



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.

MAY 2021

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Travels of Avery- Osprey banded in 2016

In 2020 I received a call from Jeff Reed, son of Pete Reed (Nest #138.1). Jeff related the following:

"I love nature. I'm a technology engineer thinking about and designing ways to monitor wildlife populations. My dad loves ospreys. So I did a search one day to see who was tracking ospreys and Google led me to the MPG Ranch, which has one of the best public-facing websites on their landscape."

I checked out the MPG web site and found that they banded other birds as well. They have a very interesting site that includes flora and fauna from the Western Montana area...check it out: <https://raptortracker.mpg ranch.com/#/ospreys>

Robert Domenech, of the MPG Ranch, related that Avery was banded in 2016 and when she flew South she ended up near Veracruz, Mexico, and has returned to that same location each winter since. On her return trips, she has always made a stop at her natal nest near Missoula and then flown on East to the Paradise Valley.

I have wondered just how many miles these birds fly per day during a migration, thinking that they were goal-oriented and were heading for their natal nest area or where they might have established a nest. Well, just look at the track that Avery took in 2021 - pretty much up the Central Rocky Mountain Flyway. She had layovers several times along the way...weather...good fishing...a good rest...might be reasons for the longer stops. And, interestingly, took a longer route to visit her natal nest site near Missoula before continuing to the Big Creek nest in Paradise Valley.

This year the nest at Big Creek was occupied by a new pair of osprey prior to Avery's arrival on the 19th of April. One of the osprey was banded but I was unable to get a good view or image of the band. I thought that if Avery found the nest occupied she would find another nest site and perhaps not even in Paradise Valley.

I checked the Raptor Tracker on April 19, 2021 and it looked like Avery was back in the Valley. I loaded the car

and headed to the Big Creek nest site. Avery was eating a fish on the energized pole adjacent to the nest pole. She decided to hop over to the nest and I was able to snap a picture of the antennae and the band with the W-3 on it. Avery was back...and she must have informed the occupants of the nest that it was time for them to leave.

On April 20, 2021 at the Hwy 89 Rest Stop #134 Nest, the two resident osprey were in the air with another pair trying to take over the nest. After watching for 30 minutes or so the resident pair seemed to have won the right to continue to occupy their nest. So we are looking for an errant pair of osprey in search of a nest site at the moment.

Later on April 20 I was at Nest #133 on East River Road. The woman who lives across the street related that earlier in the day there were two osprey flying around the nest and

that the "residents" were in the air defending their nest. The #133 nest and the #134 nest across the Yellowstone River are perhaps a half mile apart and not far from the Big Creek Nest, #135. It seems that the new pair is challenging the existing pairs on the local nests. This extra dimension of a new pair of ospreys in the Paradise Valley apparently



Photo taken April '21 at Avery's nest site in Paradise Valley

trying to take over an existing occupied nest adds some drama to the unfolding pageant of life in the wild. Marco Restani, PhD, advised that it was unusual for a pair of ospreys to attempt to take over an existing occupied nest.

Meanwhile, Year 3 of Avery's life in Paradise Valley continues, pandemic or no. We gain a better understanding of how migratory birds travel and nest. Having the birds in our lives helps to keep us aware that all things are connected and by protecting the ospreys we help to protect the natural world.

From the Old Chico Ornithological Society,
Peter Murray

Updates on Avery's travels and the Osprey Telemetry Project can be found on the MPG website: <https://www.mpg ranch.com/research/2020-osprey-telemetry-project-update>

Exxon Ponds Saturday, April 24

First and foremost, we want to thank Ron and James from the Exxon Mobile Safety team for graciously giving up a Saturday morning to tour us around Exxon Ponds. Although, it is obvious that Ron loves birding as he brought his spotting scope, bird calls, and his daughter to explore. Of course, being the first official field trip since Covid-19 restrictions were eased, it took a bit of herding to get the dozen (or so) folks going on the walk as socializing was winning out. Dorothy Bartlett took the traditional group photo.

Ron had his spotting scope on a Cinnamon Teal right at the gate and lots of the participants got to fancy that while waiting for the RMC group to find their way to the Ponds. There were some new members who, on Steve Regele's advice, drove up from Red Lodge to get on this YVAS exclusive tour. They were fun and enjoyed learning some new species as they moved to Red Lodge from Naples, FL recently.



