

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.

Monday, April 17th, 2023, Monthly Program:

“Native Bee Conservation for Home Gardeners” with Abi Saeed, Extension Horticulture Specialist at Montana State University



Abi Saeed

Pollinators, especially bees, play an integral role in our agriculture, home gardens, and our native ecosystems. Habitat loss and improper pesticide use are factors that can contribute to the decline of these important insects in our landscapes. This presentation will focus on ways to encourage and conserve native bees in the yard and garden landscape. It will include information on creating pollinator habitat in home gardens, safe pesticide use, and strategies that can reduce non-target effects and safeguard pollinators in urban and suburban areas.

Abi Saeed is the Extension Horticulture Specialist at Montana State University. She assists home gardeners, commercial and private green industry professionals, and county and reservation extension offices with horticulture-related programming, questions, concerns, and diagnostics throughout Montana. Abi has a research background in pollinator conservation, integrated pest management, and pollinator health through the University of Kentucky. Using her passion for pollinator conservation, Abi has built pollinator programming and publications through her roles in extension horticulture at Montana State University, Michigan State University, and Colorado State University.

The in-person meeting on April 17th will be held at the Mayflower Church, on the corner of Poly and Rehberg Lane. A social with coffee and cookies begins at 6:30PM; the program begins at 7:00PM.



YVAS programs are free and open to the public, featuring a special guest speaker the 3rd Monday of each month, September through May.

We are on the Web! yvaudubon.org

And on Facebook! facebook.com/yvaudubon

Clark's Fork Waterfowl Production Area Update

With the addition of a sign acknowledging the cooperative effort between YVAS, MT Fish Wildlife & Parks (MFWP) and US Fish Wildlife Service (USFWS), the final touches have been added to the Wildlife Viewing Structure and benches at the Clark's Fork Waterfowl Production Area (CFWPA).

This project started in April 2020 when Steve Regele, President of Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society, applied to the Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks "Watchable Wildlife" grant program. YVAS received funding for the shelter, two benches and trail work at the CFWPA a mile north of Bridger, MT. Many people assisted in the installation efforts and trail improvements including Steve Regele, Steve Linder, Deb Regele, Megan O'Reilly (MFWP), Jessica Gooseman (MFWP), Paul Santavy's crew (USFWS), and Shawn Stewart (USFS) who attached the sign on the shelter in March 2023.

MFWP will continue to mow a path to the shelter and viewing areas each summer as their schedule allows.

In 2015, YVAS provided funds for gravel and other needed supplies for the trail and drainage improvements through a somewhat swampy area in the lower part of the CFWPA. The USFWS brought in a backhoe to assist with the placement of the gravel and YVAS volunteers handled the placement of culverts, pipes, posts and metal netting. YVAS members who assisted in this effort include Steve Regele, Deb Regele, Steve Linder and June Baily.

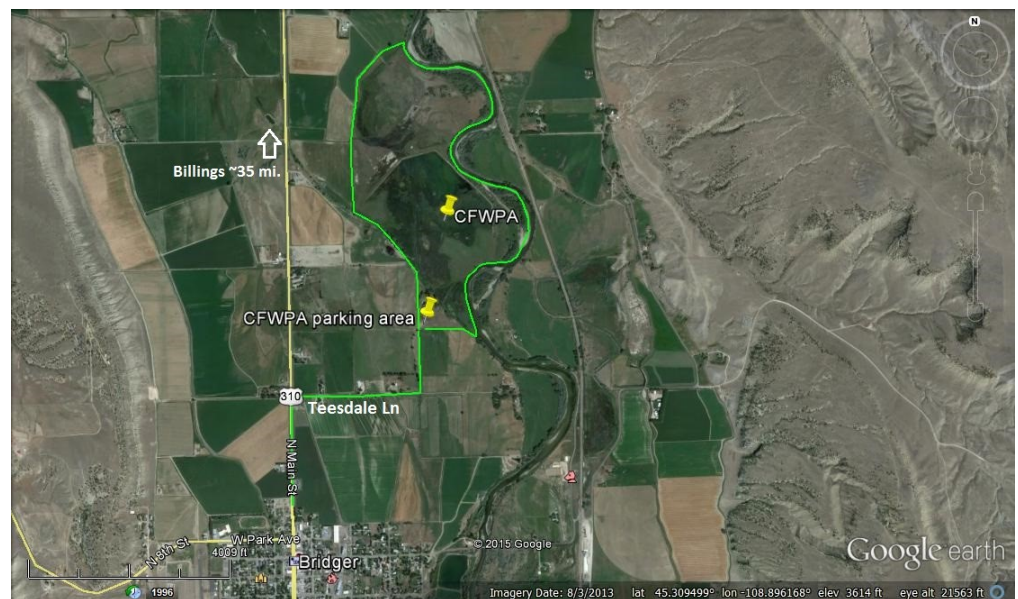
For more detailed information and future plans on this project, see the following issues of the Flyer. They can also be found on the YVAS website under Publications tab, then select Archived Flyers.

