



YELLOWSTONE VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

- FROM THE PRAIRIES TO THE PEAKS.

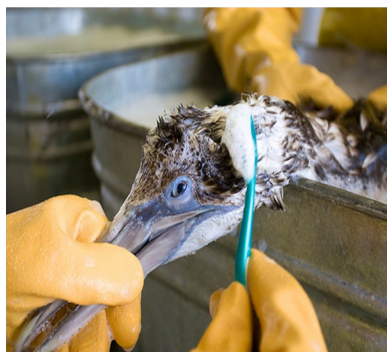
Mission: Building on the tradition of special interest in birds, Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society is organized to promote enjoyment and protection of the natural environment through education, activism, and conservation of bird habitat.

VOLUME 41, NUMBER 4

APRIL 2011

New This Issue

- **EARTH DAY**
- **WINGS ACROSS THE SKY BIRD FESTIVAL**
- **BIRDATHON**
- **OSPREY PROJECT**
- **GALAPAGOS TRAVEL**
- **NESTING MATERIALS**
- **LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**



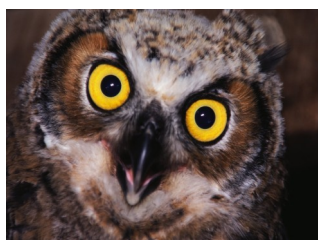
Trained specialists carefully clean an oiled bird at the International Bird Rescue Research Center in Theodore,

"BAND TOGETHER FOR BIRDS"

The one-year anniversary of the catastrophic Deepwater Horizon explosion that unleashed the devastating 2010 Gulf of Mexico oil spill and continuing environmental disaster, falls on April 20 - just two days before Earth Day 2011. How better to commemorate "Earth Day" than for YVAS Chapter to learn what happened and how the spill is affecting this fragile eco-system.

The National Audubon Society has assembled information about Gulf Coast recovery and renewal, Gulf Coast birds, and a spectacular 24-minute film on the Mississippi River Delta hit hard by the oil disaster. The program was prepared and produced by the prestigious Cornell Lab of Ornithology and includes interviews with recognized authorities at the site of the recovering and still polluted Gulf of Mexico.

You won't want to miss this important program especially since our Chapter's meeting falls on Earth Day! This program 'Band Together for Birds', recognizes that even those of us far from the Gulf Coast can come together to make a difference for Gulf Coast birds as well as for the birds much closer to home, because "birds and all about them" is really what YVAS Chapter is all about! Robert Lubbers, Program Chair



Inside this issue:

This Month's Chapter Meeting	1
Meetings Schedule	1
Officers and Committees	2
Membership Forms	7
Field Trip Schedule	8

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, April 11, 6:00pm: Board Meeting

Monday, April 18, 7:00pm: General Membership Meeting

We will hold a YVAS fundraiser dinner at 5:45, before the membership meeting. Dinner donation : \$6. It will be hosted by Ruth Vanderhorst. Please call her to contribute to dinner and/or make reservations at 245-5118



☞ We're on the web! yvaudubon.org

THIS FLYER IS PUBLISHED ON SFI CERTIFIED PRODUCT

EVENTS TO WATCH FOR



The first **EARTH DAY**, celebrated on April 22, 1970, activated 20 million Americans from all walks of life and is widely credited with launching the modern environmental movement. The passage of the landmark Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act and many other groundbreaking environmental laws soon followed. More than 1 billion people all over the world now participate in Earth Day activities each year, making it the largest civic observance in the world. Just as the first Earth Day spawned landmark conservation laws, this year we can help Congress deliver on the promise of comprehensive legislation to address climate change and our need for a clean energy economy.

THE AUDUBON CENTER

Sat April 16

Earth Day Celebration (from 9:30 – 12:30) Join in stewardship projects to create and improve habitat for wildlife at the Audubon Center. The Center will be planting, weeding, and cleaning up their big backyard on the Yellowstone River in celebration of Earth Day. www.mtacec.org or call 406-294-5099.

MAY 5, 12 & 19

HELEN'S SPRING BIRDING CLASSES

The first three Thursdays in May, from 8am to 3pm, our own Helen Carlson will help sharpen our bird identification skills. The 3-class series is \$20 per person, which goes to benefit the YVAS Audubon Adventures Program. Call Helen at 248-8684 to register. Plan to carpool and bring binoculars, a sack lunch and warm clothes—just in case.....

