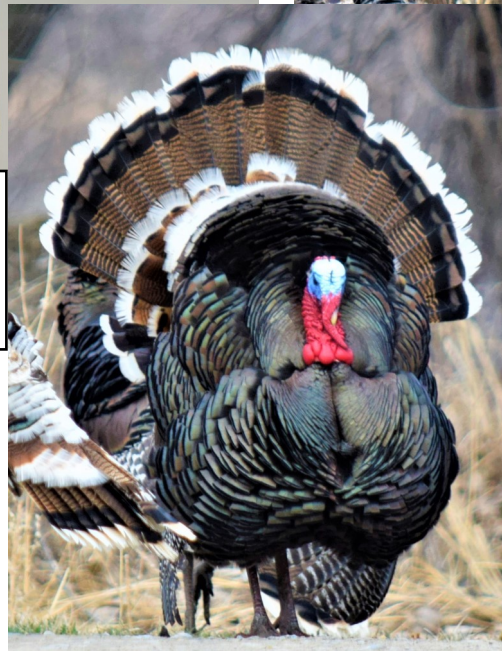
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PERMIT NO. 27



Ring-necked Pheasant that frequents the ground beneath the feeders at *Dorothy Bartlett's* home in Laurel. Thanks for sharing this great photograph!



Above: Deb Regele's daughter, *Joselyn Overby* took this photo of some squirrels who have taken over her backyard American Kestrel nesting box. It is too cute to not pass along in Flyer!



These spectacular photographs of **Wild Turkey's** were taken by *Will Crain* on a recent birding trip with Mike Weber around Billings and Broadview. Will reminds us that this variety of Wild Turkey is a Merriam subspecies.

Thank you for your contribution.