June/July 2020 Flyer at <https://yvaudubon.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/June-July-2020.pdf>

October 2020 Flyer at <https://yvaudubon.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/October-2020-YVAS-Flyer.pdf>



*Submitted by Deb Regele
Photos and graphics by
Steve and Deb Regele*



Project Feeder Watch: Not Just Counting Birds!

For those of you who have considered **Cornell Lab's Project Feeder Watch**, let me assure you it's not just sitting and counting the birds at your feeders. The season runs from Nov 1- April 30. The only requirement is that you watch for 2 days in a row and record numbers of each species. Then, as long as you wait at least 5 days there is no limit on time in between counts. Go on vacation for 2 weeks, no problem. Only had time to watch an hour one day? No problem. Flexible and easy

I've learned a lot from observing "my" birds, like chickadees are the first up in the morning and usually last to go to bed. If everyone flies away at once in the same direction, you can be sure there is an accipiter looking for a meal. That may even be the end of activity for that day. Even the squirrels freeze in place if there is an accipiter around.

In my yard at least, male and female Downey's and flickers are never feeding at the same time. Haven't figured that out, yet.



American Robin photo by Carolyn Jones

One last thing, the birds evidently can see my movement inside, and they'll disappear. Even staying 3 or 4 feet away from the window freaks them out. Still experimenting on that one.

Give it a try for a season and see what new things you learn! [Feederwatch.org](https://feederwatch.org) to register.

Submitted by Carolyn Jones

Only a Mother Could Love this Song



Northern Shrike photo by George Vlahakis

This winter I have been enjoying seeing a Northern Shrike that has been spending time between Shiloh Conservation Area and 48th St Ponds. Sometimes it is perched on a mullein plant, or a small tree. A couple times it hovered over the snowy landscape like a kestrel does.

I am not sure if it is the same bird but each time I go out I have spotted a Northern Shrike.

On March 3rd I was standing between Shiloh Conservation Area and 48th St, glassing for the Shrike. I could not find it and was ready to give up when I heard a strange song from the top of the tallest cottonwood. At first I thought it was a starling, as all sorts of disharmony is reflected in starling calls.

The lone bird atop the cottonwood was a singing Northern Shrike. I was surprised as I have never heard the spring song of this bird. Its song is reminiscent of a chattering parakeet.

It was not melodious or pretty as far as bird songs go, but it filled my heart on this late winter day. A week later I was back and searched for the Shrike in vain, hoping to hear it sing again. Perhaps it started its journey back north to its breeding grounds in Northern Canada?

Submitted by Mike Weber

BIRDING FIELD TRIPS COMING UP!

Contact Carolyn Jones at carolyn684@gmail.com or leave a TEXT for her at (406) 670-4449 to be included on the **Bird Trip Notification List**. Impromptu trips, changes and cancellations are notified by email to members on this list.

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. Passengers will share gas costs with drivers. Please DO NOT bring pets.

April 15	Sat	Pryor Mountains	Searching for Sagebrush Sparrow. Stan Heath, leader; Sack lunch.
April 22	Sat	Phipps Park 8:00 AM Phipps Parking Lot	Bluebirds & Blooms. Leaders: Carolyn Jones, Sue Weinreis, Jerry Dalton. Three-mile walk includes steep hike, so hiking poles recommend-
April 29	Sat	Exxon Ponds and Emerald Hills	Leader, Brian Henderson.
May 6	Sat	Broadview Ponds to Molt	8 AM to noon, roads permitting.
May 13	Sat	Lake Basin	Leader, Mike Weber; Sack lunch.
May 14	Sun	Pryor Mountains, Bear Canyon 6:30 AM at Rocky, or 7:30 AM at Bridger Rest Area.	Hiking and Birding. Leader, Trenay Hart Sack lunch.

