



*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.*

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### **2021 Billings Christmas Bird Count**

Save Saturday, December 18, 2021, on your calendar for the Billings 2021 Christmas Bird Count (CBC). The Billings CBC area is a circle of 7.5 mile radius centered on the Billings Exxon Refinery. The extent of the circle area reaches the Huntley bridge across the Yellowstone River on HWY 312, six miles north of HWY 312 on HWY 87 N, the east edge of Zimmerman Park, Rehberg and Grand, King Ave West and South 24th St West, ¼ mile West of Norm Schoenthal's Island, Blue Creek Road at Briarwood Golf Club, HWY 87 S at Pryor Road, I-90 at Pryor Creek Road, and back to Huntley, including Lockwood, Billings Heights, and the close in part of west Billings.

Like last year, Covid once again presents challenges and limitations. Please complete your vaccination for Covid by December 4, two weeks in advance. The rules from National Audubon Society include no indoor meetings, so there will not be a restaurant breakfast, and no compiling meeting at the end of the day. Carpool only with people you know to be vaccinated. Wear a mask whenever you are less than six feet from anyone.

Each person will be assigned to an area with specific boundaries by the count organizer/compiler. Maps and recording sheets will be distributed in advance to a group leader for each area. Contact information will be shared so each area's birders can plan meeting areas in advance. Please return results of the count to the compiler at the end of count day or as soon as possible afterward.

More feeder watchers are also needed on count day, December 18. Birders anywhere in the count circle can tally and report the species and numbers of birds they see at their feeders and/or from their home. Only six feeder watchers participated last year. They added at least one species to the count total. Many more feeder watchers would be welcome.

Please contact one of the count organizers well before December 18. Let them know you want to help.

Lois Dalton, feeder watcher organizer, 406 656-3656

Jerry Dalton, Billings CBC circle organizer, 406 656-3656

*Submitted by Jerry Dalton*

### **Twine Collection Horse Trailer Needed**

PAYS (Public Auction Yard Sales) has been contributing to the Twine Collection & Recycling Site (TCRS) by placing their used twine in a 4-horse trailer provided by YVAS. Last year it was towed and emptied at the TCRS two times!

We would like to place a similar horse trailer at Billings Livestock Commission Sales, however, another horse trailer is needed. If you or someone you know has a 4-horse trailer in decent condition with a bumper hitch, safe tires and tail lights that would be willing to loan it for this purpose, call Steve or Deb at 406-962-3115.



VISIT THE YVAS WEBSITE AT: [YVAUDUBON.ORG](http://YVAUDUBON.ORG)

YVAS ON FACEBOOK: [FACEBOOK.COM/YVAUDUBON](https://www.facebook.com/YVAUDUBON)

### A Tale of a Mountain Bluebird Trail

Carolyn Jones and I monitored the Mountain Bluebird Trail at Phipps Park during the 2021 season. We began April 4, slipping up and sliding down the icy road to the top of Phipps Park, and we trudged up for our last monitoring trip on July 23 in 93-degree heat. On each visit, we looked for the number of bluebirds in the vicinity of the nest boxes and photographed the interior of each box, so we have lots of photos of grass, feathers, eggs, nestlings, and, of course, POOP!

Four of the thirteen nest boxes were used by Mountain Bluebirds (MOBLs) this year, and together these four successful nests resulted in 17 eggs, which, in turn, resulted in 16 nestlings. (One egg did not hatch.) All sixteen nestlings appeared to fledge. Nine nest boxes housed American Tree Swallow (TRES) nests.

How did this hot, dry summer of 2021 compare to the past two summers? Unbelievably, no nestlings cooked in the (unshaded) boxes! Unbelievably, the two weary nest monitors were not cooked either. AND we are very happy to report that more bluebirds fledged this year than the past two years combined! In both 2019 and 2020, MOBLs nested in only ONE of the thirteen boxes. Fun Fact: both years the same box, Box #1 was used. In 2019, all the nestlings perished in the nest. In 2020, five nestlings fledged.

Another Fun Fact: the four nest boxes had very divergent hatch and fledge dates. In late June, we found that one box had already fledged, another box had large nestlings, the third box had tiny nestlings and the fourth box contained 5 newly laid eggs.

Recently, we struggled up to Phipps Park one last time on an unseasonably warm 91-degree day in mid-September to perform our yearly nest-cleaning ablutions. Ugh, ugh, ugh. (Here you have permission to quit reading if you are at all squeamish.) Wearing gloves and masks, the old mite-ridden nests were discarded. Then, taking care to stand up-wind, we set to work, one scraping out the caked-on poop with a putty knife, the other spraying down every inch of the interior with a vinegar water solution. Then both of us used a scrub brush and a toothbrush to thoroughly clean every nook of the box. Another quick rinse of vinegar water. One done, repeat twelve times.

Not-So-Fun Fact: Tree Swallows are PIGS, I mean, BIRDS, that are terrible housekeepers! As my dear old mum used to say, "Were you raised in a BARN?" (This is a joke only birders who know their swallows will get). Bluebirds = dainty, clean nests, a few small, fluffy feathers. Tree swallows = huge, feather-stuffed nests loaded with excrement.

