

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.

APRIL 2024

VOLUME 54, NUMBER 4

THE BENEFITS OF TREES

The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 provided \$1.5 billion in federal funding directed specifically at Urban Forestry, an unprecedented investment aimed at solving consequential problems and improving our quality of life using a tool that has been all around us but has seldom been recognized as a tool for creating positive change – TREES.

Trees are not just ornaments or objects of mystery and beauty. And they are not just sources of leaves to rake or clean off your roof in the fall. And they are not even something that is always in the way if you are a city worker and you are trying to put in a pipe, road sign, wire or make sure sidewalks are free of tripping hazards.



Billings downtown - CC photo

What they are, used correctly, is “green infrastructure” that can create communities out of a collection of buildings and roads by creating ambience that calms and cools and provides residents with positive feelings towards each other, their experience of being part of a community and a better and more optimistic connection to the present and their future.

Recognizing the value of trees and their importance to the community, Billings applied for and was awarded a \$1million grant with which it will be able to plant trees in the boulevards of neighborhoods in Billings that were identified as being “disadvantaged” using a “Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool” developed by the US Forest Service specifically for the purpose of getting a difference-making amount of funding available to create the opportunities Urban Forestry can provide in the communities that need trees and green infrastructure the most.

Join us on April 15th at 7 PM for the monthly Audubon Program to hear Steve talk about the progress to date on this grant and what people can expect to see over the next 5 years as the current ideas and hopes turn into trees in the ground guided by thoughtful community discussions and (we hope!) a lot of help from volunteers and people that love trees. Steve’s talk will focus in particular on the two overarching goals the funding was created to address, Climate Mitigation (especially of “heat islands”) and Social Equity, sometimes also called Tree Equity.

Steve will also discuss specifically how trees benefit birds, provide an overview of which trees benefit specific birds or types of birds and talk about some of the bird-friendly habitats that exist in Billings (often overlooked) Natural Areas.

Steve has been Billings City Forester since January 2017 and this is among your last chances to hear from him as he is retiring in May. Prior to his move to Billings, Steve worked as a Regional Extension Specialist in Forestry for Washington State University. Housed in Spokane, he covered most of NE and SE Washington, and, as most of the population of eastern Washington (84%) lives in cities, it was in that position that Steve began his urban forestry career. Steve’s formal education includes a B.S, M.S. and PhD degrees in Forestry. Steve has five children between the ages of 17 and 27. Outside of his children, nothing brings Steve more joy than planting trees into an area that lacks them, working with his crew to maintain the trees Billings already has and helping city residents better appreciate their urban forest by communicating to them the benefits trees provide and the ways they improve our quality of life.



Steve McConnell

Submitted by Steve McConnell



Chirps and Tweets



- ♦ The culmination of the Conservation grant awarded to Isaac Augustine came on March 15th with the dramatic installation of a metal roof on the barn swallow nesting structure in Rose Park. A story and photos are on page 4 of this Flyer.
- ♦ Help support the YVAS Educational Fund by recycling aluminum cans, old license plates and other unwanted aluminum items with YVAS. The Education Fund supports a variety of projects as educational signs in public parks, Citizen Science Kits at the Billings Public Library and other educational efforts. There are three convenient places available to drop off your aluminum. Secure bags can be left by the garage at Larry Handsaker's (918 Avenue C, 406-855-9832), Helen and Peter Cummins (519 Highland Park Drive, 406-248-8684), or you can bring them to a YVAS monthly Chapter Program (see Deb) September through May. If you have a large load, call Larry and he will be happy to pick it up.

