

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 6

JUNE/JULY 2020

Submitted by the YVAS Board of Directors:

Bon Voyage Carolyn Sevier!

Carolyn Sevier, *Director of the Montana Audubon Center* in Billings resigned from that position in May. Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society is sorry to see her go. Her accomplishments are impressive. We will certainly miss her leadership,

YVAS Board of Directors – Retirements

After serving on the Board since 2011, both Dorothy and Donn Bartlett made the decision to retire. For 9 years, both Dorothy and Donn generously shared with members and the Board their time, patience, sense of humor, opinions, and knowledge of birds – and a whole lot more! Dorothy served as Secretary for many years and was involved with special assignments and committees. Donn also was involved with special assignments and has served as the Field Trip Chair, a role that he takes seriously and will continue with even though he stepped off the Board. Donn, along with Dorothy, participated in the majority of trips to ensure all went well and birders and caravans stayed safe. Dear Dorothy and Donn – thank you both for all you have done and the positive impact you have made to Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society and our members. The Board will miss you both; but we are glad you both will continue to volunteer and remain active members.

The Flyer Editor(s)

Trenay Hart, who has served as the Editor, made the decision to step away from those duties. Over 5 years ago, Trenay graciously volunteered to take on the role and learn the editing software needed to produce *The Flyer*. She consistently ensured *The Flyer* was timely shared and contained interesting and accurate information. Thank you Trenay for your time and work.

A big welcome and thank you to our new Editor - Teresa Henderson! Teresa did not hesitate when asked if she was interested in becoming the Editor. Her prior editing experience and expertise in birding makes her an excellent choice. Trenay and Teresa have been working together to ensure a smooth transition; the Board appreciates their efforts.

YVAS Public Programs

All **YVAS Public Programs** 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, Sept 10th, 2020 at 4:00pm: Board of Directors Meeting

Monday, Sept 17, 2020 at 7:00pm: YVAS Public Program Series

The Board invites everyone for cookies and coffee at 6:30pm prior to the Public Program. Please contact Sue Weinreis at 855-4181 [the Friday prior to the Public Program](#) if you would like to contribute cookies or bars.

☞ We're on the web! yvaudubon.org

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

Although we are moving to "Phase 2" due to Covid-19, YVAS has decided to SUSPEND all birding trips until further notice. We do, however urge everyone to bird on their own or with others while adhering to the pandemic requirements. If you have any questions or comments, please let me know. Here's to good birding and good weather!

Donn Bartlett
406.812.1008
406.598.3689



BOARD OF DIRECTORS UPDATE/NOTICES

Public Program Series and Board of Directors meetings are held September through May at Mayflower Congregational Church, corner of Poly and Rehberg, Billings, MT.

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

Board of Directors meetings are held the second Monday of each month at 4:00pm. Board meetings are open to all members.

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society Officers:

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

Vice-President: Steve Linder, 380-0073,

becon1@bresnan.net

Secretary: Sue Weinreis: 855-4181,

granpeak47@gmail.com

Treasurer: Pam Pipal, 245-4517, ppipal@charter.net

Board of Directors:

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

Carolyn Jones: 670-4449, carolyn684@gmail.com

Steve McConnell: 661-0422, mcconnells@ci.billings.mt.us

Sheila McKay: 652-7175, 694-7918, wjhbird@yahoo.com

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

Sue Weinreis: 855-4181, granpeak47@gmail.com

(Phone numbers are Area code 406.)

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: Teresa Henderson, yvasflyer@gmail.com,
337-263-7985

Injured Raptors: Montana Raptor Conservation Center, 585-1211

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

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

Osprey Research: 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

Clark's Fork Waterfowl Production Area News

Submitted by Steve Regele



Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society submitted an application in April for funding a shelter, benches and some trail work at the Clark's Fork Waterfowl Production (CF WPA) area north of Bridger, MT. The application was to the Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks "Watchable Wildlife" grant program. That proposal was approved!

