

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 2023

VOLUME 53, NUMBER 5

Monday, May 15th, 2023, Monthly Program:

Welcome Back the Bluebirds!

with Jane Brockway, President of Mountain Bluebird Trails



Jane Brockway

The bluebird conservation movement started in the 1970's with Dr. Larry Zelany's article in National Geographic entitled, "Where Have the Bluebirds Gone?" The article detailed the loss of bluebird habitat and the disastrous effects of the introduction of two non-native species, the European Starling and the House Sparrow. This presentation will include a very brief history of the conservation efforts in the early days of the 1970's to today, current conservation efforts, and what interested people can do now. The program includes information on bluebird trail management, informational handouts, nest box plans, small exhibits, and beautiful photos.

Jane Brockway started "bluebirding" in 1998 when she and her husband bought his grandparents' ranch in Mineral County in Western Montana. They knew that there were bluebirds around the ranch, so they hung a couple of bluebird boxes...from there her trails have grown to 100 boxes! Jane is fortunate to have both Western and Mountain Bluebirds on her trails. She was trained to band in 2004, and now bands 200-350 bluebirds per year. Jane is Mountain Bluebird Trails President, Editor & Banding Administrator and also serves on the Board of Directors for the North American Bluebird Society.

If you would like to learn more about Mountain Bluebirds, please join us on Monday, May 15 at the Mayflower Church on the corner of Poly and Rehberg Lane. A social with coffee and cookies begins at 6:30 PM; the program begins at 7:00 PM.



YVAS Bluebirders at Phipps Park April 22



Mountain Bluebird pair

MEET YOUR YVAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Board Member: Bruce Waage

Where are you from and what was/is your profession?

I am a Minnesotan, hailing from Lake Minnetonka. I am now retired, but previously worked as a wildlife biologist.

What bird hooked you into birding?

I think it was a lot of different species I saw on a trip to the Florida's Everglade's - Roseate Spoonbills, Ibis, Anhingas and Gallinules

What is your favorite Montana bird species?

Red-headed Woodpecker.

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

Helping my grandson's Boy Scout troop to appreciate nature and birds.

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

That Golden Eagle's break off fresh pine boughs to decorate their nests.

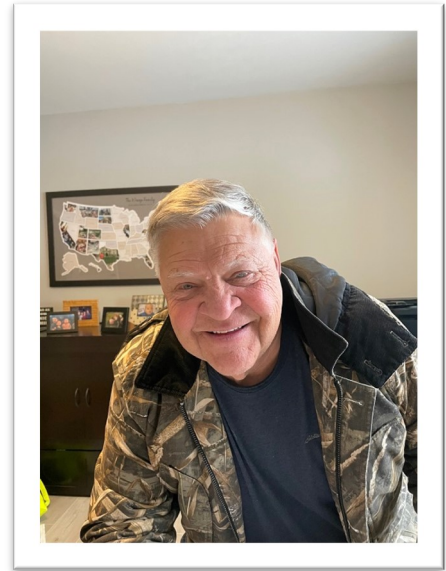
What do you like best about YVAS?

Everyone's enthusiasm for the environment and birds.

Where is your favorite place to go birding in Montana?

Broadwater Ponds.

Submitted by Sue Weinreis



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 otherwise in the specific trip information shown below. Passengers will share gas costs with drivers. Please DO NOT bring pets.

May 6	Sat	Broadview Ponds to Molt Meet 8 AM at Rocky	8 AM to noon, roads permitting. Leader needed.
May 13	Sat	Lake Basin Meet 8 AM at Rocky	Leader, Carolyn Jones 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.
May 20	Sat	Bridger Creek 8:00 AM Itch-Kep-Pe Park, Columbus	Stan Heath, leader Sack Lunch
May 21	Sun	Bluewater Fish Hatchery 7:00 AM Rocky OR 8:00 AM Bridger Rest Area	Fish and Fowl Leaders: Sue Weinreis and Linda Wham
May 23	Tue	Stillwater River/Woodbine Area 7:00 AM Rocky OR 8:00 AM Itch-Kep-Pe Park, Columbus	Leader, Carolyn Jones Sack lunch. Return to Billings by 5 PM.
May 25	Thu	Riverfront Park 5:30 PM Riverfront Park parking lot to right of entrance road. Mosquito repellant advised.	Evening Bird Stroll Leader, Mike Weber
May 27	Sat	Two Moon Park 8:00 a.m. Lower Two Moon parking lot	Chats, Warblers, and Starlings, Oh My! Leaders: Carolyn Jones & Sue Weinreis
June 1	Thu	Bundy Bridge Fishing Access/Pompey's Pillar 7:00 AM Rocky OR 8:00 a.m. Bundy Bridge Fishing Access	Leader, Carolyn Jones
June 6	Tue	Pryor Mountain, Sage Creek 7:30 AM Rocky OR 8:30 AM Bridger Rest Area	Leader, Stan Heath Sack lunch.

In Search of the Elusive Sagebrush Sparrow

"The Sagebrush Sparrow is an elegant sparrow intimately tied to the great open spaces of the intermountain West. They live among sagebrush and other shrubs, where they forage mostly on the ground for insects and seeds. In early summer, males sing an abrupt, lively song from the shrub tops, where their soft gray upperparts complement the muted, gray-green sage. These sparrows depend on intact, relatively undisturbed tracts of sage for their breeding success; they winter in desert scrub and grasslands in the Southwest and Mexico." From the Cornell Lab All About

Saturday, April 15, a group of 10 birders led by Stan Heath and Susan Hovde headed up Bear Canyon Road in the Pryor's to find a sagebrush sparrow. Although it seemed like it might take some time, the little fellow appeared soon and sang for us and gave us a good look, using several poses. In the same area we also saw sage thrashers and one that was trying desperately to impress a female. He sang a beautiful song, then started a display. Up, then down, then up again, around a circle, probably where the female was watching.

