



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.

NOV/DEC 2022

VOLUME 52, NUMBER 10

Adaptive Management for Waterfowl Protection at the Berkeley Pit

A former open-pit copper mine, Berkeley Pit today is an open body of water that is contaminated with heavy metals. In 2016 after unusually warm weather resulted in a late fall migration for Snow Geese, a sudden winter storm in late November forced roughly 60,000 geese to land unexpectedly in the toxic Berkeley Pit water. Over 3,000 snow geese died.

Since that event, there has been a concentrated effort to better manage the Pit with respect to impacts to birds. A team was formed with representatives from industry, government, academia and other organizations (including YVAS) in response to that fatal event. The team has been meeting and working diligently since 2016 to better predict waterfowl migration and be ready for another large event. Dr. Stella Capoccia is an important part of that effort.

Dr. Stella Capoccia will be discussing the protection efforts at the Berkeley Pit to reduce these types of waterfowl deaths. She is an associate professor in the Department of Biology at Montana Technological University in Butte. She received her Master's Degree in Environmental Policy from Clark University and her Ph.D. from Rutgers focusing on wildlife conservation. Her current research involves looking at trends in waterfowl migration to help manage avian protection for the Berkeley Pit.



The program will begin at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, November 21, at the Mayflower Congregational Church on the corner of Poly and Rehberg. This program is free and open to the public.

Submitted by Deb Regele

Bob Landis' December Presentation

December 19 is the date for our annual presentation by Bob Landis of what he has done the past year. He plans to first give a 30 minute presentation about the 3 white wolves that served as alpha females of 3 packs in Hayden Valley over 18 years ago. For the second half of the program he will talk about how the flooding changed his access to the Gardner Canyon and how important that area has been to his filming over the years. Then he has footage of the flooding in his back yard. The program will be unique, as has been the weather in Yellowstone, but no doubt it will be entertaining. Please bring friends, we'll have plenty of room in the Mayflower sanctuary.

Submitted by Carolyn Jones

Bridger Creek Field Trip

On September 9th, Stan Heath led the Bridger Creek field trip on a scenic loop from Columbus, through Absarokee and up the Stillwater Road, to the Bridger Creek area.

My bird list from the day (I am a novice. The experts in the group will have longer lists): Sandhill cranes- a couple dozen along Stillwater Road, American kestrels, Prairie falcons, Red-tailed hawks, Lewis's woodpeckers, Western tanager, Wilson's warbler, Wood ducks, Western wood-pewee & the usual suspects (American robins, Black-billed magpies, swallows, etc)

The Lewis's woodpeckers were a highlight. We watched them doing their flycatcher-style feeding.

I requested a bear and Susan Hovde found three. Next time I will have to specify that I want a photogenic bear, not ones that are hiding in the chokecherries. As compensation, she also found a moose.

There was fortuitously timed flat tire—not good news for the motorist, but it turned out to be an excellent stopping place for watching Lewis's woodpeckers. I should have photographed the capable birders who fixed the flat tire, but I was too excited about the woodpeckers.

Photos of the bigger fauna of the day:



Dover Park Guided Tour

On September 24th around 15 birders met at Dover park for a guided tour from Karen Wilcox of the Yellowstone River Parks Association. YRPA is the vehicle for acquiring additional public land along the Yellowstone River for public access.

We toured two areas near Dover Park. One is abandoned gravel pit that is now a pond and wetland area. Within this expanse of wetland there are small, scattered clumps of trees and shrubs. The birders imagined this would be a lovely spring hotspot for migrants and resident songbirds, waterfowls, shorebirds, swallows and Sandhill Cranes. In fact we saw a pair of Sandhills and one nearly grown colt, numerous duck species, two pied-billed grebe, greater yellowlegs, pheasants, and a Northern Harrier. A downy woodpecker was working on the bark of a small shrub on the edge of the wetland. This wetland is currently not open to the public, but YRPA has it in the works of making this area open to the public with walking trails, similar to the nice walking trails in Dover Park.

