



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 2022

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US Fish and Wildlife Service, Stewardship for Wildlife, Habitat, and People

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society invites you to a special program with Paul Santavy of the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on May 16, 2022. Paul is the Project Leader/Wildlife Refuge Manager for the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge Complex. He will discuss the wealth of bird and other wildlife species and habitats in this Complex and will explain the USFWS National Refuge System, including National Wildlife Refuges (NWR) and Waterfowl Production Areas (WPA's) in Montana. His program will include discussion of public use and recreation opportunities, management needs and challenges, as well as the immense value of these areas to wildlife and ecosystems.

Some of the USFWS sites frequented by Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society birders and YVAS organized birding trips include Lake Mason NWR and Clark's Fork, Spidel, and Tew WPA's. You will also learn about other such areas within the Complex and within other parts of the USFWS National Refuge System in Montana.

This informative and enjoyable evening with Paul Santavy will be held at Mayflower Church on the corner of Rehberg Lane and Poly Drive in Billings. Doors open at 6:30 PM, the program begins at 7:00 PM.

Submitted by Steve Regele



War Horse NWR



Clark Fork's WPA

Avian Flu, a Perspective

I am writing to educate our members and stop the spread of false information happening on the internet regarding the recent outbreak of H5N1, aka Avian Flu. While I am no expert, my occupation allows me access to many resources at the franchise level who are in contact with the Lab of Ornithology at Cornell University, the CDC, and the USDA.

Avian influenza refers to the infection of birds with avian influenza Type A viruses. These viruses occur naturally among wild aquatic birds worldwide such as ducks, geese, and shorebirds, as well as poultry. The current 2022 avian influenza in Canada and the US is a form of HPAI H5N1 that is the same as has been found in Europe. The recent detections of this strain in wild birds serve as an early warning system for bird owners in the U.S. to review and stay vigilant about their biosecurity practices to protect poultry and pet birds from avian influenza.

The backyard birds that visit our feeders appear to be significantly less susceptible and much less likely to become a source of the virus. It is safe to feed and attract birds to your backyard. Therefore, there is no need to stop watching, feeding or attracting birds to your yard because of the avian flu. There is no evidence humans are at risk of contracting avian flu from backyard birds or bird feeding. In the case where wild waterfowl such as ducks, gulls, or turkeys are in the area spreading feces, you may choose to remove the feeders.

What others are saying:

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Public Health Agency of Canada correctly deem H5N1 to be of low human health risk.

David Bonter, Arthur A. Allen Director of Citizen Science with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, shared that it is his "... opinion that there is no scientific basis for removing bird feeders at this time."

A link to the Institute of Infectious and Zoonotic Diseases at U Penn Vet School states, "According to the USDA, there is no evidence that birdfeeders, or the birds that frequent them, contribute to the spread of HPAI.



This article contains the best information available as of March 2022. As the story of avian flu continues to unfold, new information, data and changes in the viruses are discovered, I will pass this information on as needed.

As always, we encourage responsible bird feeding by:

- Provide multiple feeding stations in different areas of your yard to disperse bird activity.
- Provide seed from a bird feeder rather than scattering it on the ground.
- Keep areas clean under and around your feeders.
- Keep fresh seed in the feeder and be sure it doesn't get moldy.
- Clean your bird feeders regularly with a solution of one part bleach and nine parts water.

Thanks for your interest in protecting our songbirds, wild birds, and wildlife.

Submitted by Kathy Haigh



Kathy and her husband, John, own and operate the Wild Birds Unlimited, located in Billings. Kathy has an MBA, MMGT. She is, also, a past president of the Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society and a Master Naturalist. This article is submitted with the permission of Wild Birds Unlimited, Inc.

Exxon Ponds Trip Report

Fourteen birders including Exxon representatives came out to visit the Exxon Ponds property on the morning of April 30th. Perfect weather including calm winds meant it would be easier to see and hear birds and the first of many Song Sparrows began serenading us right away.

As we walked in along the old water channel, wary ducks would almost always flush - seeing us before we could see them - so we just enjoyed them in flight instead! Walking along the ditch full of cattails, we noted more Song Sparrows and Red-winged Blackbirds who love that habitat but did not discover any Virginia Rails or the Sandhill Crane that had reportedly been sitting and possibly starting to nest in there. Fortunately, we did have some Sandhills fly by - so cool! It was also maybe just a little early in the season for wrens as we found none during our visit. Continuing towards the ponds, we flushed a few more wary ducks concealed by brush along the ditch.

Birds on the ponds were a little more tolerant because they could just swim to a safer distance so we enjoyed easier looks at them there - some relatively close. Northern Shovelers were by far the most numerous waterfowl followed by Canada Goose, Mallard, Am. Coot, Gadwall, Am. Wigeon, Blue-winged Teal, Common Merganser, Double-crested Cormorant, Lesser Scaup, Green-winged Teal, Eared Grebe, Western Grebe, and Wood Duck.

We saw one early Common Yellowthroat at the last pond, then several Yellow-rumped Warblers led us from the ponds to the Yellowstone River. Several Ospreys were seen and heard but the only Bald Eagle was an early fly-by before we actually got started. Finally, though we had become used to ducks flushing as we approached, Ring-necked Pheasants tended to let us get a little closer before they took off. Need to be prepared for that explosion of wings from nearby grass, especially when you're on the way back from a long outing and needing to visit a restroom! Fortunately we all held it together and enjoyed another great trip to the Exxon Ponds. Thanks again to ExxonMobil for permission and facilitation of this trip!

Emerald Hills Trip Report

A couple of us made a very quick trip for lunch at the Emerald Hills viewpoint and noted 16 species including the following highlights: White-throated Swift, Mountain Bluebird, Say's Phoebe, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch.