Trenay (the fill-in leader) thankfully brought her spotting scope as well and got the group on a few of the VERY ABUNDANT Song Sparrows that thrilled with front and back views while singing a repertoire of their spring time song. This was along the way to the ponds in the marshy areas. A Western Meadowlark delighted the crowd with song on a relatively high perch. Great views of its brilliant golden chest were taken advantage of though the scopes. Black-capped Chickadee, Red-winged Blackbird, Canada Geese, Downy Woodpecker, Black-billed Magpie, Tree Swallow, Killdeer, European Starling, Great Blue Heron, and a fly by Osprey with a fish in his talons provided a grand beginning to our species list. Once we got closer to the main ponds a Sandhill Crane was spotted but was a bit sulky. Trying to get a good look at it had the group stopped for a moment and that gave Jim Hansen the opportunity to tell us his tales about Sandhill Cranes duet song that he believed was likely part of

their mating ritual. Ring-necked Pheasant rooster calls were heard and we flushed a hen. Ron and Trenay flushed a Wilson's Snipe, darn-it no one else got to see it.

Ron and James provided a "bridge" of boards for us to use to cross over some rerouted runoff, gaining us close access to the Ponds. Trenay remarked that it was much like birding in developing countries, you get out there and make things work. Ron had nicely cleared the path back into the Ponds walking through a tunnel of Russian Olive trees was magical and likened to an enchanted forest. The Wood Ducks were right where they always are at the far end of the first Pond, Ron looked relieved when they were finally spotted. We tried and tried to call in a Marsh Wren but regretfully we never really heard one let alone saw one. Numerous Eared Grebe were on the Ponds. Other waterfowl included: Mallard, Gadwall, Northern Shoveler, Double-crested Cormorant, Lesser Scaup, and American Coots were on the Ponds. The most interesting sighting there was the solo Western Grebe. One Red-tailed Hawk followed along enough for all to view.

We made our way towards the Yellowstone River with lots of chatting along the way as so many were catching up after not spending time with more than 3 people over the last year. Once at the river we gained an American Wigeon and learned from Jim (he is by trade a waterfowl expert) that it was once called Bald Pate but that changed in 1976 to its current name. 8 Wood Duck drakes were sunning themselves on the opposite bank and a lone Green-winged Teal floated in the river. A solo Bald Eagle soared overhead but none were in the large eagle's nest across the river.

As we started our walk back towards the gate, we were dazzled by a Common Tern flying at eye level down the center of the river, it was very cool. Lastly, Ron spotted a Northern Harrier to round out the species total for the day at 33.

Submitted by Trenay Hart



Wings Across the Big Sky Registration Now Open

This year's festival will be a combination of regional field trips and virtual/online workshops. A total of 17 field trips, scattered across the state, are scheduled for June 5th, 2021.

The price for the festival is \$55 and includes:

- ❖ Access to virtual workshops on backyard birding, rare bird hot spots, bird songs, and citizen science. Links to these workshops will be sent via email to all registered participants the week of June 1st and may be viewed at your convenience.
- ❖ One field trip of your choice with a Montana birding expert in the region of your choice. Select one field trip to attend on June 5th, rain or shine.
See field trip options, descriptions, and locations:
<https://wingsacrossthebigsky.regfox.com/wings-across-the-big-sky>
- ❖ A copy of the Montana Audubon Bird Guide to Familiar Species and other Montana Audubon goodies. You will receive these items from your field trip leader at the beginning of each field trip.

Submitted by Teresa Henderson

Georgia Frazier, sadly, passed away on March 27, 2021 after suffering a stroke. She had been an active member of YVAS for over 40 years & served in several roles in the Society.

She was: Vice-President 1980; President 1981-83, 2003; Conservation Committee Chair 1984-96; Birdathon, 1994-2002; Secretary, 2006; Treasurer, 2007-08.

In addition she was the small bird injury contact for several years in the 1990s.

Georgia loved birding and travelled to many states in the USA in pursuit of her hobby. One time she drove from Wisconsin to Southern Texas to bird with Helen and myself-very enjoyable trip.

She moved around quite a lot but eventually settled in Two Harbors, MN. In one of her last conversations with Helen she said she was planning to move to Illinois to be closer to her family.