After visiting the wetlands we drove onto a private road took us to the river bottom and past the original Sindilar Ranch. We drove along some low rimrock,s and at the base were willows, cottonwoods, dogwoods, buffalo berry and various shrubs and trees, providing great birding and wildlife habitat. This dense thicket teemed with white-crowned sparrows. We saw a few Lincoln sparrows a couple towhees and numerous Wilson Warblers. Dozens of cedar waxwings were flycatching in the treetops. Soon we made our way to the river's edge where we observed both the sharp-shinned and cooper's hawk, bald eagles and pelicans.

From there we drove along the River Eastward for about ½ mile and parked. We hiked into the Riparian Forest and saw yellow-rumped warblers, flickers, red-breasted nuthatches, more towhees and a ruby-crowned kinglet. Oxbow ponds held 20 plus wood ducks, gadwalls, mallards and a hooded merganser. Along the river we saw several more sandhill cranes.

This river bottom we toured is part of the Sindilar Ranch. From this river bottom you could see the new bridge being constructed over the Yellowstone River, and just beyond the bridge was Dover Park. The Sindilar Ranch holdings go as far as the bridge. YRPA is also looking at adding the Sindilar Ranch area along the Yellowstone as a public park. Between the ranch and the wetlands it would add 800 plus acres of parkland. What is unique about the Dover Ranch is no dogs are allowed. I do not know if that is in the works for the parcels up for acquisition by YRPA. We finished beautiful fall day of birding with 47 species.

Thank you to YRPA for allowing YVAS members to tour. I am reciting this from memory nearly a month after the trip. My apologies for the probable inaccuracies in the description of the YRPA lands I described. Please defer to YRPA for any questions regarding these additional public parks. These land parcels are not open to the public at this time.

Submitted. by Mike Weber

2022 Billings Christmas Bird Count

All Volunteers Welcome, Please Sign Up

Save Saturday, December 17, 2022, on your calendar for the Billings 2022 Christmas Bird Count (CBC). The CBC is long term citizen science started in 1900 by National Audubon, and probably conducted in Billings for the first time in 1940.

Every count area is a circle of 7.5 mile radius. Ours is 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.

This year we will plan (optional) to meet for breakfast from 7:00 – 8:00am at Perkins, 825 N 27th St, and meet about 5:00 pm at the Montana Audubon Center, 7026 S Billings Blvd, for free pizza provided by YVAS, to compile the species observed. If Covid comes roaring back, the breakfast and supper meetings will be cancelled.

Each person will be assigned to an area with specific boundaries by the count organizer/compiler. Maps and recording sheets will be distributed at breakfast or in advance to a group leader for each area. Please return results of the count to the Montana Audubon Center around 5:00pm on count day or to the compiler as soon as possible afterward.

More feeder watchers are also needed on count day, December 17. Birders living in the count circle can tally and report the species and numbers of birds they see at their feeders and/or from their home. You may be the lucky one to add a species to the count total. More feeder watchers would be welcome.

Please contact one of the count organizers well before December 17. Let them know you want to help.

Lois Dalton, feeder watcher organizer, 406 656-3656
Jerry Dalton, Billings CBC organizer/compiler,
406 656-3656
2255 Darcy Lane, Billings MT 59102
daltonlj@centurylink.net

Submitted by Jerry Dalton



Chirps and Tweets



- ◆ Recently Audubon and its numerous partners announced the Bird Migration Explorer, a new interactive, digital platform that visualizes the migration journeys of 458 North American migratory species. It is the culmination of years of collaboration and scientific contributions from hundreds of researchers and institutions. It can be found at: [Bird Migration Explorer](#) -
- ◆ Last month, my sister-in-laws had the thrill of watching thousands of migrating Vaux Swifts descend into the chimney at Chapman Elementary in Portland, Oregon. For over twenty years, these swifts have roosted in this chimney on their way to their wintering habitat in Central America. As they described it, "looks like a vacuum is just sucking them in - wonderful!" Check out the video clip from the local TV station. <https://www.kptv.com/2022/09/15/swift-watch-returns-swarm-chapman-elementary-chimney-nw-portland/>
- ◆ For those of you that hike in the higher altitudes of the Rocky Mountains, Rocky Mountain Wild and the Denver Zoo have launched a mobile app called Pika Patrol. This new app will help scientists track observations and monitor populations of the climate-sensitive American pika not only in Colorado but wherever pikas are seen in the Rocky Mountains. The app is free and easy to use. Check it out at: <https://pikapartners.org/pikapatrol/>

Submitted by Deb Regele

Meet Your YVAS Board of Directors

Treasurer: Pam Pipal

Where are you from and what was your profession?



