

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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OSPREY



Osprey parent oversees Yellowstone Valley Electric Cooperative bucket truck lift researcher to Laurel nest. Photo by Jim Wiggins.

YVAS NEST MONITORING Between 1950 and 1970, use of DDT was widespread. By late 1960, the populations of brown pelicans, bald eagles, peregrine falcons, white pelicans, golden eagles, ospreys, and other birds had declined significantly. This was due in part to birds' failure to reproduce because of the effect DDT had on their ability to metabolize calcium, which resulted in the thinning and breaking of eggshells. When the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was established in 1972, DDT was banned in most regions of the United States.

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society (YVAS) volunteers monitor and record data at osprey nests along the Yellowstone River from Big Timber to Miles City (Montana). This project began in the summer of 2009 with the surveying and mapping of known osprey nests from Big Timber to Miles City by YVAS members Monty Sullins, Robert Lubbers and George Mowat. Trained volunteers adopt one or two nests early in the spring and follow up with a visit to each nest for 30 minutes every one to two weeks. All data is submitted to the Montana Natural Heritage Program. In 2014 there were 27 trained nest monitors in the field who covered some 94 nests, not all of which were successful.

Ospreys have a dangerous habit of building nests on power poles. The dangling sticks and bailing twine cause power outages and fire. In addition to monitoring nests, YVAS supports and fosters safe nesting pole alternatives. Since 2010, YVAS has collaborated with Federal and State wildlife agencies and local power companies to establish nesting platforms at the Duck Creek Fishing Access, Riverfront Park and, most recently, at the Osprey

Outpost on Highway 212 in Laurel.

THE OSPREY PROJECT YVAS collaborates with Rocky Mountain College's (RMC) Yellowstone River Research Center (YRRC) and Assistant Professor Kayhan Ostovar on the Osprey Project, now in its third year, to further the study of osprey along the Yellowstone River. Professor Marco Restani of St. Cloud State University, a nationally known ornithologist, co-directs research that includes recovering nestlings to band and to sample blood, and to take measurements, and weight to determine age and toxin levels, especially mercury. Coal burning is a main source of mercury, which can enter the river and food chain through a variety of methods. At the end of this season, the project will have sampled a total of nearly 60 nests and banded "well over" 100 chicks in the past three years. Dr. Restani partners with the YVAS nest monitors to gather data. Money from the TogetherGreen Grant and data from YVAS volunteer osprey monitors helped support a RMC intern's osprey study.

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YVAS MEETINGS

All YVAS Meetings are at Mayflower Congregational Church, corner of Rehberg Lane and Poly Drive, Billings, MT unless otherwise noted. The public is welcome, there is no admission fee and ample free parking is available.

Monday, August 11, 6:00pm: Board of Directors Meeting

Monday, September 8, 6:00pm: Board of Directors Meeting

Monday, September 15, 7:00pm: General Membership Meeting



☞ We're on the web! yvaudubon.org

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MESSAGE FROM MARCO: Osprey Offerings

- Fledging – to leave the nest for the first time (usually via flight). Once a nestling has fledged, it is referred to as either a fledgling or a juvenile. Some juvenile ospreys will return to the nest to feed after they have fledged
- Most individuals of a single brood fledge on the same date.
- Nestling ospreys fledge when approximately 50-55 days old. We typically band nestlings when they are 30-40 days old, so nestlings can be expected to remain in the nest another 2-3 weeks after banding.
- Siblings often associate with one another after fledging, and there is some indication that nestlings with siblings learn to fish faster than nestlings that don't have siblings. Parents feed their fledged young for 2-3 weeks before the family group finally breaks up, and adults and juveniles prepare to migrate. It takes fledglings about two weeks before they finally learn how to catch a fish.



Renee Seacor, last year's YVAS RMC osprey intern, accomplished something done very rarely by an undergraduate - publishing in a scientific journal. See her paper 'baling twine - osprey entanglement' at the following link: <http://canadianfieldnaturalist.ca/index.php/cfn/issue/current>). Thanks to all for supporting her efforts!

