

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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US Fish Wildlife Service and Depredation Permits at the Miles City Fish Hatchery

After seven Working Group meetings hosted by MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks, the YVAS attendees feel there are questions and issues being unanswered or ignored. As a result, Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society (Steve Regele, Steve Linder, Deb Regele, Teresa Erickson, Brenda Dunham and Board of Directors), Audubon Rockies, National Audubon Society and Earthjustice have signed and submitted a letter to the U.S. Department of the Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Region 6 office in Denver CO) and U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's Wildlife Services offices in Washington D.C. and Regional office (Fort Collins CO). A copy of this letter can be found on our website at: https://yvaudubon.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/YVAS-NAS-solicitation-USFWS_USDA-WS-NEPA-051322-FNL-2-3.pdf



Great Blue Herons Photo: Jeff Dunham



Osprey nest. Photo: Steve DuBois

US Fish Wildlife Service (USFWS) Program presented by YVAS May 16, 2022.

Paul Santavy, the USFWS Project Leader/Wildlife Refuge Manager for the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge Complex, presented a good overview of public use and recreation opportunities and management needs and challenges of the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge Complex.

Paul discussed the National Wildlife Refuges (NWR) and Waterfowl Production Areas (WPA's) that he manages in Montana. His overview of the sites and management situations was well received and he answered questions from the audience of 20.

Such websites as the following provide some information included in Pauls' Program: <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/charles-m-russell-wetland-management-district/visit-us> and <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/charles-m-russell>

Paul touched on the status of the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Charles M. Russell Wetland Management District and Associated Refuges (District) Planning Process. YVAS provided formal comments on the Comprehensive Planning Process

(CPP) in a letter to the USFWS dated March 28, 2017. YVAS and many other commenters are awaiting responses to their review of the CPP, and about procedures and schedules for further comment about it. One of the points Paul brought up in his Program is the USFWS consideration of allowing hunting at Grass Lake NWR. The YVAS BOD March 28, 2017, letter requested that USFWS:



Great Blue Heron Photo: Jeff Dunham

"Consider a no-hunting policy at the Grass Lake NWR, other than the State Section within the Refuge. Hunting is allowed and encouraged at the nearby Big Lake WMA, owned and managed by Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks. YVAS has no overarching issues about hunting. We suggest however that Grass Lake NWR would provide a refuge for wildlife during hunting seasons that might minimize energy expenditures by migrating birds, and provide a local safe zone for waterfowl and other wildlife given local hunting pressures. The birds and other wildlife could find refuge at the Grass Lake NWR without moving completely out of the region.

There has been no hunting allowed at this NWR for many years. The YVAS Board of Director's looks forward to opportunity to further discuss this and other CPP issues with USFWS prior to finalization of the CPP.

A copy of the March 28, 2017 letter from YVAS to USFWS can be found on our website at: <https://yvaudubon.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/USFWS-CMR-Refuge-Comments-YVAS-032817.pdf>

YVAS members and scores of others look forward to future visits to USFWS managed lands and waters.

Submitted by Steve and Deb Regele

Bear Canyon Field Trip May 8, 2022

It was a cool start to the annual Mother's Day bird/hike trip. This year was a slim crowd, only 6 people did the hike. Being a bit early in May the birding wasn't spectacular, as far as turn out, but we enjoyed the hike. 27 species total. The Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher was a delight for 3 folks as it was a lifer. A side trip at the end to find the Mountain Plover on Gyp Springs Road was not successful. We were disappointed that the Wren trifecta didn't happen, only the Canyon Wren preformed. No Rock Wren's or House Wren's for us this year.

Submitted by Trenay Hart

Lake Basin Field Trip May 14, 2022

On Saturday, May 14, Stan Heath led a group of about 10 on a trip to Lake Basin. He took us on a new route from previous years, resulting in a very lucrative day of birding. First, heading toward Broadview on the highway, we turned off onto Ballard Ivie Road and were treated to a bevy of birds along the way. The day started with Crows at Rocky, then Meadowlarks, Red-winged Blackbirds, House Sparrows, Brown-headed Cowbirds, Brewer's Blackbirds, Vesper Sparrows, Mourning Doves and Horned Larks made their usual roadside appearance. An Upland Sandpiper stood right in the road so we could get a look before he took off. Two Lark Buntings were also roadside, darting among the sagebrush. The treat of the day for this birder was the Loggerhead Shrike, which turned out to be the trash bird of the day as there were so many! We saw two prairie dog towns with Burrowing Owls out on a morning hunt. The second one on Buffalo Trail offered close-up views. Fabulous!