Pam: I was born in Havre, Montana, but have lived 60+ years in Billings. I have a degree in Accounting from Eastern Montana College. I quit work to go to college full-time 10 years after high school graduation. I worked for 33+ years as an Accountant for the US Bureau of Reclamation. They used to build dams - Canyon Ferry, Yellowtail - but now they mostly fund water projects on Indian Reservations.

What bird hooked you into birding?

Pam: Osprey! I saw an article in the paper about watching a Condor hatch. Then I watched a Red Tail Hawk cam. Then I watched the Osprey pair in Lolo, MT, Ozzie and Harriet. That's when I became obsessed with Osprey. I saw a nest near Skyview and called Northwestern Energy who referred me to YVAS. The President, Bill DeMeyer, suggested I get some binoculars and a field guide and ID the bird myself! So I did! It was an Osprey! I guess you could say that the Osprey was the gateway bird for me.

What is your favorite Montana bird species?

Pam: Osprey!

What is a conservation topic that you are excited about right now?

Pam: Recycling, especially YVAS' Baling Twine Recycling Program

What is your favorite/funniest/most interesting piece of Wildlife Trivia:

Pam: The first time I heard a man scream was when a snake fell on my dad, from the rafters inside an outhouse. We kids were young and on a family camping trip at the Fred Robinson Bridge.

What do you like best about YVAS?

Pam: The people and the birds we see on the bird field trips.

Where is your favorite place to go birding in Montana?

Pam: The Red Lodge area!

Submitted by Sue Weinreis

YVAS MEETINGS & PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Next Board of Directors Meeting: Nov 14, 2022; Dec 12, 2022 —The YVAS meeting of the Board of Directors will be held from 4 pm to 6 pm. Board of Directors meetings are held the second Monday of the month. Board meetings are open to all members.

In-Person Program Nov 21, 2022 and Dec 19, 2022. Programs will be held on third Monday of the month at Mayflower Church on the corner of Rehberg Lane and Poly Drive in Billings. Programs are held the third Monday of the month. Doors open at 6:30 pm; the program begins at 7:00 pm.

Board of Directors

President (Acting): Steve Linder 406-380-0073 becon1@bresnan.net

Vice President:

Secretary: Sue Weinreis 406-855-4181 granpeak47@gmail.com

Treasurer: Pam Pipal 406-245-4517 ppipal@charter.net

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Doreen Hartman 406-697-0277 rdzlhman@bresnan.net

Carolyn Jones 406-670-4449 carolyn684@gmail.com

Steve McConnell 406-661-0422 mcconnells@ci.billings.mt.us

Deb Regele 406-200-7873 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 Assignments

Christmas Bird Count: Jerry Dalton 406-656-3656 daltonlj@centurylink.net

Conservation Advisor:

Facebook:

Field Trip Chair:

Flyer Editor:

Injured Raptors:

Injured Waterfowl:

Membership Data:

Mt Bluebird Habitat Project:

Osprey Nest Monitor Coord:

Osprey Research Coord:

Program Committee:

Publicity:

Recycling (aluminum):

Recycling (baling twine):

Website:

Doreen Hartman 406-697-0277 rdzlhman@bresnan.net

Teresa Henderson 337-263-7985 yvasflyer@gmail.com

Montana Raptor Conservation Center 406-585-1211

WJH Bird Resources 406-652-7175 wjhbird@yahoo.com

Peter Cummins 406-248-8684

membership.data@yvaudubon.org

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YVAS Board of Directors

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Deb Regele 460-200-7873 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.

❖ Nov renewal: Jack & Carol Sterling, Robert & Carolyn Jones, Carl & Virginia Kimmel

❖ Dec renewal: Tanner Bloom, Mary Fitzpatrick, Polly Gordon, Rita Harding, Hunter Jackson, Sheila McKay, Larry & Marlene Pirtz Newell, Susan Newell & Dick Walton, Barb Pitman, Jo Anne Setzer, Pat Sweeney & Teresa Erickson, Michael Szczutkowski, Tom & Ruth Towe, Bruce Waage, Gene Wade

❖ October outstanding: Mary Davis

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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