CONSERVATION

⇒ Tar sands mining in the heart of Canada's boreal forest is putting millions of America's migratory birds in jeopardy and has already resulted in hundreds of thousands of fatalities, according to a recently released report by the National Wildlife Federation and Natural Resources Council of Maine. Read more at [Ecowatch.com](http://ecowatch.com)

⇒ June 19, 2014, American Bird Conservancy (ABC) filed suit in federal court against the Department of the Interior (DOI), charging DOI with multiple violations of federal law in connection with its December 9, 2013, final regulation that allows wind energy companies and others to obtain 30-year permits to kill eagles without prosecution by the federal government. Read more at www.abcbirds.org

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society Officers: AREA CODE 406

President: Steve Regele, 962-3115, sregele@juno.com
Vice-President: open
Secretary: Dorothy Bartlett, 252-0757, dpadanyi@live.com
Treasurer: Pam Pipal, 425-4517, ppipal@charter.net

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Montana's Congressional Delegation:

John Walsh: U.S. Senate, Wash. D.C. 20510
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 email: john@walsh.senate.gov
 Billings: 657-6790 Wash. D.C.: 1-800-332-6160
Sen. Jon Tester: U.S. Senate, Wash. D.C. 20510
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 Billings: 252-0550 Wash. D.C.: 1-866-554-4403
Rep. Steve Daines: U.S. House of Rep. Wash. D.C. 20515
 website: www.daines.house.gov
 email: steve.daines@mail.house.gov
 Wash, DC: 202-225-3211

Committees and Special Assignments:

Audubon Adventures: Jerry Dalton, daltonlj@centurylink.net
 Bird Questions: George Mowat, 656-7467 or
 Helen Carlson Cummins, 248-8684
 Birdathon: Ruth Vanderhorst, 245-5118, acr@bresnan.net
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 Program Chair: Sheila McKay, 652-7175, wjhbird@yahoo.com
 Recycling (aluminum): Larry Handsaker, 406-855-9832
 Website: Deb Regele, 962-3115, dregele@juno.com

Meetings are held September through May at Mayflower Congregational Church, corner of Poly and Rehberg, Billings, MT:

- Board Meetings are held the second Monday of each month at 6:00pm. Board Meetings are open to the entire membership.
- General Chapter Meetings are held the third Monday of each month at 7:00pm. All meetings are open to the public.



FIELD TRIP NOTES

SATURDAY, MAY 10 RIVERFRONT PARK

George Mowat led about a dozen birdwatchers through Riverfront Park. The resident species that were seen included Mallard, Canada Geese and goslings, American Robin, Bald Eagle, Common Merganser, Downy Woodpecker, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Northern Flicker, Song Sparrow, European Starling, Red-tailed Hawk, and Lesser Scaup. Migrant species included Red-winged Blackbirds, House Wrens, Mourning Doves, Yellow Warblers, Brown-headed Cowbirds, and 13 American white Pelicans. In addition some of the group saw a Wood Duck and a Yellow-breasted chat. Perhaps the cooler than normal spring weather limited some species which we usually see on that date. Approximately half of the cottonwood trees had leafed out. Submitted by Lois Dalton



SATURDAY, JUNE 14 RED LODGE

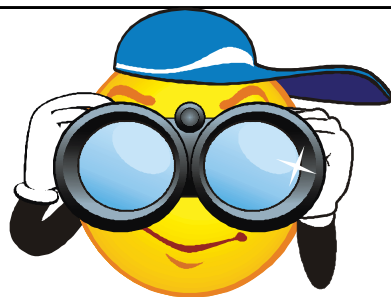


AMERICAN DIPPER Red Lodge Creek
Photo by Will Crain

The weather forecast was “iffy” at best and the early morning started out with a drizzle, but the day became increasingly pleasant and ended up pretty much perfect. Ruth Vanderhorst led a caravan of seven cars, birding along the way to Red Lodge. We paused by the 64th Street ponds, were reminded how beautiful Yellow-headed Blackbirds are, and then checked on an Osprey nest in Laurel. We stopped at the rest area outside Joliet and were joined by more birders. By the time we got to Red Lodge, we had already seen over a dozen species. In Red Lodge, YVAS member Stan Heath took over the leadership of the outing. We began at two fishing accesses on Rock Creek. Everything is so beautiful and green this year!