Thank You Peter Cummins

After six years of keeping the YVAS membership on track, Peter Cummins is stepping down as the Membership Data Administrator. He has maintained the membership list including the mailing addresses, email addresses and renewal dates. He has also sent out membership renewal reminders to members, has forwarded mailing addresses to the printer for the mailing of the Flyer and assisted when and as needed. Thank you for your work and time Peter!

Membership Data Administrator Needed

YVAS is now looking for a volunteer Membership Data Administrator to continue where Peter left off. This person does need to be a member of YVAS, a user of MS Excel, the internet and email. See the above article "Thank You Peter Cummins" for other duties. If you are interested or want more information, contact Deb at debregele@gmail.com or home phone at 406-200-7873.

Twine Collection & Recycling Site (TCRS) needs Assistance



Need #1 Coordinator: Someone is needed to coordinate the logistics of the equipment at TCRS, especially for deliveries of twine. Large deliveries in tote sacks typically require the tractor to unload and transfer them to the shed. We use a 1949 Ford tractor with an adapted front-end bucket for the unloading of 400-600 pound tote sacks and the management of loose of twine.

Need #2 Tractor Drivers: We need a couple of volunteers able to drive the tractor and assist with the unloading of deliveries. Currently, we have a couple people to run the tractor, however they are not always available to assist with deliveries.

Need #3 Excavator Driver: At this time, the shed is almost full with very little room for more twine. We are waiting for a top-loading semi to pick up and deliver the twine to the reprocessing center in Minnesota. This is going to require someone to run the excavator (bucket with thumb) to transfer the twine from the shed to the top-loading semi-trailer. The excavator will be delivered to TCRS by Midway Rental in Laurel. We prefer to have several people able to operate the excavator since YVAS will need to plan around the trucking company's schedule.

The TCRS is located north of Laurel near the Laurel Airport. If you are interested or want more information, please contact Deb Regele at debregele@gmail.com or 406-200-7873.

Impromptu Birding Trip to Yellowtail Dam Afterbay

On a cloudy Sunday, February 26th, Mike Weber organized an impromptu birding trip to the Yellowtail Dam Afterbay. Participants along with Mike were Will Crane and Ron Kuhler. Numbers indicated in this narrative are the species tally, not a count of the individual birds. Birding activities started at approximately 8:00 AM. when the participants started the trip under the Billings Rims. Mike was able to identify a Canyon Wren (1) calling from a nearby rock face and Dark-eyed Juncos (2). Before departing Billings via US Highway 87, we added Rock Doves (3), Eurasian Collared-Doves (4) and Black-capped Chickadees (5). Along the way, we encountered Black-billed Magpies (6). Once past the junction with Pryor Road, we had a flyby with what were tentatively identified as Snow Buntings (unconfirmed).



Golden Eagle



Lapland Longspur

Proceeding down the road we encountered multiple groups of Horned Larks (7). Prairie dogs were evident in the flats along the road, and we noticed several raptors on the hill tops surrounding the prairie dog towns. During one stop, a Ferruginous Hawk (8), Bald Eagle(s) (9), Red Tail Hawk (10) and several Rough-legged Hawks (11) were sighted. It seemed that every highpoint around the prairie dog towns had a raptor or two on it. We also sighted a Golden Eagle (12) on a subsequent stop. As we drove closer to Hardin, we encountered multiple groups of Horned Larks in the fields and on the road. **During one stop to examine the Horned Larks, we encountered at least 5 Lapland Longspurs (13) feeding along the road.** Once we

reached Hardin, we continued along the Bighorn River to the Afterbay. Along the way, we found Ring Necked Pheasants (14), Mallards (15), Canada Geese (16), Northern Flickers (17), Starlings (18), American Crow (19) and Common Goldeneye (20). We also encountered additional Bald Eagles and the total count of eagles exceeded 13 during the trip.