Georgia said when she died she wanted to be cremated so her ashes would soar with the birds

Submitted by Peter Cummins

REGIONAL FIELD TRIPS

SATURDAY, JUNE 5, 2021

JOIN MONTANA AUDUBON FOR A UNIQUE FIELD TRIP IN YOUR AREA

- 1 American Prairie Reserve - PN Ranch
- 2 Moose Creek to Humbug Spines WSA
- 3 Larry Creek Bitterroot National Forest
- 4 Fergus County to Carroll Trail
- 5 Arold Lakes NWR and IBA
- 6 Brandy Ranch and Ovando Valley
- 7 Browns Lake and Upper Blackfoot Valley
- 8 Canyon Ferry WMA
- 9 Broadview Molt
- 10 Lee Metcalf NWR IBA
- 11 Bluewater Creek & Bridger Montana
- 12 Makoshikah State Park
- 13 Three Forks, Harrison Reservoir, Ennis Lake
- 14 Northeast Montana
- 15 East Glacier
- 16 Lower Flathead Valley
- 17 Pompeys Pillar



wings MONTANA AUDUBON
across the big sky

May Events at the Montana Audubon Center

Advance registration is required for all programs. Visit our website at mtaudubon.org/center for more info or to register. Current members of the Montana Audubon Center receive discounts on all of our programs! Become a member today by visiting our website.

❖ Bird Stroll: May 8 from 8:30 - 10am

Enjoy a morning stroll by the river and learn a few birds along the way. Great for beginning birders. Binoculars and guidebooks available to check out. Suggested donation \$10/adults, \$5/students, or free for members.

❖ Evening Walk with a Naturalist:

May 25 from 6:30 - 8pm

The weather is warming up, plants and animals are waking up, and we're ready to get outdoors exploring! Join us to make observations, follow our curiosity, and share naturalist knowledge with each other. Each month we'll explore a different natural area in and around Billings. This month we'll meet at Zimmerman Park, located on the Rims above Billings on Highway 3. This beautiful natural area is a county park with scenic views of the Yellowstone Valley, and winding paths through forest and prairie. Be prepared for more wildflowers in bloom this month!

Please bring a mask and any naturalist tools you like to use (binoculars, field guides, magnifying glasses, journals, etc.). We'll also have some equipment you can borrow. Suggested donation \$5-10/person.

Submitted by Heather Bilden

Please submit articles, notes, and photos that you would like to see in a YVAS Flyer newsletter on or before the 20th of the month preceding the month of preferred publication. This is your chance to use your writing and reporting skills! All contributions are appreciated.

YVAS Board of Directors Highlights April, 2021

- ❖ **Project Night Flight:** Mike Weber and two associates from the MPG Ranch updated the Board on Project Night Flight. Since 2017 Mike has been recording bird calls from his roof top as they fly over in the night during spring and fall migration. MPG Ranch then collects and processes Mike's data, as well as data from 50 other collection sites. The Billings data is especially critical because the bird calls from Billings, which is located in the Central Flyway, are much different from the bird calls recorded in the western part of Montana. MPG Ranch intends to provide a report on Project Night Flight that will be shared with YVAS members as well as the public. MPG Ranch articles on the results of some of the data can be found at <https://www.mpg ranch.com/dispatches/western-montana-migration-corridor-upland-sandpiper>
 - ❖ **Riverfront Park signs:** We're looking for a few good BIRDS (or TREES)! YVAS is working with Billings Parks to place two informational signs at Riverfront Park. Please contact any Board member if you have a suggestion about what birds or trees should be included on the signs.
 - ❖ **Please Sign the Petition!** The Miles City Hatchery piscivorous bird killings were made public in March with posts to the Osprey Google Group (OGG) followed by the YVAS/NAS Petition that was posted on National Audubon Society's Action Works Website. An article and the Petition were published in the April Flyer. The article also appeared in the Billings Gazette, Helena Independent Record, Missoulian, Butte Standard, Bozeman Chronicle, and Livingston Enterprise.
- The Petition now has over 1,000 signatures. Here is the link to read and sign this petition: <https://works.audubon.org/petition/shooting-native-piscivorous-birds-miles-city-montana-fish-hatchery> The petition can also be found on the YVAS Website and Facebook.
- ❖ **Training for Osprey Nest Monitors** was held April 17 at the Mayflower Congregational Church. Dr. Marco Restani gave a 2-hour presentation to 18 volunteer nest monitors. Welcome Back, Osprey!