I should mention that a number of the birders on this trip had attended Marco Restani’s bird identification classes the previous week, and there was a lot of discussion about the things we had learned and were trying to put into practice on this trip. One of the things I noticed is that we all spent more time listening to bird songs and using the songs to find and

to identify the passerines and empidonaxs. Most interesting was a Willow Flycatcher that we heard and saw in a valley outside of Red Lodge. Marco had talked about the difficulty of differentiating between flycatchers, and Stan Heath started out by telling us the same thing. The difference in markings are so subtle that even if you have them in hand to examine, it’s almost impossible. The song is what makes the difference, and we were fortunate to experience this. We identified over 60 species on this trip. We had an exceptional look at a Spotted Towhee that sat still and looked back at us. On Red Lodge Creek we observed a pair of American Dippers who put on a good viewing for us, partly because we think there was a nest under the bridge, and all the people on the bridge kept them from feeling comfortable going to their nest - probably to feed their young. Other species identified included Yellow Warblers, several flycatchers, Downy and Hairy Woodpecker, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Mountain Bluebird, Long-billed curlew and many others. Thanks to our leaders, Ruth Vanderhorst and Stan Heath. Submitted by Dorothy Bartlett



BINOCULAR UPDATE

Before you sign up for a birding class, consider evaluating your options for equipment. Visit <http://www.audubonmagazine.org/articles/living/audubon-guide-binoculars>

The “Audubon Guide to Binoculars” by Wayne Mones, published: 11/18/2013. When it comes to birdwatching, what you choose to look through makes all the difference. “I see them whenever I lead bird walks--birders who cannot find the objects of

their affection with their binoculars. When they do manage to find a bird, they can't keep it in their binocular field, can't see field marks, and can't distinguish subtle colors. Often they leave in frustration before the walk is over.”

SATURDAY, JUNE 21 PRYOR MOUNTAINS

There isn't a better way to spend the Summer Solstice than birding with a dozen fellow YVAS members on a field trip through the Pryor Mountains/Bridger sage-steep, Important Bird Area. Experienced leader, George Mowat guided us in finding 59 bird species in 12 hours, and putting over 200 miles on the odometer. Dr. Marco Restani, ornithologist extraordinaire, joined up to quiz his students, who were with the group, on the taxonomy, topography and behavior of birds...or maybe just to have fun. Many of the members did the usual meeting at RMC and headed southwest to the rest area just north of Bridger to meet up with others for the day. The convoy of birders traveled through the city of Bridger enjoying a wake of Turkey Vultures coming off roost. Driving east into the Pryor's via Rushwater Rd, was a productive stop along the Riparian habitat, where we enjoyed the usual fare of summer birds--from Lazuli Bunting to Yellow Warblers-- a Raven's nest was observed near a local home. The three nestling Ravens were quite vocal although, by the size of them, they did not look neglected or hungry. Once into the grasslands, Helen Carlson identified a solitary Sprague's pipit along the roadside. Thanks to her keen observation and extensive birding experience, many of us scored a life bird that otherwise surely would have been missed. Meandering through the hills gaining elevation and moving from sage brush to deciduous trees to coniferous forest, we enjoyed perfect weather. The usual lunch stop at Mick Knight's hummingbird paradise on Sage Creek was pleasant, and we moved on to find the Ice cave. Despite a BLM ranger assuring us passage was possible on the road to the Ice Cave, our lead driver Bob Hill decided to turn the convoy around, as it was a marginal pass that would put our tour behind a good two hours. From there, on the suggestion and memory of Ruth Vanderhorst, we came to the conifers at Crooked Creek and checked off two amazing birds: Williamson's Sapsucker and the Black-backed Woodpecker. The trip concluded with a spectacular drive down the Crooked Creek canyon to Cowley, Wyoming and home. Submitted by Trenay Allen Hart

The Pryor Mountains occupy a 145,000-square-mile region of Montana and Wyoming. They are located on the Crow Indian Reservation and the Custer National Forest, south of Billings, Montana, and north of Lovell, Wyoming. It is the driest area in Montana and supports the state's only stand of Utah juniper. Bear Canyon supports more than a dozen species on the Montana Priority Bird Species List. It has the highest known number of nesting Blue-gray Gnatcatchers in its foothill canyons that constitute the entire range of the species in Montana. See pryormountains.org for more information.