The work will be done in July or August and will be a cooperative effort between YVAS, MT FWP and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Project will improve bird and wildlife viewing and other recreational access and opportunities at the CF WPA. It will also enhance educational opportunities and access for persons with limited mobility.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service web site says:

"The Clark's Fork WPA is a 271-acre tract of land located along the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone River. This WPA has 1.5 miles of river frontage. After acquiring the tract through the Farmer's Home Administration, the Service coordinated a wetland creation project with Ducks Unlimited and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. The wetland is 66 acres in size and is surrounded by excellent dense nesting cover (a mixture of grasses and legumes which supply cover for nesting female ducks). The narrowleaf cottonwood/redosier dogwood community type along the river attracts a wide diversity of wildlife providing excellent observation opportunities. Waterfowl, upland game birds (sharp-tailed grouse and pheasants), white-tailed deer, and numerous other non-game species can be observed either year-round or seasonally. Unusual species documented on this WPA include – a nesting pair of greater sandhill cranes, a bull moose, a black bear that fed on carp for two-weeks in the river, trumpeter swans (likely from Yellowstone National Park), and a greater egret. Access into the WPA is by foot only."

YVAS did some trail work at the CF WPA in 2015. That work and this 2020 effort promotes ease of access and enjoyment at this special area.

Twine Collection & Recycling Site

Summer hours at the Twine Collection & Recycling Site will begin in June. 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 (debregele@gmail.com or 406-962-3115) or Doreen (rdzlhman@bresnan.net or 406-697-0277).

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

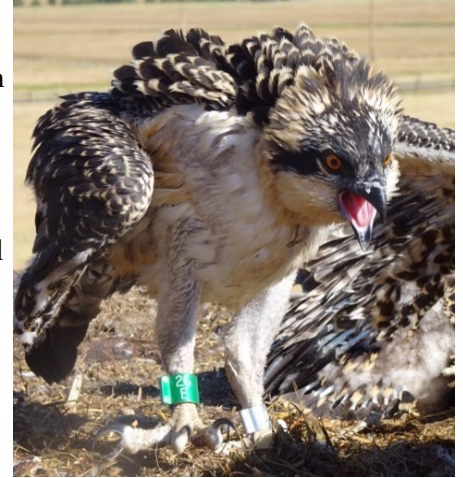
Osprey Nest Monitor's Observation from the Ball Park in Livingston

Submitted by Deb Regele

“As I approached the nest area, the male was at his usual spot on a light pole with a fish. Suddenly the fish fell to the ground. When I arrived, the osprey was moving around, appearing to find little pieces to scarf up while looking down at the fish below. Then he flew off to the nest, stood on the edge and had a heated conversation with his mate, then took off for the river. In his absence I walked a little closer to look. Two magpies were trying to eat off the fish, which was lying in the grass by a shed, a netted area, the pole, and a fence. No room there for an osprey's wide wingspan. A raven appeared, chased off the magpies, and tried to move the fish. The osprey wasn't having it and swooped as close he could, the raven took off, and a high-speed chase ensued! It was glorious to watch! The raven finally returned, and after a huge struggle, flew up to the low fence nearby with the fish. Instead of the usual whitefish, this was a huge rainbow trout. No wonder it had slipped out of his grasp! The raven began to eat, and the osprey swooped over him again. The fish fell to the other, more open side of the fence, but the osprey still couldn't get to it. Another chase! Finally the raven was able to get down to the ground, grab the fish, and take off, osprey in hot pursuit. Go, osprey! Raven and fish disappeared from my view, and osprey gave it up. He didn't seem inclined to go fishing again, so I left. I was worn out.

I know this is long, but believe it or not, I left out many details! The next day the osprey was back on the same pole, again eating. This time it was back to whitefish and no raven.”

Edie Linneweber
May 16, 2020

**Ospreys and Utility Poles**

Submitted by Deb Regele

Spring 2020 like most springs, saw a number of Ospreys along the Yellowstone River displaced from their nests by Canadian Geese and an occasional Bald Eagle or Red-tailed Hawk. When this happens, Ospreys need to find a new site to build their nests. Unfortunately, they tend to prefer utility poles that resemble their beloved, but scarce, tree snags. And probably to the “delight” of Ospreys, these poles are conveniently located all along the Yellowstone River as well as other rivers throughout the United States.