Along the way we also encountered a pair of Golden Eagles tending a fuzzy eaglet in their nest. Not far away there was also a nesting Raven. We saw a Ringneck Pheasant or two, a White-crowned Sparrow and quite a few Long-billed Curlews. We stopped and watched a large flock of Whimbrel moving around in a field, occasionally taking flight and landing again. There must have been at least 50 of them. I think somebody counted them, but I didn't get the number.

Heading north toward Broadview on Buffalo Trail we saw a Swainson's Hawk soaring high overhead, as well as a Gray Partridge making a very brief appearance in the tall grass. An Eastern Kingbird and a Say's Phoebe were spotted as well as flocks of both Barn and Cliff Swallows. Small roadside ponds and the Broadview Ponds were teeming with ducks, grebes and the like. Ducks: Cinnamon Teal, Green-winged Teal, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Ruddy, Canvasback, Ring-necked, Mallard. We saw both Western and Red-necked Phalarope. We got nice close-up looks at Eared

Grebes and Western Grebe. Of course, the Canada Geese, Common Merganser and American Coot showed up, and an American White Pelican flew in for our viewing pleasure. Killdeer could be heard as well as seen swooping around the pond. Several scopes were set up for more waterfowl and views of Black-necked Stilt, White-faced Ibis, and Marble Godwit. Sandhill Cranes were making their way through the grass on the other side of the pond. A lone Willet was feeding on the shore.

The group split up with every car but ours finally heading to Lake Basin. As we ate lunch, we watched a Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's) working the trees and bushes along the shore as well as Tree Swallows feeding over the water. On the way back to Billings we saw a Northern Harrier soaring over a field and an American Avocet standing by a roadside pond.

If there were additional species seen at Lake Basin, the ultimate destination of this field trip, you'll have to ask someone who continued on. Also, I hope I listed everything we saw up to that point. There were so many, I had my hands and head full, trying to keep track. What a wonderful day! Thank you to Stan Heath for leading this one.



Pelicans and Gulls nesting. Photo by Dorothy Bartlett

Submitted by Robin Manfredi

Riverfront Park Field Trip May 19, 2022

When I approached the entrance to Riverfront Park a large sign warned that Riverfront was closed due to road repair. I threw caution to the wind and turned into the park and the road was being repaved, but there was a path to the parking area. Speaking of wind, there was no shortage of it and it kept blowing the entire birding walk. The no admittance sign probably scared some birders away and the wind kept others snugly at home.

Despite the obstacles, 5 birders ventured into the park. The wind was our greatest challenge as it silenced much of the normal chorus of birds. Several goldfinches were singing throughout the park and we got a good look at the bright lemon yellow male. Throughout the park we heard snatches of catbird song and mostly saw them chasing each other through the brambles. The distant raucous call of a yellow-breasted chat was also heard a couple of times. Even the normally very vociferous house wrens rambling warble was diminished in quantity in the gale. We enjoyed a great look at a red-eyed vireo and it was gleaning insects in a small tree. While enjoying the vireo we heard a redstart singing. And soon in the brushy ravine in front of us, a male and a female redstart impressed us with their flashy plumage.

The saying goes, good things come to those who wait. That was true for this evening. We stood along the river for what seemed a good hour, waiting, watching and being mesmerized by the many dozens and dozens of swallows cruising above the water. And when we walked it was at turtle pace and with the caution of walking barefoot on broken glass. The majority of swallows were violet green and nearer the highway bridge there were about 100 cliff swallows. We did see one bank and barn swallow.