BIRDATHON 2014 MOST SUCCESSFUL YET



The 2014 annual **BIRDATHON** fundraiser, May 31-June 1, was a great success. The Chair, Ruth Vanderhorst, reported several positive changes that made it so. First, this year 5 teams involving 14 persons participated. Second, a record 150 species were identified and third, \$2486.00 was raised through the generous contributions of supporters.

The many persons, members and nonmembers, who supported the Birdathon are greatly appreciated. Some contributed per species, some split their contributions so that all five teams were credited with solicitation. However contributions were made, they are welcomed and are earmarked to support the Osprey Project. So, thanks to The Avian Rangers (previously Cravin Ravens) who again achieved top honors for identifying the most species, 117, breaking their record of 2013. They are congratulated! The most funds were raised by the Senior Moments again this year, followed closely by the Team Gold-eneye. Kudos to both of those teams. The numbers of species identified and amount of

funds raised for YVAS are listed below: Avian Rangers (Mike Weber, Will Crain. And Robert Hill) 117 species; raised \$154. Senior Moments (Ruth Vanderhorst, Phil McBride, Nancy Traeger and Jerry Dalton). 101 species, raised \$875. Snipe Hunters (George Mowat and Ron Kuhler) 89 Species; raised \$280.

Total Pledges: \$2549.50; Total Expenses: 83.44 Total Profit: \$2466.06 Submitted by Ruth Vanderhorst



SUMMER NESTING MATERIALS

- **National Audubon Bird Cams Live Online** Visit www.explore.com

Audubon's live bird cams are online, providing a window into the wonderful world of birds. Tune in all summer long to watch an osprey couple raise their three chicks on Maine's remote Hog Island, enjoy the antics of puffins on the rocky coast of Seal Island, or explore a puffin burrow and watch the parents incubate their egg and wait for the puffin to emerge. An exciting new feature this year is that the puffin cams are equipped with sound, allowing viewers to hear the voices of birds. Find the bird cams on the website.

- **Cornell Labs All About Birds**

Visit <http://www.garyengbergoutdoors.com/blog/2014/07/17/cornell-lab-eneews-summer-birdhouse-tips-and-great-feeder-ideas-7-17-2014/>

- **Watch Snowy Owlets** in Alaska: Snowy Owls nest in the 24-hour sunlight in the tundra around Barrow, Alaska. Now you can watch one of these nests, featuring seven growing owlets, live on the Bird Cams. The camera is located a respectful distance from the nest, so be aware that the owlets are not always visible (they tend to hunker behind a low rise). But their parents visit regularly with meals of lemming and duck—as you can see in this video highlight. What are the owlets up to now? Check in on the Snowy Owl cam on the website.
- **Go Beyond the Sunflower Seed:** Try 'Summer Bird Feeding Tips'. Sure, winter is prime time for feeding birds, but birds flock to feeders in summer, too. Especially in midsummer, after they've fledged a brood from their nest and they've got new mouths to feed. It's also a great time to try offering more than seeds, and to look for migratory visitors such as orioles and grosbeaks that will be in the tropics come December. Click through for a full set of summer bird feeding tips on the website.
- **"All About Birdhouses"** has all you need to host your feathered neighbors. The 'NestWatch' project has just launched a great new site that can help you provide safe, attractive homes for birds in your yard. Learn which species to expect near you, when they will be nesting, what size birdhouse they need, how to build one, where to put it, and how to keep it safe from predators, on the website.