Birding Field Trips

DATE	DAY	DESCRIPTION & LEADERS
April 13	Sat	Pryor Mountains: Search for the Sagebrush Sparrow. Stan Heath and Susan Hovde, leaders. Sack lunch. 7:30 am Bridger Park south end Main St, Bridger.
April 27	Sat	Phipps Park: Bluebirds & Blooms. Carolyn Jones and Sue Weinreis, leaders. STEEP HIKE to the top of Phipps Park, 3 miles total. Hiking poles recommended. 8am Phipps Parking Lot
May 5	Sun	Exxon Ponds and Emerald Hills Mike Weber, leader. 7:30 am Rocky, OR 8am Exxon Gate on Johnson Ln
May 11	Sat	Broadview Ponds. Carolyn Jones, leader. 8am Rocky
May 18	Sat	Bridger Creek. Stan Heath and Susan Hovde, leaders. Sack lunch. 8am Itch-Kep-Pe Park, Columbus

Montana Audubon Center Events

Register in advance for all events at <https://mtaudubon.org/center>

From the Center Director, Emily Chilcoat:

We're getting ready to dive into a world of adventure and exploration, as we wrap up 4th-grade class visits and prepare to welcome 70+ classes and groups to learn, laugh, and grow with us. We're also counting down the days until migratory waterfowl, seasonal songbirds, and resident serpents make their appearance and are keeping a close eye out for the first blooms of the season.

Spring also means the kickstart of this year's volunteer season. This year's initiatives include tree identification and health surveys, West End Pollinator Garden and the Demonstration Garden maintenance, pond health surveys, and Nest Watch monitoring. If you're looking to get out and make a difference this summer we'd love to hear from you. If learning is more of your forte, join us for our upcoming community programs.

Montana Audubon Center
7026 South Billings Blvd.
Billings, MT 59101
Office: (406) 294-5099
Cell: (406) 794-8095

Climate Lecture- Earth's climate past and future: It is almost always carbon dioxide's fault!

Presented by Derek Sjostrom, April 2nd, 6:30-7:30 pm, suggested donation of \$5.

Morning Bird Stroll, April 13th, 8:30 am-10:00 am, suggested donation of \$10 for adults, \$5 for students, and free for members.

Weekend Wonders Family Program, April 13th, 10:30 am - 12:00 pm, suggested donation of \$5 per person, free for members.

Nature Nuts - toddler & me program, Every Tuesday 10:00 am- 11:00 am, suggested donation \$5 per person,

Corrections

Apologies from the Editor! The March Flyer page 3 article by Mike Weber "Getting Schooled by a White Goose," featured photos that were all by Will Crain. These photos were erroneously attributed to Mike Weber.

Boy Scout Initiative provides nesting habitat for Barn Swallows

In September 2023, middle-schooler Isaac Augustine approached the YVAS Board with the idea of building a large structure to shelter multiple barn swallow nests. He had researched the type of swallow structure that was successful in Canada and had started conversations with the Billings Parks and Recreation Department about possible sites. The plan was to work on the swallow nest structure with his Boy Scout Troup 52 over the winter and to set it up prior to the spring nesting season. YVAS encouraged him to apply for a Conservation Grant with some conditions, such as obtaining approvals from Park and Recs and providing a report at the end of the project.

Following approval of the grant in November, Isaac's grandfather, Bruce Waage, helped arrange for the posts to be erected in Rose Park. On March 15th all the elements were ready for installation of the nest structure, and KTVQ documented the final assembly and elevation of the roof by Langlas Construction.

KTVQ's excellent coverage of the event can be seen [HERE](#).



Raising the roof - Photo by Pam Pipal



Roof installation - Photo by Pam Pipal



Finished swallow structure - Photo by Bruce Waage



Installation of sign - Photo by Bruce Waage

A Glimpse of Tanzanian Birds

We recently returned from a fabulous wildlife and birding trip to Tanzania. Our group booked the trip through Tupo Africa Safaris, which is owned and operated by Beth Hamilton and her husband (our guide) Deo Kessy. Beth is a Physicians Assistant at the Billings Clinic and Deo is a native Tanzanian who lives in Tanzania during the safari season.