First stop upon reaching the Afterbay area was the Bighorn River fishing access ramp downstream of the Afterbay Diversion Dam. In the spillway, we encountered Pied-billed Grebes (21) and a Common Merganser (22). We proceeded on to the top of the Afterbay dam and examined the waterfowl on the Afterbay. We observed Tundra Swans (23) Canvasback Ducks (24), American Coots (25), Buffleheads (26), Northern Pintails (27) American Wigeon (28), Gadwall (29), Red Head Ducks (30), Green-winged Teal (31), Ring-necked Duck (32), Lesser Scaup (33) and additional Mallards, Canada Geese, Common Mergansers and Common Goldeneye. **While observing the waterfowl, we noticed an odd mallard with blackish marks on a blue bill and a long tail. Upon subsequent observations, it was identified as a Mallard/Pintail hybrid.**



Hybrid Mallard-Pintail

We proceeded along the west side of the Afterbay and amongst the willows and cattails we observed American Tree Sparrows (33), American Robins (34), Black-capped Chickadees, a single Wilson Snipe (35) and a single Townsend Solitaire (36). We failed to locate an American Dipper nearer the main dam

but were able to add a Downy Woodpecker (37) during the side trip. We headed back to Hardin each of us competing to count the highest number of ring-necked pheasants grouped at every snow-free livestock area. We added an American Kestrel (38) during the drive to Hardin. Returning to Billings via I-90 we sighted a group of Sharp-tailed Grouse (39) on a field along the highway. The trip concluded around 3:30 PM with a quick art exhibition by Will Crane. The highlights of the trip were the mallard/pintail hybrid, Lapland Longspurs and Will's art exhibition. Thanks to Mike Weber for initiating the adventure!



Pied-billed Grebe

Submitted by Ron Kuhler

Photos by Will Crain



Northern Hawk Owl – Photo by Tracy Enterline,
taken in Wise River, MT, January 2023

**The Chickadee you see sitting on a tree? It might
be a hybrid**

“Hybrids of two common North American songbirds, the black-capped and mountain chickadee, are more likely to be found in places where humans have altered the landscape in some way.”

Grabenstein, K. C., Otter, K. A., Burg, T. M., & Taylor, S. A. (2023). Hybridization between closely related songbirds is related to human habitat disturbance. *Global Change Biology*, 29(4), 955-968.



Black-capped and Mountain Chickadee Hybrid – Photo
by Tracy Enterline, taken in her backyard, Columbus,
MT, January 2023

Coming up at Montana Audubon Center

Bird Stroll: April 8th from 8:30 - 10am

Enjoy a morning stroll by the river and learn about a few birds along the way. Great for beginning birders! On this monthly birding adventure, we will cover some birding basics, learn some bird calls/songs for ID by ear and work on our description skills to visually ID the species that we see. Come with your own gear or borrow some from us; we have binoculars and guidebooks available to check out. We hope to see you there on the 2nd Saturdays of the month.

Suggested donation \$10/adults, \$5/students, or free for MAC members

Advance registration is requested - visit
www.mtaudubon.org/center/adultprograms/workshopsclasses/

Spring Lecture Series: Bird Biology with David Lukas: April 19th, April 26th, May 3rd & May 10th, 2023 from 6pm-7pm.

Join us for a virtual (online) Spring Lecture Series on Bird Biology by naturalist David Lukas. David will cover Bird Bones & Skeletons, Bird Colors, Bird Songs and Bird Nests in this exploration into the life of birds. Learn more about your favorite living dinosaurs from a well-known speaker, writer, and naturalist. David has spent virtually every day of his life exploring the natural world— then merging personal observations and intensive scholarly research to craft astonishing stories and insights that he shares both in person and through his books, videos, and photographs. We are excited to have David Lukas as the bird expert for our Spring Lecture Series and we hope to see you all there.

