

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.

FEBRUARY 2022

VOLUME 52, NUMBER 2

Montana State Parks

What do you know about Montana's 55 State Parks? For instance, did you know that Makoshika State Park outside of Glendive was recently named one of 10 of America's least known and under-appreciated State Parks by Outdoor Magazine? It was called one of the "most magnificent, unheralded parks across America" by Country Magazine.

President Teddy Roosevelt said of an area that later became another of Montana's State Parks, that it was "As fantastically beautiful a place as I have ever seen." This was Medicine Rocks State Park near Ekalaka.

Or take Smith River which is a destination for not only Montana residents but for people all across the United States. Once you launch your canoe or raft at Camp Baker near White Sulphur Springs, you have no civilization - no place for supplies or assistance other than what is in your and your travel companion's boat for at least 3 days until you reach Eden Bridge 59 miles downstream.

Or if you are a History Buff, spend some time at Granite Ghost Town near Phillipsburg which was once the home of the "richest silver mine on earth". Then learn what happened the day after the silver panic of 1893. It boasted 8200 people crowded into a mountain top 8,000 feet above sea level. Or walk the board walks of Bannack, Montana's first capitol, where one third of the city's 300 buildings are still there. It has been called the best ghost town in America.

Then there is Lewis and Clark Caverns, First People's Buffalo Jump, Giant Springs, Travelers' Rest, or my favorite spot in the whole State at the Marias River State Park - where the only real amenity, other than the road and parking lot, is a chair that sits on top of the highest point above the river. It is just like it was when Captain Lewis of the Lewis and Clark Expedition came down that river; there is absolutely no civilization in sight.

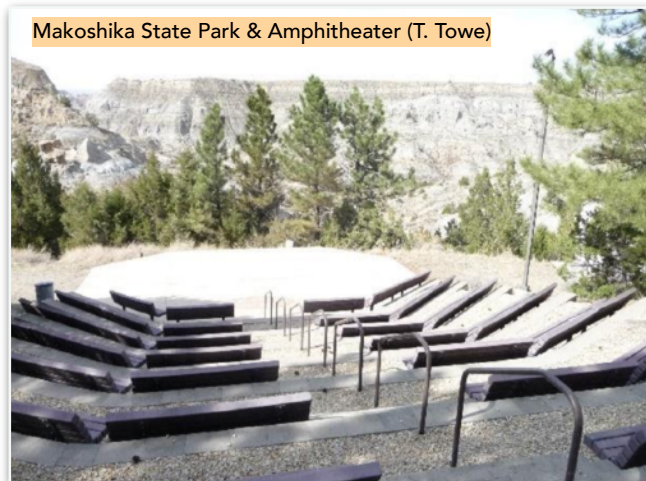
Montana's State Parks are more than just a side visit on the way to Yellowstone or Glacier National Parks. They are worthy of a visit in their own right. Many do have good locations for bird watching.

Listen to Our Montana's 9 half hour programs filmed by Channel 7 TV hosted by Mike Penfold. Mike interviews me on each of the 55 State Parks during which I have a chance to tell a little about each one and show some of my photographs of all 55 State Parks. The links to each of the 7 programs are below. They tend to focus on historical matters. Some of the great camp grounds and bird watching areas are also talked about.

Submitted by Tom Towe

Tom Towe is a former Montana State Senator, first Chairman of the Montana State Parks and Recreation Board, and retired Billings attorney.

Links to "Our Montana" State Parks programs are on page 2 of this flyer.



Makoshika State Park & Amphitheater (T. Towe)



Medicine Rock State Park (T. Towe)

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society (YVAS) Program Announcement:

We are again postponing YVAS 'live/in-person' Programs due to Covid circumstances in our area.

Billings Gazette, January 19, 2022:

"Over the last week Montana has averaged 1,343 new COVID cases per day, the highest daily average since the pandemic began." ...

"Yellowstone County ... With three data entry employees and other public health staff helping out, the number of COVID cases are piling on faster than the team is able to report.

Two indicators on the Yellowstone County COVID dashboard have been switched to red, indicating that active COVID cases in the region and the positivity rate are of critical concern."

YVAS, like everyone everywhere, looks forward to better Covid situations in the future. YVAS Programs are important and enjoyable, and we will again present them when in the best interest of the Society, presenters and audiences.