- **American Bird Conservancy** Visit <https://www.youtube.com/user/abcbirds>

- **ABC's Youtube: Students Expose Link between Humans, Corvid Predation and Marbled Murrelet Decline** Seventh and eighth graders from Oregon's Newport Preparatory Academy recently went on a field trip to Cape Perpetua on the central Oregon coast. Teams of kids went from station to station to learn about old-growth, forest ecology, the threatened Marbled Murrelet, and corvids (jays, ravens, and crows). Afterwards the twelve students each made YouTube videos about what they had learned. They are just awesome (see link below)!

<https://sites.google.com/a/lincoln.k12.or.us/collson-s-npa-website/home/marbled-murrelets-corvids>.

- **Bird Songs on ABC's Youtube Channel** ABC's YouTube channel has a growing archive of bird songs and short video clips; see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PB0QyShvqAg&list=PLsAsLroa7HAKHVjis5MjXgPbJeo-Felx8>.

- **PBS** Visit <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/episodes/outback-pelicans/>

Outback Pelicans: the Australian pelican is built for long-distance travel. One of the largest pelicans in the pelican family, with a light skeleton and a wingspan of over eight feet, it can be airborne all day and deep into the night, riding far and high on rising thermals. When rare weather systems bring heavy rains, huge numbers of Australian pelicans abandon the sea and coastal waters, and embark on a mass pilgrimage to a place a thousand miles inland. It's the last place you would look for one of their kind – the Australian Outback, one of the driest, hottest places on the planet.

- **American Prairie Foundation** visit americanprairie.org

Wildflowers are a special treat for creatures big and small, and they are a colorful reminder of the many secrets that the prairie holds for those that slow down long enough to spot the savvy, vibrant adaptations of life on the Northern Plains. Experience more shades of spring and summer in our new flower photo gallery. See the website to help you identify local wildflowers.

- **National Wildlife Federation** visit <http://online.nwf.org/>

About 75 per cent of flowering plants rely on pollinators, such as the graceful monarch butterfly. But sadly, pollinators—especially monarchs—are on the decline worldwide. In fact, in California alone, the number of overwintering monarchs found up and down the coast since the mid-1990's has declined by nearly 90 percent. Some three quarters of flowering plants rely on pollinators, such as the graceful monarch butterfly. The best way to both help monarchs and attract them to your yard is to provide milkweed—an important host plant and food source for their caterpillars. See more about milk weed on the website.



EVENTS AT THE AUDUBON CONSERVATION EDUCATION CENTER

7026 South Billings Blvd, Billings, MT, 59101
call [406-294-5099](tel:406-294-5099) or email education@mtadubon.org www.mtacec.org

August 2014

August 17th Weekend Wonders Family Program, 1:30 – 3 PM. Open to all ages! Fee is \$2/person or Free for Friends of the Center. Theme this month is, *repeated by popular demand...* “**Canoeing!**” Ever wonder what it is like to paddle in a canoe? Ever wonder who lives in our Will’s Marsh? Join us in this exciting adventure as we canoe and use our pond nets to see who lives in our marsh. Registration required. Email education@mtadubon.org

Volunteer Saturdays, 2nd and 4th Saturdays of the month. 9am-12pm. There will be a variety of activities, fitting for all ages and physical capabilities, such as planting seedlings, mulching, and monitoring and pulling weeds.

Sprouts Club - Are you between the ages of 5 and 18? Do you love being outdoors, getting dirty and volunteering? Well then you should join the Sprouts Club. Come down on the **2nd or 4th Saturday of the month** (9am-12pm) and earn a stamp for every hour you volunteer. Get 15 stamps by October 1st and earn a “I volunteer at the Audubon Center” t-shirt! Questions? Email Trinity at restoration@mtadubon.org or Frances at education@mtadubon.org

Big Fun at Evening Under the Big Sky

The Audubon Conservation Education Center (Audubon Center) will host an evening of fine dining at the Center on Saturday, September 6, 2014, beginning at 5:30 p.m.



The dinner will be accompanied by a silent and live auction, featuring auctioneer Mert Musser along with music from Kemmick and Friends.

A luxurious 6 day safari in South Africa by Zulu Nyala, Griz/Cat game weekend, one of a kind sketch from Loren Entz, onsite painting by Sarah Morris and one of a kind artwork designed by local artists and community members such as Connie Landis and Nick Lamb are just a few of the items that will be auctioned that evening.