Submitted by Sue Weinreis

Art and Opportunity: Barbara Garret Art Sale Proposal

Artist and YVAS member, Barbara Garrett, has generously offered to donate a portion of the sale of her paintings to YVAS supporters in a way that benefits the patron and YVAS. For all YVAS related sales, Barbara will donate 40% to YVAS in lieu of her gallery. If you are interested in seeing her original paintings and also in taking advantage of this opportunity to support YVAS contact Barbara: (406)601-1391 or garrettimpressionart@gmail.com



"American white pelicans" pastel 16"x20 \$395



"2021 Great blue heron" oil 11"x14" \$295



YVAS MEETINGS & PUBLIC PROGRAMS - September through May

Next Board of Directors Meeting: **May 10, 2021** —The YVAS meeting of the Board of Directors will be held from 4pm to 6pm. The Meeting will be held virtually by Zoom conference. Please notify Sue Weinreis if you would like to be included and she will send you an invitation to ZOOM with the Board.

Board of Directors meetings are held the second Monday of each month at 4:00pm. Board meetings are open to all members. YVAS Public Programs are suspended until further notice.

Board of Directors

President: Steve Regele 406-962-3115 smregele@gmail.com
 Vice President: Steve Linder 406-380-0073 becon1@bresnan.net
 Secretary: Sue Weinreis 406-855-4181 granpeak47@gmail.com
 Treasurer: Pam Pipal 406-245-4517 pppipal@charter.net

Board Members

Doreen Hartman 406-697-0277 rdzlhman@bresnan.net
 Robert Hill 406-252-4447 rehill49@gmail.com
 Carolyn Jones 406-670-4449 carolyn648@gmail.com
 Steve McConnell 406-661-0422 mcconnells@ci.billings.mt.us
 Sheila McKay 406-652-7175 wjhbird@yahoo.com
 Deb Regele 406-962-3115 debregele@gmail.com

Montana's Congressional Delegation to the US Congress:

Senator Steve Daines
 www.daines.senate.gov
 Billings: 406-245-6822 Wash DC: 202-224-2651

Senator Jon Tester
 www.testersenate.gov
 Billings: 406-252-0550 Wash DC: 202-224-2644

Representative Matt Rosendale
 https://rosendale.house.gov/contact
 Billings: 406-413-6720 Wash DC: 202-225-3211

Committees and Chairs

Bird Questions: Any Board of Directors or member
Birdathon: Ruth Vanderhorst 245-5118 erv132@charter.net
Christmas Bird Count: Jerry Dalton 656-3656 daltonlj@centurylink.net
Conservation Advisor: Steve Regele 962-3115 smregele@gmail.com
Facebook: Nancy Wiggins 839-4461 nwiggins83@gmail.com
Field Trip Chair: Donn Bartlett 812-1008 donnbartlett@msn.com
Flyer Editor: Teresa Henderson 337-263-7985 yvasflyer@gmail.com
Injured Raptors: Montana Raptor Conservation Center 406-585-1211
Injured Waterfowl: WJH Bird Resources: 652-7175 wjhbird@yahoo.com
Membership Data Admin: Peter Cummins 248-8684
 membership.data@yvaudubon.org
Mt Blue Bird Habitat Project: Carolyn Jones 670-4449 carolyn684@gmail.com
 Sue Weinreis 855-4182 granpeak47@gmail.com
Osprey Project Nest Monitor Coordinator: Deb Regele 962-3115
 debregele@gmail.com
Osprey Project Research Coordinator: Marco Restani 425-2608
 restani@stcloudstate.edu
Twine Recycling Project: Deb Regele: 962-3115 debregele@gmail.com
 Doreen Hartman 697-0277 rdzlhman@bresnan.net
Program Committee: Steve Regele 962-3115 smregele@gmail.com
Publicity: Steve Regele 962-3115 smregele@gmail.com
Recycling (aluminum): Larry Handsaker 855-9832918 Avenue C, Billings
Recycling (baling twine): Deb Regele 962-3115 debregele@gmail.com
 Doreen Hartman 697-0277 rdzlhman@bresnan.net
Website: Deb Regele 962-3115 debregele@gmail.com

Membership Updates

Chapter members listed below are up for renewal. Please use the application form below (include your email address) and submit, along with a check, to any Board Member or mail it to the address on the application.

- ✧ May renewals: Deborah Drain, Johna Jablonski, Marco Restani, Jack & Carol Sterling
- ✧ April outstanding: Kristie Decker, Gordon & Susan Hills, Judi Knapp, Judy Weddel

Contact the Data Base Administrator: Peter Cummins at membership.data@yvaudubon.org with any questions.

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

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**

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

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-Profit Organization
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Top right: Merriam's Turkey at East Rosebud April 2021 -
Teresa Henderson

Bottom right: Double-crested Cormorants at Exxon
ponds April 2021 - Jenny Koffler

Below: charging Sandhill Crane at East Rosebud April
2021 - Teresa Henderson