The 'pre-Covid' routine YVAS Program schedule is no longer a firm sideboard (i.e. conventionally "YVAS Public Programs are held the third Monday of the month, September through May"). Given peaks and troughs of Covid in MT, YVAS may decide to arrange and host Programs mid-summer.

Please continue to check in at the YVAS web site <https://yvaudubon.org/> and watch the Flyer for news and updates about future live Programs.



Submitted by Steve Regele, on behalf of the YVAS Board of Directors

Montana State Parks continued from page 1:

Tom Towe & "Our Montana" State Parks Programs on Community 7 TV

- ◆ #1 Makoshika, Medicine Rock, Marias River, Giant Springs, Hell Creek, Bush Lake
<https://cloud.castus.tv/vod/comm7tv/video/60ae84fdb20270008eb5075?page=HOME>
- ◆ #2 Lewis and Clark Caverns, Bannack, First People's Buffalo Jump, Lone Pine, and Traveler's Rest
<https://cloud.castus.tv/vod/comm7tv/video/60df50d694c877000a4990aa?page=HOME>
- ◆ #3 Traveler's Rest (continued), Granite Ghost Town, and Rosebud Battlefield
<https://cloud.castus.tv/vod/comm7tv/video/60f9e7d7c905cb0007f7c1c0?page=HOME>
- ◆ #4 Chief Plenty Coups, Pictograph Cave, Council Grove, and Fort Owen
<https://cloud.castus.tv/vod/comm7tv/video/612e9fd7036a330007f115fc?page=HOME>
- ◆ #5 Elkhorn, Missouri Headwaters, Sluice Boxes, Milltown, Anaconda Stack, Clark's Lookout, and Tower Rock
<https://cloud.castus.tv/vod/comm7tv/video/6167449fbb79a40008d77d9a?page=HOME>
- ◆ #6 Numerous State Parks special camping areas
<https://cloud.castus.tv/vod/comm7tv/video/61c25f457300890009f2b40b?page=HOME>
- ◆ #7 Flathead Lake, etc.
<https://cloud.castus.tv/vod/comm7tv/video/61c25f483969130008fe1d3b?page=HOME>

Additional Montana State Parks Information can be found on the MT Fish Wildlife and Parks website at <https://fwp.mt.gov/stateparks/find-a-park>

Project Night Flight

If you drove by my house during spring and fall bird migration and looked up on my roof, you would find a 3 gallon plastic bucket pointed to the sky. In the bucket there is a sensitive microphone which detects the nocturnal flight calls of migratory birds. A transmission line is run into my house from the microphone into a recording laptop. The laptop has bird recording software that is programmed to start recording from ½ hour before sunset to ½ hour after sunrise.

The recorded calls are laid down in a track called a spectrograph, which is a unique signature of a bird's flight call. Each individual call is captured in a call clip, like a snapshot in time of the bird's flight call. Usually there is only one bird call in each clip. But occasionally two birds call at the same time and you could have for example, a Wilson's warbler and a white-throated sparrow flying and calling over my house at the same moment. Each of their distinct spectrographs would be on the call clip. Call clips can be long or short depending on the species call. A long-billed curlew tremulous whistle may be a few seconds where an orange-crowned warbler calls a fraction of a second. On a busy spring night for example you may have 1500 songbird call clips of a dozen species and in mid October you may only have a handful of calls that may consist of two species such as American tree sparrow and a lapland longspur. Some nights in late fall you will have no calls.

The spring recording season goes from mid-April to mid-June and the fall recording season runs from late July to mid-November. About 90 percent of the night flight calls we record are passerines (songbirds). The bulk of spring passerine migration is May but it is not unusual to have a few laggards trickle through into mid June. The most common late migrant is the Swainson's Thrush. The peak of fall migration for passerines is late August through mid-September.

To date we have exactly eight seasons of recordings captured. Spring of 2018, 2019, and 2021. Fall of 2017 through fall of 2021. That data is being shared with MPG Ranch in the Bitterroot Valley in Western Montana who processes our recordings. YVAS has worked with MPG ranch since 2017 and MPG ranch also helps me with

technical and equipment support (such as repairing or replacing bucket microphones or transmission lines.) MPG Ranch used to have over 50 recording stations in the Bitterroot Valley at the height of their research project to record the calls of migrating birds. Now they maintain 3 microphone buckets on the ranch.