Submitted by Brian Henderson



Photo by Ron Kuhler



Chirps and Tweets



- ❖ YVAS volunteers are our backbone! Without them, there would not be the wide variety of birding trips, monthly meetings with public speakers, The Flyer (monthly newsletter), numerous conservation projects and education programs. Since birding trips are taking off in full-wing this month, it is a perfect time to recognize our 2021-2022 volunteer bird trip leaders: Stan Heath, Brian Henderson, Trenay Hart, Mike Weber, Jerry Dalton, Steve Regele, Robert Hill, Ruth Vanderhorst, Carolyn Jones, Sue Weinreis, Marco Restani, Brenda & Jeff Dunham and Megan O'Reilly. Thank you all for leading these amazing trips!
- ❖ Now is a good time to join or renew your YVAS memberships! When done in person, such as at the May Program or on a birding trip, the membership is only \$20 for a family membership saving \$5.
- ❖ Recycle your aluminum cans with YVAS. Refunds support special conservation and educational projects. If tied securely in plastic sacks, cans can be dropped off at 918 Avenue C (Billings). Contact Larry Handsaker at 406-855-9832 for more information. Thank you Larry!
- ❖ Saturday, May 14, is 2022's World Migratory Bird Day. This year's theme is "Dim the Lights for Birds at Night," focusing on the impact of light pollution on migratory birds. Learn more about World Migratory Bird Day at: <https://www.migratorybirdday.org/>
- ❖ Do you know the difference between a native plant, a non-native and an invasive plant? This is important to birds, bees, butterflies and other life forms. Visit National Audubon's web article at: <https://www.audubon.org/news/what-difference-between-native-non-native-and-invasive-plants>

Submitted by Deb Regele



Field Trip Schedule

Unless otherwise noted, field trips are open to the public and depart at 8:00 a.m. by car from the Rocky Mountain College parking lot on Rimrock Road next to Billings Studio Theater. Passengers will share gas costs. Please DO NOT bring pets. Check the yvaudubon.org website, YVAS Facebook, and the Flyer for the most updated details and for any cancellations or additions of new trips. Make transportation arrangements ahead of time if possible. Carpooling cannot be guaranteed due to Covid-19. Please follow Covid-19 safety measures when prudent to do so.

May 7 (Sat). Riverfront Park on S Billings Blvd. 8:00 a.m. to noon. FAMILY ORIENTED. Meet at parking/picnic area in Riverfront Park located to the right after entering Park. NEED A LEADER.

May 8 (Sun). Pryor Mountains, Bear Canyon. Meet at Rocky at 6:30 a.m. or Bridger Rest Area at 7:30 a.m. Hiking and birding. Sack lunch. Trenay Hart, leader.

May 12 (Thu). Riverfront Park on S Billings Blvd. Meet at 5:30 p.m. at the parking/picnic area in Riverfront Park located to the right after entering Park. Mike Weber, leader.

May 14 (Sat). Lake Basin. Meet at Rocky at 8:00 a.m. Sack Lunch. Brian Henderson, leader.

May 17 (Tue). Pompey's Pillar. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at Rocky or 7:45 at Bundy Bridge FAS. Sack lunch. Carolyn Jones, leader.

May 21 (Sat). Bridger Creek. Meet at Itch-Kep-Pe Park in Columbus at 8:00 a.m. Sack lunch. Stan Heath, leader.

May 24 (Tue). Stillwater River/Woodbine area. 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Leave Rocky at 7:00 a.m. or Itch-Kep-Pe Park in Columbus at 8:00 a.m. Sack lunch. Carolyn Jones, leader.

June 7 (Tue). Pryor Mountains, Sage Creek. Meet at Rocky at 7:30 a.m. or Bridger Rest Area at 8:30 a.m. Sack lunch. Stan Heath, leader.

June 11 (Sat). Red Lodge Area. Meet at Rocky at 7:00 a.m. or Town Pump in Red Lodge at 8:15 a.m. Sack lunch. Jerry Dalton & Stan Heath, leaders.

June 14 (Tue). Red Lodge, Palisades Trail off Hwy 78. Meet at Town Pump in Red Lodge at 8:00 a.m. Birding and hiking up to 2 miles. Sack lunch, water, bear spray. Steve Regele, leader.

June 16 (Thu). Grant Marsh, 7 miles north of Hardin on Hwy 47. Meet at 8:00 at Love's Truck Stop in Hardin located as you turn left on 47 North. Sack lunch. Megan O'Reilly, leader.

June 18 (Sat). Yellowstone River WMA. Meet at Bundy Bridge FAS at 8:00 a.m. Sack lunch. Megan O'Reilly, leader.

Submitted by Donn Bartlett

To encourage additional outings or other questions, please contact Donn Bartlett (Field Trip Chairperson) at donnbartlett@msn.com or 406-812-1008. Please visit our website at yvaudubon.org for additional sites in and around the Billings area.

YVAS MEETINGS & PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Next Board of Directors Meeting: May 9, 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.

In-Person Program May 16, 2022 with Paul Santavy will be held at Mayflower Church on the corner of Rehberg Lane and Poly Drive in Billings. Doors open at 6:30 PM, the program begins at 7:00 PM

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 rdzhman@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: Doreen Hartman 406-697-0277 rdzhman@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
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 rdzhman@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 rdzhman@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. Contact the Data Base Administrator: Peter Cummins at membership.data@yvaudubon.org with any questions.

- ❖ April renewal: Randy Heinz, Marco Restani
- ❖ March outstanding: Carol Pearson, Linda Wham

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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Pryor Mountain field trip April 28, 2022.
Photo by Dorothy Bartlett

Greater Sage-Grouse, Pryor Mountains.
Photo by Dorothy Bartlett