I don't know about her, but I was impressed!

Our next stop was to look for a mountain plover, but, alas, no success. After that, we left the sagebrush flats and headed over to the rail line road to check out birds in the creek and ponds. Nothing terribly exciting until we turned off and headed towards Bridger. Out in the open, under the windmills, there were 2 long-billed curlews who put on an exciting mating show! Could it get any better? Yes, a little further up the road we found a burrowing owl! Then outside of Bridger, we saw a huge flock of bohemian waxwings, probably about 300!

The next stop was the Clark's Fork Waterfowl Production Area. There were lots of birds there: Pelicans, tundra and trumpeter swans, marsh wrens and other assorted water birds. We also got a view of the new shelter Audubon put up. (See April Flyer for more details on the shelter.)

We had a very productive and educational day, with 55 species reported to eBird. Thanks, Stan and Susan.

Submitted by Carolyn Jones



Sage Thrasher photo by Tracy Enterline



Sagebrush Sparrow photo by Tracy Enterline



Chirps and Tweets



- ◆ **The Yellowstone River Osprey Project** kicked off this April with meetings for new nest monitors in Livingston and Billings. Thirty returning and 10 new nest monitors are led by Marco Restani, Research Coordinator, and Deb Regele, Nest Monitor Coordinator. Now into the 15th year of the project, the enthusiasm of the volunteer monitors does not fade as they use Google groups to report (and even boast) about their assigned osprey's nest building, mating, home defense strategies and more. Every monitor hopes for healthy nestlings that can join the study population of banded birds, but braces for possible heartbreak.
- ◆ **Membership Data Administrator Needed:** YVAS is looking for a volunteer to be our new Membership Data Administrator. This work can be done on your home computer or laptop. It requires use of MS Excel, the internet and email. If you are interested or want more information, contact Deb at debregele@gmail.com or home phone at 406-200-7873.
- ◆ **April Flyer Correction:** On page 2 in the second paragraph, please note that Shawn Stewart is with the MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks, not the US Forest Service.

A Window into Nature at St. Francis

Isaac Augustine, a 7th grader at St. Francis Catholic School, along with about fifty other 7th grade students in Dale Rumph's science class made clear fiberglass birdfeeders to be placed in windows around the school and in their homes.

This female House Finch was found in the birdfeeder outside a 4th grade classroom on April 12, 2023. The find prompted Isaac to start a discussion with the 4th graders about the type of bird, when they migrate, and the feeder they used to entice the finch.

Thank you, St. Francis, for encouraging the interest of wildlife in our youth!

Submitted by Erin Augustine



Isaac Augustine



Coming up at Montana Audubon Center

Please register in advance on the MAC website for all activities: mtaudubon.org/center

May 2nd Evening Exploration: 1st Tuesday of the month, May-August, 4:30pm-7:30pm

Explore and enjoy the ponds, the wildlife and the changes in our plants as we move from winter to spring and spring to summer. Or get in a canoe and explore the ponds with the setting sun. Choose your own adventure and enjoy this special time outside with your friends and family.

Suggested donation \$10/canoe, Free for members of MAC.

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 Spring Lecture Series on Bird Biology by naturalist David Lukas. His creative presentation takes advantage of the Zoom interface to engage and delight the audience with a fresh perspective on birds, covering Bird Bones & Skeletons, Bird Colors, Bird Songs and Bird Nests. \$15 per Session or \$50 for all 4 Sessions for Members of MAC. \$20 per Session or \$70 for all 4 Sessions for Non-Members.

May 13 Bird Stroll: 2nd Saturday of the month from 8:30 - 10am. Suggested donation \$10/adults, \$5/students, or free for MAC members.

May 13 Weekend Wonders Family Program: 2nd Saturday of the month from 10:30am-12pm. Every month features a nature theme, an outdoor adventure, and a hands-on learning experience from an expert in their field. **May Theme: Nature Journaling.** We will make our own nature journals, learn different styles of journaling, practice our observation skills and record what we see, feel and hear around us. Suggested donation \$5/person or free for MAC members.

Montana Master Naturalist: 5-Day Course

June 12th-16th, 2023 from 8:30am-4:30pm

This course is designed for adults who want to deepen their knowledge of the natural world. We'll explore everything from birds and insects to mammals and plant ID. You'll hone your naturalist skills as we practice birding, journaling, making connections in nature, and the art of observation.

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: May 8, 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: May 15, 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
debregle@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
debregle@gmail.com
Doreen Hartman 406-697-
0277 rdzlhman@bresnan.net
Website: Deb Regele 406-200-7873
debregle@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.

- ♦ May renewal: Jeff DiBenedetto, Tracy Enterline, Randy Heinz, Megan O'Reilly, Marco Restani, Gail Speck
- ♦ April outstanding: Angus & Margie Fulton, Gordon & Susan Hills, Pam Jones, Linda Wham

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
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SANDHILL CRANES ON THE PLATTE

This photo is from our March 13 trip to the Wood River Nebraska area to see the Sandhill Crane migration. We spent one morning at the Crane Trust Center, which is located on the banks of the Platte River. The Crane trust offers up close viewing opportunities of cranes and all types of migrating waterfowl from their blinds right across from sandbars along the Platte. From the blinds, we were able to observe the dawn departure of cranes and snow geese as they headed to nearby corn fields where they feed all day.

There were spectacular viewing opportunities just driving along the rural roads. The Crane Trust estimated close to 500 thousand cranes on March 15.

Peak migration dates vary by year, but the last 2 weeks of March are consistent times to see hundreds of thousands.

Submitted by Jeff Dunham