Our recording station is the only station East of the Bitterroot Valley in Montana. We have a robust spring and fall migration, whereas the Bitterroot Valley spring migration was found to be pretty quiet, so they only record in the fall migration season.

MPG Ranch has processed our recordings to species through 2020. The data is raw and needs to be formulated by MPG ranch before I will be able to share the data with the YVAS members. A big driver for being involved in recording the calls of migratory birds for me initially was the curiosity of what bird species are migrating through Billings and when. What is more important is the long-term goal of all the organizations and participants that are recording migratory bird calls this way, which will ultimately provide fodder for possible conservation efforts.



Bucket containing microphone on roof — Photo by Mike Weber

One of the long term goals of the leaders in the development of the bird recording software programs, is that it will be able to process the calls of the migratory birds without someone manually reading the recording clips. Another goal of the program is to have the data available for free for scientists and citizen scientists alike on the web.

How are we helping? MPG Ranch's recordings as well as our recordings from Yellowstone County are used to refine and improve the bird detecting software. The more call clips that are available to scientists, software and acoustic engineers, the science of deciphering spectrographs becomes better. For example the flight calls of spotted sandpipers and solitary sandpipers are almost impossible to tell apart when you look at the spectrographs. New research has detected subtle ways that they are different so that they can be identified to species more easily.

The future? I will continue to record the nocturnal flight calls of migratory birds that migrate over my house in the west end of Billings and share the data with MPG ranch. As MPG processes and shares the data with me, in turn I will share the data with YVAS members.

Submitted by Mike Weber

Beavers in Riverfront Park

Billings is blessed with several large natural areas in or adjacent to its municipal boundaries. One of these is the 272 acre Riverfront Park, a cottonwood-dominated riparian forest along the Yellowstone River. Many birders are familiar with this area as it is high on the list of local "birding hotspots" and, while it has not been updated since 2016, the bird list there is extensive: <https://yvaudubon.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Riverfront-Park-Check-List-eBird-8-16-16.pdf>. A review on TripAdvisor gives an idea of it as perceived by birders that were just passing through "Many trails. Wetlands, cat tails blackbirds, cranes, ducks, geese and others. Next to river. Great place to see birds, relax and enjoys trails. Got to see many goslings and parents."

We share Riverfront Park with more than people and birds, however. And one of our most impactful neighbors is the beaver (*Castor Canadensis*). Beavers are known as "keystone species" because of the way they interact in the ecosystem, changing and shaping their environment by building dams which create wetland habitat in which other species thrive but could not thrive if not for the beaver dams. Beavers play a crucial role in biodiversity and a riparian ecosystem bereft of beavers would be a riparian ecosystem lacking much else we value including some of the birds we see at Riverfront Park.

Recently, beavers made their presence known in a big way, taking down and chewing all around the circumference of many cottonwood trees. Hit especially hard was the northern edge of Cochran's Pond where even many very large trees were taken out. This caused us to engage the beaver and embrace the challenge of finding ways to coexist with our hungry, and driven-to-build beaver friends. It was not long before we found several sources providing us excellent guidance and the result has so far been successful and simple. In cottonwood forests, there are usually more trees present than you really need and there are often more than you actually want. So, we've decided to "hire" the beavers to do some forest thinning for us. We put steel gauge wire around the trees we want to have stay there, an effective control method to prevent beaver damage. And, we did not put wire around trees we have arranged for them to take out at a time and pace of their choosing. That is the plan in its entirety, put wire around some and leave others, so that beavers and trees and the people who appreciate both can live better together. Come on down to check it out, and stay tuned for birdwatching trips to Riverfront Park. YVAS usually leads two or more trips there every year.