A few reports, an article or two, and finally, we can put "PAID" to a successful MOBL monitoring season. A huge THANK YOU! goes out to Jim Wiggins, who helped with the maintenance of the boxes early this spring, sanding, reinforcing, and tightening. We very much appreciate his assistance.

Do you LOVE Mountain Bluebirds? Do you want to learn more? The North American Bluebird Society has a wonderful website [www.nabluebirdsociety.org](http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org) that is a wealth of information with printable PDF fact sheets on bluebirds and many educational and research topics that concern bluebirds and other cavity nesters.

*Submitted by Sue Weinreis*

### ***Do Your Litter Bit!*** Yellowstone Valley

Audubon Society continues to **collect and recycle aluminum cans**, a project begun some decades ago. YVAS member Larry Handsaker has been accepting the cans from YVAS-ers and others for many of those years. He reminds us all that he is glad to take your deliveries or even arrange to pick up your aluminum. You can deliver your aluminum to Larry at 918 Ave. C, Billings or call him at 406-855-9832 for assistance in getting your aluminum to him. **Recycle! It's the right thing to do!**



Photo by Stan Heath of Red-throated Loon on Cooney Reservoir

## YVAS MEETINGS & PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Next Board of Directors Meeting: December 13, 2021 - The YVAS meeting of the Board of Directors will be held from 4pm to 6pm. The meeting will be held via Zoom. Board of Directors meetings are held the second Monday of the month. Board meetings are open to all members. YVAS members can contact any Board member about attending virtually during the Covid pandemic.

Next Public Program: No scheduled program for November or December due to the Covid pandemic situation. YVAS Public Programs are otherwise held the third Monday of the month, September through May. Doors open at 6:30pm; program begins at 7pm.

All meetings (other than Covid restricted) are held at the Mayflower Congregational Church, corner of Rehberg Lane and Poly Drive, Billings, MT.

### 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. Contact the Data Base Administrator: Peter Cummins at [membership.data@yvaudubon.org](mailto:membership.data@yvaudubon.org) with any questions.

- ⇒ Nov renewal: Catharine Glennon, Robert & Carolyn Jones, Carl & Virginia Kimmel, DGM Steward, Susan Weinreis, Liz White
- ⇒ Dec renewal: Marlene & Robert Cushing, Mary Fitzpatrick, Larry C Newell, Susan Newell & Dick Walton, Roger Otstot, Barb Pitman, Hoyle & Jo Anne Setzer, Fran Garnett & Jim Snyder, Pat Sweeney, Michael Szczutkowski, Tom & Ruth Towe, Pat Vandell
- ⇒ Oct outstanding: Robin Manfredi

#### Board of Directors

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

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#### Montana's Congressional Delegation to the US Congress:

Senator Steve Daines  
[www.daines.senate.gov](http://www.daines.senate.gov)  
 Billings: 406-245-6822 Wash DC: 202-224-2651

Senator Jon Tester  
[www.testersenate.gov](http://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](mailto:erv132@charter.net)  
Christmas Bird Count: Jerry Dalton 656-3656 [daltonlj@centurylink.net](mailto:daltonlj@centurylink.net)  
Conservation Advisor: Steve Regele 962-3115 [smregele@gmail.com](mailto:smregele@gmail.com)  
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Injured Waterfowl: WJH Bird Resources: 652-7175 [wjhbird@yahoo.com](mailto:wjhbird@yahoo.com)  
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[restani@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:restani@stcloudstate.edu)  
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 Doreen Hartman 697-0277 [rdzlhman@bresnan.net](mailto:rdzlhman@bresnan.net)  
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Recycling (baling twine): Deb Regele 962-3115 [debregle@gmail.com](mailto:debregle@gmail.com)  
 Doreen Hartman 697-0277 [rdzlhman@bresnan.net](mailto:rdzlhman@bresnan.net)  
Website: Deb Regele 962-3115 [debregle@gmail.com](mailto:debregle@gmail.com)

### Upcoming Birding Field Trips:

December: Christmas Bird Count Jerry Dalton, Organizer

Jan 1, 2022 Sat: New Year's Day Annual Trip to Yellowtail Dam Afterbay, Brian Henderson, leader, Sack Lunch

Please check for updated/correct times and meeting places prior to field trip: Donn Bartlett [donnbartlett@msn.com](mailto:donnbartlett@msn.com)

**YELLOWSTONE VALLEY****AUDUBON FLYER**

P.O. Box 1075

Billings, MT 59103-1075

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Non-Profit Organization

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**NEW - Special Membership Rate When Renewing In Person**

Whether you are renewing or becoming a new supporting member of Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society, receive an individual or family membership for \$20 when you renew IN PERSON at a birding trip or other YVAS sponsored event. (Memberships renewed by mail remain at \$25. Student memberships are \$15.)

Checks can be made out to Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society or YVAS. However, be sure to complete and include the below membership application with your payment.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Do you want to receive the Flyer electronically?

☐ YES☐ NO**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 ☐ NOSend this application and your check to:  
Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society

P.O. Box 1075

Billings, MT 59103-1075