To alleviate the nesting of Ospreys on these active utility poles, many utility companies have installed baffles on the problem poles, while at the same time installing nesting platforms nearby. Utility companies are able to provide a limited number of platforms annually. Since each platform costs \$2,000, these sites are carefully evaluated.



This spring Northwestern Energy (NWE) had four ongoing problem areas along the Yellowstone River. NWE covered the cost of three nesting platforms and Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society paid for the fourth. The new sites are located as follows: near mile marker 348 on the north side of I-90 between Springdale and Livingston, near Figgins Circle in Laurel south off Old Hwy 10 (YVAS funded),

near Woods Power Grip in Laurel south off Old Hwy 10, and near the Billings Treatment Plant at the Lockwood Bridge.

As birders, we all know that Ospreys nesting on active utility poles create unsafe situations with the sticks and baling twine that dangle off the nests. This is not only dangerous for the Ospreys, but for utility companies, people that depend on electricity, and the fire departments that put fires out.

YVAS sends a heart-felt thank you to all who donated to the YVAS' Osprey Project and the Osprey Rescue Funds over the last several years including Osprey nest monitors, property owners, and YVAS members. Your generosity has made a difference!

And a big thank you Northwestern Energy for your generous donations of time, equipment and supplies to help protect Ospreys. Your generosity continues to make a difference too!

A Win for Sage-Grouse – A Win for Montana!

Montana Audubon Press Release May 27, 2020

Montanans know what's best for Montana, and we want a balance between natural resource conservation and responsible development.

In this spirit, many people came to the table to develop the Bureau of Land Management's 2015 Sage-Grouse plan, which resulted from a historic effort based on consensus, sound science, and common sense, and protected critical Greater Sage-Grouse habitat on public lands. A diversity of representatives formulated the plan, including conservationists, sportsmen, government officials, ranchers, and energy industry leaders.

We had a deal. A good deal forged by local communities.

But then, in December, 2017, the Trump administration reversed the plan's Sage-Grouse protections by allowing millions of acres of oil and gas leasing in sensitive Sage-Grouse habitat.



So, action was necessary.

Montana Audubon has a long-established interest in the conservation of Sage-Grouse and sagebrush habitat, which is one of the most imperiled ecosystem types in the West. We were at the table 5 years ago to help develop the Sage-Grouse conservation plans. We believed so strongly in the results, we joined forces with like-minded organizations, as one of five plaintiffs, to fight for the Sage-Grouse protections agreed upon by Montanans. A lawsuit against this administration's policies was filed by Earthjustice on behalf of Montana Audubon, National Audubon Society, Montana Wildlife Federation, National Wildlife Federation, and The Wilderness Society.

On Friday, the U.S. District Court in Great Falls nullified 440 oil and gas leases, covering approximately 525 square miles, thereby restoring the original deal, protection of sensitive Sage-Grouse habitat on public lands.

Executive Director, Larry Berrin, said, "For more than 40 years, Montana Audubon has been protecting birds and vital habitats in our state, and though we never had done it through litigation, this was one case we just couldn't ignore. Joining forces on this effort was our way of saying 'we had a deal and the federal government cannot just bulldoze their way through years of hard work and consensus building by the people who know these lands the best.' We hope this win for Montana today sets precedence and is therefore a win for the West tomorrow."

Greater Sage-Grouse Photo by Bob Martinka

Click here for the Associated Press article on the ruling: <https://apnews.com/caec0705148c3a9c2299f99c01fe1c4>

For information on the iconic Greater Sage-Grouse, click here: <https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/greater-sage-grouse>

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society helped National Audubon Society secure legal standing to proceed with the lawsuit against the Bureau of Land Management.

Other Flyers...

Submitted by Steve Regele



Like all other living things bats have to deal with many problems - harsh weather and climate change, pesticides, loss of habitat etc. But on top of all that, bats are suffering from a devastating disease.