*Submitted by Steven McConnell
City of Billings Forester*

Beaver activity in Riverfront Park- Photo by Steven McConnell

Chirps and Tweets



- ◆ Many of the articles in the Flyer contain links to additional information. For those that receive the eFlyer, these links are easily accessible as you read the Flyer on-line. For those that receive the paper copy of the Flyer but would like an easier access, you can find the eFlyer on the YVAS website.
- ◆ YVAS continues to adapt as Covid cases rise and fall Montana. After postponing monthly programs and speakers in the spring of 2020, the Board of Directors did resume in-person programs in December 2021 with the caveat that Covid cases remain low. However, it may be necessary to cancel a scheduled program due to an unexpected rise in cases. If you receive the paper copy of the Flyer and would like to receive an email notification of last minute program cancellations due to a surge in Covid, please send your email address to our Membership Data Administrator, Peter Cummins at membership.data@yvaudubon.org. If you are receiving the eFlyer, your email address is already on record. Email addresses are not shared with other organizations.
- ◆ If you would like to be on the rotating list to assist with unloading twine at the Twine Collection & Recycling Site in Laurel, contact Deb or Steve Regele at 406-962-3115 or debregele@gmail.com. While the tractor does the brunt of the work, an extra pair of hands is needed a few times a year.
- ◆ There are many benefits to being a member of YVAS. A few of these are bird trips, The Flyer, programs with speakers that are currently only open to YVAS members due to Covid, local conservation efforts that are supported by your dues and donations, and being a part of an organization of like-minded birders!

Submitted by Deb Regele



2022 FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE

YELLOWSTONE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY, BILLINGS, MONTANA

EVERYONE WELCOME: CHECK THE YVAUDUBON.ORG WEBSITE, FACEBOOK, AND THE FLYER FOR ANY SCHEDULE CHANGES INCLUDING TIMES, CANCELLATIONS, NEW TRIPS, ETC. **COVID SAFETY FIRST-make travel arrangements ahead of time if possible and only if the driver and rider(s) are at ease with carpooling.**

IN ORDER FOR YVAS TO SPONSOR BIRDING TRIPS IT IS NECESSARY THAT EACH PARTICIPANT FOLLOW COVID SAFETY MEASURES...WEAR A MASK WHEN PRUDENT, DISTANCE APPROPRIATELY BETWEEN OTHERS, DO NOT SHARE BINOS OR SCOPES.

Field trips depart by car from the Rocky Mountain College parking lot on Rimrock Road next to Billings Studio Theater at 8:00 a.m. unless noted in the specific trip information shown below.

Please DO NOT bring pets.

Passengers will share gas costs

Donn Bartlett, Field Trip Chairman, 406-812-1008

Apr 16	Sat	Pryor Mountains	Searching for Sagebrush Sparrow –Stan Heath leader; meet at the Bridger Rest Area at 7:30. Sack Lunch.
Apr 30	Sat	Exxon Ponds and Emerald Hills	ONE MILE WALK, Sack Lunch, Brian Henderson, Leader; meet at Rocky or at Exxon.
May 7	Sat	Riverfront Park	8:00 a.m. to noon. FAMILY ORIENTED S Billings Blvd; parking area to the right near the picnic area. NEED A LEADER.
May 8	Sun	Pryor Mountains, Bear Canyon	Meet at Rocky at 6:30 a.m. or at Bridger Rest Area at 7:30 a.m. Hiking and Birding; Trenay Hart leader.
May 12	Thurs	Riverfront Park	Meet at Riverfront at the parking lot to the right at the end of the entrance driveway. Mike Weber, leader 5:30 p.m.
May 14	Sat	Lake Basin	Brian Henderson, leader. Meet at Rocky at 8:00 Sack Lunch
May 17	Tue	Pompey's Pillar	7:00 a.m. at Rocky or 7:45 at Bundy Bridge FAS, Carolyn Jones, leader, Sack Lunch
May 21	Sat	Bridger Creek	Stan Heath, leader, Sack Lunch Meet at Itch-Kep-Pe Park in Columbus at 8:00 a.m.
May 24	Tue	Stillwater River/Woodbine Area	7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Sack Lunch Leave Rocky at 7:00 a.m. or Itch-Kep-Pe Park at 8:00 a.m. Carolyn Jones, leader