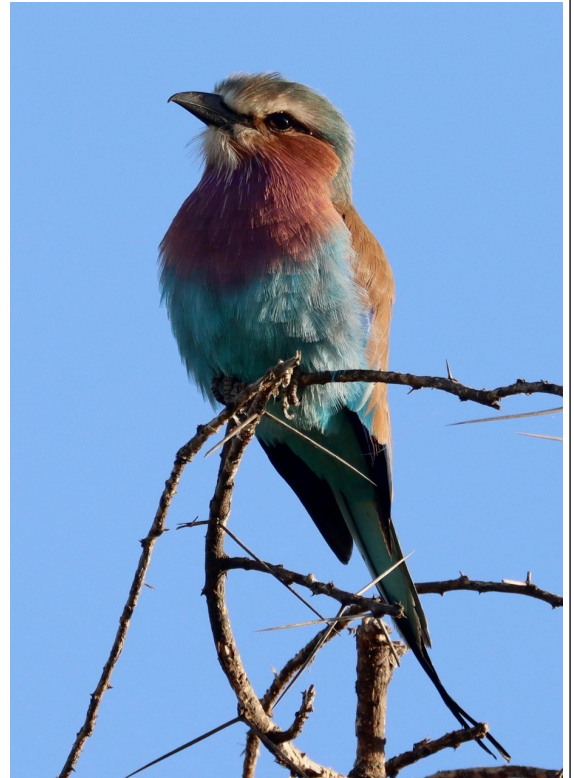
Deo met our group of four at the airport and was our guide for the entire trip. Deo, a native Tanzanian, daily shared his wealth of knowledge about his country, its wonderful people, wildlife, and birds.

Although we did not focus on birding every day, we were very thrilled to add over 150 new species to our life list! The birding was simply incredible.

If you have ever thought about visiting Tanzania and have questions I would highly encourage you to reach out to Deo or Beth through their website <http://tupoafricasafaris.com>. Our trip was fully customizable and exceeded our expectations in every way.

You can also contact Jeff or Brenda Dunham with specific birding or other questions at mtangler62@gmail.com.

Submitted by Jeff Dunham



Lilac-breasted Roller - Photo by Jeff Dunham



Pin-tailed Whydah - Photo by Jeff Dunham



Woodland Kingfisher - Photo by Jeff Dunham

YVAS MEETINGS & PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Next Board of Directors Meeting: April 8, 2024 —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: April 15, 2024. 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: Open – Contact any Board Member
 Vice President: Vacant
 Secretary: Sue Weinreis 406-855-4181
 granpeak47@gmail.com
 Treasurer: Pam Pipal 406-245-4517 ppipal@charter.net

Board Members

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: Ginny Waples 406-850-1056
 waplesv@gmail.com
 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: Deb Regele 406-200-7873
 debregle@gmail.com
 Mt Bluebird Habitat Project: Carolyn Jones 406-670-4449
 carolyn684@gmail.com, and
 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
 Website: Deb Regele 406-200-7873 debregle@gmail.com

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



Spring has arrived. Red-winged Blackbird.
Acrylic on paper by Mike Weber.

***** Membership Updates *****

In an effort to keep our members advised of their membership status, members within the renewal period will be printed at the back of each Flyer. A renewal reminder will also be sent by email or USPS. YVAS now has a 60-day grace period for renewals.

Your memberships help to provide for speakers at YVAS monthly meetings, the YVAS newsletter the *Flyer*, bird studies and conservation efforts. YVAS is affiliated with the National Audubon Society. We do not share your membership information including your address, phone or email address with any other organization.

Memberships up for renewal at the end of April are

Peggy Arnold, Jim & Virginia Court, Angus & Margie Fulton, Trenay Hart, Gordon & Susan Hills, Pam Jones, Chris Miller and Pat & Scott Vandell.

If you have any questions regarding your membership, please contact the Membership Administrator (Deb) at YVAS.membership.data@gmail.com or 406-200-7873.