The U.S. G. S. National Wildlife Health Center says: *“White-nose syndrome (WNS) is an emergent disease of hibernating bats that has spread from the northeastern across United States at an alarming rate. Since the winter of 2007-2008, millions of insect-eating bats in 34 states and seven Canadian provinces (as of March 2020) have died from this devastating disease. ...*

*Bat population declines are expected to have substantial impacts on the environment and agriculture. Bats eat insects that damage crops and spread disease. Consumption of insects by bats saves farmers billions of dollars in pest control services annually. White-nose syndrome is caused by a fungus, *Pseudogymnoascus destructans*, that infects skin of the muzzle, ears, and wings of hibernating bats. Field signs of WNS can include excessive or unexplained mortality at a hibernaculum; visible white fungal growth on the muzzle or wings of live or freshly dead bats; abnormal daytime activity during winter months or movement toward hibernacula openings; and severe wing damage in bats that have recently emerged from hibernation. Infected bats experience a cascade of physiologic changes that result in weight loss, dehydration, electrolyte imbalances, and death.”*

Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP) and other agencies and groups are trying hard to find out more about the disease, its spread and possible treatments.

Megan O'Reilly of FWP says: *“Our ability to sample bats, in Montana, for white nose syndrome has been greatly reduced because of COVID. We have (very recently) been given directive, that we could sample bat guano, in open areas (under occupied bat houses, bridges, pole barns, etc.). We would be visiting the identified areas ASAP, placing a tarp below to ensure fresh samples and then visiting once a week until mid-June to collect the samples, with a final collection after the 28 day period. Volunteers would be welcomed in these open spaces and assistance in this sampling would be gratefully accepted.*

Most importantly, please let me know where you think we have a good chance of sampling approximately 20 bats. If interested in the work or if you have information about places frequented by bats, please contact me directly!

Thanks,

Megan O'Reilly - 406-794-6154”

P.S. YVAS wrote a letter of support for a FWP Grant proposal to Montana Audubon's "Wildlife Fund of Montana" Grant for partial funding of an "Alpha-batz" educational trunk. This trunk would be full of educational tools about bats - similar to the "Educational Bird Trunks" that FWP has used in a couple YVAS Programs and elsewhere. The "Alpha-batz" grant was approved on May 21, 2020. Congratulations to Megan and FWP! We look forward to seeing that put into use.

Do Birds Threaten Game Fish Populations?

Submitted by Pam Pipal

The May-June 2020 Montana Outdoors magazine addresses the concern of fish population watchers that winged piscivores are causing a decline in game fish populations. Among major suspects from here in Montana, the Great American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, and Osprey were addressed.

In a couple of studies cited for Pelicans, the one study in Montana found one trout and mostly carp and crayfish in the stomach contents of 12 Pelicans, and the other study in Wyoming found 77 percent of Pelicans' diet to be mostly of common carp and white suckers, but also containing Iowa Darters, tiger salamanders, crayfish, and fathead minnows.

Double-crested Cormorants were found to be even less of a threat, eating smaller nongame species like stonecats, rather than trout. It was stated that Osprey take mostly trout, but "remove only a tiny percentage from a population and have no effect on recreational angling."

In general, it was found that fish-eating birds are not a threat to game fish populations in that they eat mostly species other than trout and other game fish.

RENEWALS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chapter members listed below are up for renewal. 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. Contact the Data Base Administrator: Peter Cummins at membership.data@yvaudubon.org with any questions.

May renewals: Deborah Drain

June renewals: Vonnie Anderson, Jean Boone, Rita Cetrone, Nancy and Dale Detrick, Brenda Dunham, James King, Brenna Molney. George & Bernie Mowat, Jim & Jean Sells

July renewals: Grace Blair, Trenay Hart, Donna Lance



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?

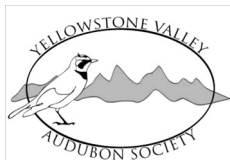
☐ YES ☐ NO

Send this application and your check to:
Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society

P.O. Box 1075

Billings, MT 59103-1075





**YELLOWSTONE VALLEY
AUDUBON FLYER**

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Red-necked Grebe



Photo by Robert Hill

American Avocet



Photo by Will Crain

Dark-eyed Junco (Gray headed)



Photo by Brian Henderson

Burrowing Owl



Photo by Will Crain