June 7	Tue	Pryor Mtn. Sage Creek	Meet at Rocky at 7:30 a.m. or at 8:30 a.m. at the Bridger Rest Area. Stan Heath, Leader, Sack Lunch
June 11	Sat	Red Lodge Area	Meet at Rocky at 7:00 a.m. or in Red Lodge at 8:15 a.m. at the Town Pump Conoco C-Store. Jerry Dalton & Stan Heath, Leaders, Sack Lunch
June 14	Tue	Palisades Trail (Northern Portion),	Birding/Hiking-1.5-2miles. Sack lunch, water, hiking shoes, bear spray; Steve Regele leader Meet at Town Pump in Red Lodge at 8:00a.m.
June 16	Thurs	Grant Marsh	The site is 7 miles North of Hardin on Hwy 47. Meet at 8:00 at Love's Truck Stop just as you Turn left on 47 North. Sack lunch. Megan O`Reilly, leader.
June 18	Sat	Yellowstone River WMA State Park	Megan O` Reilly, leader, Sack Lunch Meet at Bundy Bridge FAS at 8:00a.m.

AT PRESENT THERE ARE NO TRIPS SCHEDULED IN JULY. ALERTS WILL BE SENT VIA EMAIL OF ANY IMPROPTU TRIPS. CONTACT DONN BARTLETT IF YOU ARE NOT ON THE FIELD TRIP BIRDERS EMAIL LIST.

Aug 6	Sat	Shorebirds, Hawks, Prairie Birds	Mike Weber, leader; Sack Lunch Meet at Rocky at 8:00 a.m.
Sept 3	Sat	Bridger Creek	Stan Heath, leader, sack lunch, Meet at 8:00 a.m. at Itch-Kep-Pe Park in Columbus
Sept 7	Wed	Riverfront Park	Meet at the parking area on the right once in the park at 5:00 p.m. Mike Weber, leader
Sept 17	Sat	Red Lodge Area Hawk Watch	Marco Restani, leader, Sack Lunch Meet at 8:00a.m. In Red Lodge at the Town Pump Conoco C-Store.
Nov 5	Sat	Yellowstone Dam Afterbay	Brian Henderson, leader, Sack Lunch Meet at Rocky at 8:00 a.m.
Dec TBD	Sat	Christmas Bird Count	Jerry Dalton, leader
1-1-2023	Sun	New Year's Day	Annual Trip to Yellowtail Dam Afterbay, Brian Henderson, leader

TO ENCOURAGE ADDITIONAL OUTINGS, PLEASE CONTACT DONN BARTLETT AT DONNBARTLETT@MSN.COM OR 406-812-1008. DONN WILL THEN FORWARD THE INFORMATION TO ALL AREA BIRDERS HE HAS ON EMAIL. PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT YVAUDUBON.ORG FOR ADDITIONAL SITES IN AND AROUND THE BILLINGS AREA AND CHECK OUR FACEBOOK PAGE FOR INFORMATION.

YVAS MEETINGS & PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Next Board of Directors Meeting: February 14, 2022 —The YVAS meeting of the Board of Directors will be held from 4pm to 6pm. Board of Directors meetings are held the second Monday of the month. Board meetings are open to all members.

We are again postponing YVAS 'live/in-person' Programs due to Covid circumstances in our area. See page 2 for more information. Please continue to check in at the YVAS web site <https://yvaudubon.org/> and watch the Flyer for news and updates about future live Programs.

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 ppipal@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 debregale@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: Doreen Hartman 406-697-0277 rdzlhman@bresnan.net
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
debregale@gmail.com
Osprey Project Research Coordinator: Marco Restani 425-2608
restani@stcloudstate.edu
Twine Recycling Project: Deb Regele: 962-3115 debregale@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 debregale@gmail.com
 Doreen Hartman 697-0277 rdzlhman@bresnan.net
Website: Deb Regele 962-3115 debregale@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. Contact the Data Base Administrator: Peter Cummins at membership.data@yvaudubon.org with any questions.

- ❖ Feb renewal: Barbara Garrett, James Hansen, John & Carol McNeal, James Olmes, Charles Paris, Sarah Stockburger, Roger & Patricia Williams
- ❖ Jan outstanding: Doreen Hartman, Jim Hartung, David & Sandy Kennedy

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**

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Billings, MT 59103-1075

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Rosy Finch near Belfry, MT at -10° — Photo by Shawn Stewart



Prairie Falcon eating a Rock Pigeon — Photo by Fred DeFrance, Jan 2022