To reserve your tickets today call 294-5099 or mail a check (written to Montana Audubon) to 7026 S. Billings Blvd, Billings, MT 59101. Tickets are \$50 per person.

National Audubon Society
 Recruitment Code: C0ZN500Z
 Application for New Membership

Please enroll me as a member of the National Audubon Society. I understand that I will receive the Audubon Magazine and Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society Flyer. Make check payable to **National Audubon Society**. Renewals will be sent to you through National Audubon.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Email Address _____

One Year Membership

\$20 One year new membership

Send this application and your check made out to **National Audubon Society** to:

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society
 Attention: Membership Secretary
 P.O. Box 1075
 Billings, MT 59103-1075

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 \$20. If applying for a new or renewing student membership, make check for \$10 and indicate academic affiliation.

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
 Attention: Membership Secretary
 P.O. Box 1075
 Billings, MT 59103-1075



WHOOPS!!

Is it time for you to become a YVAS member or renew your chapter membership?

PLEASE CHECK THE MAILING LABEL ON YOUR FLYER. IF IT SHOWS "YVAS JAN 12" BELOW YOUR NAME, THEN YOU ARE A SUPPORTING CHAPTER MEMBER WHOSE MEMBERSHIP EXPIRED IN JANUARY 2012. IF YOU ARE NOT A SUPPORTING MEMBER OR YOUR MEMBERSHIP HAS EXPIRED, HELP US OUT BY JOINING OR RENEWING NOW WITH YOUR CHECK FOR \$20, USING THE FORM ON THE RIGHT. YOUR MEMBERSHIP HELPS FUND THE PUBLICATION OF THE FLYER ALONG WITH OTHER ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE MANAGEMENT OF OUR CHAPTER.

Membership Information

Although the National Audubon Society gives complimentary membership in our chapter as a benefit, no dues come to us. We strongly encourage you to join YVAS as a Supporting Chapter Member, which is offered for \$20 a year. Use the application form above to join as a Supporting Chapter Member or to renew your Chapter Membership.

1. **Moving???** Let us know as early as possible when you plan to move. The Post Office does charge us a fee for returned flyers. Include your old address as well as your new address so we can track you. You may write, call, or email the information to the Membership Secretary.
2. Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society offers Supporting Chapter student memberships for a reduced rate of \$10 a year. If you applying for a new student membership or are renewing a student membership, make sure you indicate your academic affiliation in your application. Joel Bowers, Membership Secretary



**YELLOWSTONE VALLEY
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Field Trip Calendar:

All field trips depart from Rocky Mountain College parking lot on Rimrock Road, adjacent to Billings Studio Theater, unless otherwise noted, and will be by car. **PLEASE DO NOT BRING PETS.** All field trips are open to the public. Passengers will share gas costs with driver when car-pooling. Do make sure you check all field trips with listing in flyer each month for any changes.

FIELD TRIP CHAIR: Donn Bartlett 252-0757, donnbartlett@msn.com

Aug 9	Sat	SHOREBIRDS, HAWKS & PRAIRIE BIRDS. 8 a.m.	Sack lunch. Mike Weber, leader.
Aug 22—24	Fri—Sun	FORT PECK AND BOWDOIN NWR, MONTANA	Observe migrating birds including warblers and shorebirds found in Northeast Montana. George Mowat, leader. Call George at 656-7467 for information. Make your own reservations for two nights at the Maltana Motel in Malta (406-654-2610).
Sept 4	Thur	MEET AT RIVERFRONT PARK at 5 p.m. S Billings Blvd, 1st parking area on right.	Fall Migrants. Mike Weber, leader.
Sept 20	Sat	PRYOR MOUNTAINS 7:00 a.m. at Rocky Mountain College for carpooling. Ruth Vanderhorst will lead from Rocky to the Bridger Rest Stop. Stan Heath will meet the group at the rest stop and lead from Bridger Rest Stop at 8:30 a.m.	Sack lunch. Donn Bartlett, coordinator. 252-0757, donnbartlett@msn.com