While waiting a spotted sandpiper landed along the rocky shoreline calling "whet whet whet". Close by and at eye level we saw two plumbeous vireos, a pleasant and unexpected gift. A lincoln sparrow was witnessed sulking low at the base of some aspens, in the same area we spotted two small flycatchers we could not ID to species. Several yellow-rumped warblers flitted in the cottonwoods and a female and male common yellowthroat were both observed. Overhead we could hear the high octave call of cedar waxwings. The yellow warblers were seemingly immune to the wind as they seemed to be everywhere singing, flitting and chasing one another.

Nearly two hours into the walk, I had wished I had brought gloves and a warmer coat. You would think I would learn to dress for a Montana. On the lake a flotilla of eared grebes were joined by a handful of ruddy ducks and a lone lesser scaup. We heard the pleasant and melodious song of a black-headed grosbeak as we neared the parking area. We finished the evening with 39 bird species.

And I forgot to mention, at the start of the trip we spotted a chimney swift circling above us which was sharing the same airspace as soaring a turkey vulture. Two birds that you normally would not invite to the same party!

Submitted by Mike Weber



Chirps and Tweets



- ❖ If you watch Netflix, be sure to catch *Animals - Season 2* which has recently been released. Episode 2 looks at Birds of Prey and it is excellent! Did you know that the smallest bird of prey is not much bigger than a butterfly?
- ❖ During the summer months, behind the scenes volunteers keep YVAS on track just as they do throughout the year. Doreen Hartman keeps our Facebook readers up-to-date on local, state and national photos and reports. Peter Cummins maintains the YVAS membership list. Larry Handsaker continually collects and hauls aluminum cans to Earth First (refund goes to special conservation and educational projects). Deb Regele manages the YVAS Website. Donn Bartlett keeps our birding trips rolling along. Teresa Henderson skillfully organizes contributed articles into ten monthly Flyers. YVAS volunteers are our backbone.
- ❖ Enjoy the spring birding. It won't be long until the new fledglings are out and about!
- ❖ As you head out on one of YVAS' hosted birding trips, be sure to renew your membership. When done in person, the membership is only \$20 for a family membership, a savings of \$5.

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.

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. Meet at Rocky at 8:00 a.m. Mike Weber, leader; Sack Lunch

Sept 3 Sat Bridger Creek. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at Itch-Kep-Pe Park in Columbus. Stan Heath, leader, sack lunch.

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 Meet at 8:00 a.m. In Red Lodge at the Town Pump Conoco C-Store. Marco Restani, leader, Sack Lunch

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.

Greater White-fronted Goose- Basin Lake May '22. Photo by Dorothy Bartlett



Mountain Plover, Pryors Field trip May '22. Photo by Dorothy Bartlett



YVAS MEETINGS & PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Next Board of Directors Meeting: August 8, 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 TBA. Programs will be held on third Monday of the month 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

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 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.

- ✦ June renewal: Nancy and Dale Detrick, Brenda & Jeff Dunham, Stanley Heath, Susan Hovde, Brenna Moloney, George Mowat, Jim & Jean Sells, Steve Yungblut
- ✦ July renewal: Trenay Hart

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 _____

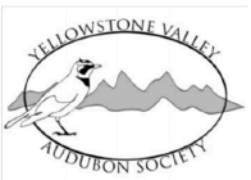
Email Address _____

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

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June Bailey, BLM field manager 2001-2004, Anchorage, Ak. Releasing a rehabilitated Bald Eagle. Photo submitted by Steve Linder



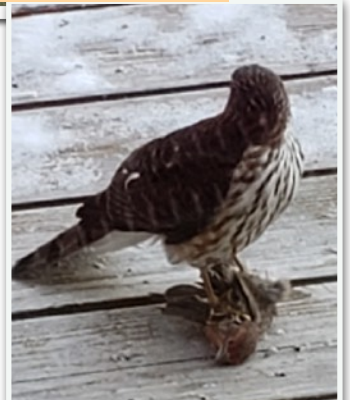
Lake Basin Field trip May '22. Photo by Dorothy Bartlett



Cormorant Photo: Pete Murray



Bobolink May '22. Photo by Dorothy Bartlett



Sharp shin and an English sparrow, deceased! Photo: Steve Linder