\$15/Session for MAC Members

\$20/Session for Non-Members

\$50/All 4 Sessions for MAC Members

\$70/All 4 Sessions for Non-Members

Advanced registration required via our website-
www.mtaudubon.org/center/adultprograms/workshopsclasses/

Submitted by Rebecca Mathias

*Community Programs Coordinator & Fledglings Teacher
Naturalist*

(406) 294-5099 (Office)

rmathias@mtaudubon.org

YVAS MEETINGS & PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Next Board of Directors Meeting: April 10, 2023 —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: April 17, 2023. Programs will be held on the third Monday of the month at the Mayflower Church on the corner of Rehberg Lane and Poly Drive in Billings. Doors open at 6:30 for coffee and cookies; the program begins at 7:00 pm.

Board of Directors

President (Acting): Steve Linder 406-380-0073
beconl@bresnan.net
Vice President: vacant
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
Carolyn Jones 406-670-4449 carolyn684@gmail.com
Steve McConnell 509-868-8277 mcconnells@billingsmt.gov
Kristin Neva 406-672-8912 ksneva@gmail.com
Deb Regele 406-200-7873 debregele@gmail.com
Bruce Waage 406-698-3126 bruce.waage@outlook.com

Committees and Assignments

Christmas Bird Count: Jerry Dalton 406-656-3656
jerrydalton96@gmail.com
Facebook: Doreen Hartman 406-697-0277
rdzlhman@bresnan.net
Field Trip Chair: Carolyn Jones 406-670-4449
carolyn684@gmail.com
Flyer Editor: Kristin Neva 406-672-8912
yvasflyer@gmail.com

(Committees, continued)

Injured Raptors: Montana Raptor Conservation
Center 406-585-1211
Injured Waterfowl: WJH Bird Resources 406-652-
7175 wjhbird@yahoo.com
Membership Data: vacant
Mt Bluebird Habitat Project: Carolyn Jones 406-670-4449
carolyn684@gmail.com
Sue Weinreis 406-855-4181
granpeak47@gmail.com
Osprey Nest Monitor Coord: Deb Regele 406-200-7873
debregele@gmail.com
Osprey Research Coord: Marco Restani 460-425-2608
restani@stcloudstate.edu
Program Committee: YVAS Board of Directors
Publicity: YVAS Board of Directors
Recycling (aluminum): Larry Handsaker 406-855-
9832 or 918 Ave C, Billings
Recycling (baling twine): Deb Regele 406-200-7873
debregele@gmail.com
Doreen Hartman 406-697-
0277 rdzlhman@bresnan.net
Deb Regele 406-200-7873
debregele@gmail.com
Website: Deb Regele 406-200-7873
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.

⇒ **April renewal:** Angus and Margie Fulton, Pam Jones, Linda Wham

⇒ **Mar outstanding:** Gwen Emmerson, Jim & Peggy Good, Claudia Janecek, Joan McKeown, Steve & Kathy Shandera

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society
Application for New & Renewal Membership



Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Our federal tax ID number is 51-0206955.

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 _____

Do you want to receive the YVAS 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
PRST STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BILLINGS, MT
PERMIT NO. 27

WINGS ACROSS THE BIG SKY FESTIVAL



Sneed B. Collard III

Mark your calendars for the **Wings Across the Big Sky 2023**. Montana's premier birding festival, organized by Montana Audubon and this year's local host chapter, Upper Missouri Breaks Audubon, is scheduled to take place in Great Falls, **June 9th – 11th, 2023**, at the Heritage Inn. Numerous field trips will explore wildlife-rich landscapes of this historic and adventure-filled part of the state. Registration opens April 15th.

For the schedule and registration details, go to:

<https://mtaudubon.org/outreach/wings/>

The festival keynote speaker on June 9 is the acclaimed author, Sneed B. Collard III, who has written more than ninety books for young people. Sneed is a popular award-winning speaker and has spoken at numerous birding festivals and events.

During the presentation, Sneed will recount the entertaining adventures behind his humorous, award-winning memoir *Warblers and Woodpeckers: A Father-Son Big Year of Birding* (Mountaineers, 2018) and other bird books and articles. Along the way, participants will travel to some of America's best birding hotspots as well as South America, the Galápagos, and the Middle East. Sneed will share highlights of his son's and his "accidental Big Years" of 2022 starring Pinky, America's most famous flamingo.

To learn more about Sneed, visit his websites www.sneedbcollardiii.com and www.FatherSonBirding.com.

wings MONTANA
AUDUBON
across the big sky