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society Officers:

President: Ruth Vanderhorst, 245-5118, acrv@bresnan.net
Vice-President: Steve Regele, 962-3115, sregele@juno.com
Secretary: Mary Schvetz, 720-935-2504, mary.schvetz@rocky.edu
Treasurer: Deb Regele: 962-3115, dregele@juno.com
Past-President: Kayhan Ostovar, 256-7481, kayhan@q.com

Board of Directors:

Rita Harding: 259-7586, mtroses22@bresnan.net
Robert Lubbers: 245-2970, rslubbers@q.com
Monty Sullins: 656-5242, ssullins@bresnan.net
Jeanette Tasey, 669-3169, jtasey@gmail.com
Nancy Wiggins: 651-0218, nwiggin83@gmail.com

Montana's Congressional Delegation:

Sen. Max Baucus: U.S. Senate, Wash. D.C. 20510
website: <http://baucus.senate.gov>
email: max@baucus.senate.gov
Billings: 657-6790 Wash. D.C.: 1-800-332-6160
Sen. Jon Tester: U.S. Senate, Wash. D.C. 20510
website: <http://tester.senate.gov>
email: senator@tester.senate.gov
Billings: 252-0550 Wash. D.C.: 1-866-554-4403
Rep. Dennis Rehberg: U.S. House of Rep. Wash. D.C. 20515
website: www.rehberg.house.gov
email: denny.rehberg@mail.house.gov
Billings: 256-1019 Wash. D.C.: 202-225-3211

Committees and Special Assignments:

Archives and History.....open
Audubon Adventures.....Jeannette Davis 656-7618
Bird Questions.....George Mowat 656-7467 or Helen Carlson 248-8684
Christmas Bird Count.....Helen Carlson 248-8684 or Billie Hicks 962-3798
Conservation Chair...Kayhan Ostovar 256-7481, kayhan@q.com
Editor.....Nancy Wiggins, nwiggin83@gmail.com
Greeters.....Phyllis Holt 252-7373 Audrey Jurovich 656-2748
Injured Raptors.....Jeanette Tasey 669-3169
Membership Secretary.....Joel M. Bowers, 534-3672, cell: 591-5635, jmba@jmba.com
Program Chair.....Robert Lubbers 245-2970
Recycling (aluminum).....Tom Davis 656-7618
Website: Tom Lyman, Tomglyman@gmail.com

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

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

JUNE 3-5**Wings Across the Big Sky Bird Festival** - to be held in Glasgow .

Plan a vacation to northeastern Montana, see amazing birds and learn about grassland and sage conservation. Registration is now open for Montana Audubon's annual bird festival. To find all the news about registration, lodging, Pre-Festival Workshops, the full conference schedule, Bucket Raffle and opportunities to volunteer, visit mtaudubon.org or call 406-443-3949.

JUNE 11-12**JOIN IN THE BIRD-A-THON!**

1st Annual YVAS and Audubon Center Bird-A-Thon 2011
Saturday June 11, 5pm-Sunday June 12, 5pm

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society and the Audubon Center will be hosting a 24 hour Bird-a-thon.

Who Can Participate?

EVERYONE! This event is for professional birders, novices and casual birders. All you have to do is form a team of at least 2 people-no limit to the number of people in your team. No age limit and no birding experience necessary! FAMILIES can participate too-it's a great way to get outside with your loved ones while having fun and learning also.

What is the Overall Fund Raising Goal?

The goal for the 1st Annual YVAS and Audubon Center's Bird-a-thon 2011 is to raise \$7,500. Each team will collect pledges to benefit the installation and maintenance of an osprey pole with webcam on the Audubon Center's property. The live feed will appear on YVAS's and the Audubon Center's websites for all to enjoy. We hope to conduct research each year learning more about the osprey's natural history.

Pledges and Team Sponsorships

Each team can raise funds in many ways. Here are just a few ideas:

Pledges – each team can collect pledges from friends, relatives, business associates etc. This can be a whole dollar amount such as \$50 or can be based on an amount per species identified during the entire Bird-a-thon. If someone pledges \$.50/species and 100 species are seen during the Bird-a-thon by all teams, then the support would be \$50. We expect the total number of species to be less than 140.

Corporate Sponsorships – a team can get a business to sponsor them at whatever level they choose. We suggest a minimum business/corporate sponsorship of \$250.

Families are welcome to join the bird-a-thon on Sunday afternoon from 3 – 5 PM at the Audubon Center. Audubon staff will teach the tricks of bird identification, some common local birds, and how to use binoculars. Then we'll head into the field in pursuit of our feathered friends. Binoculars and bird guides will be available to loan. There is a suggested donation of \$10 per family for participation in the event. Be sure to stick around for the awards ceremony and dinner at 5:30 PM.

Awards and Awards Party

Bird-a-thon 2011 Awards Party will follow immediately after the Bird-a-thon Sunday, at 5:30 pm at the finish line at the Audubon Center

Registration Deadlines

Registration w/ t-shirt orders deadline is May 23, 2011 (mailed registrations must be received by this date).

Registrations w/o t-shirts orders will be accepted until the start of the Bird-a-thon at 5 pm on June 11th.

Download information and registration forms at mtacec.org or yvaudubon.org **OR**

COMPLETE AND RETURN THE ENCLOSED REGISTRATION FORM NOW!!

What is a Bird-a-thon?

During a 24 hour period from 5pm Saturday, June 11th to 5pm Sunday June 12th birding teams made up of professional birders, casual birders or novices will work to identify the most number of species of birds in Montana.



FIELD TRIP NOTES



Magnificent Frigatebird Photo by Mike Downing

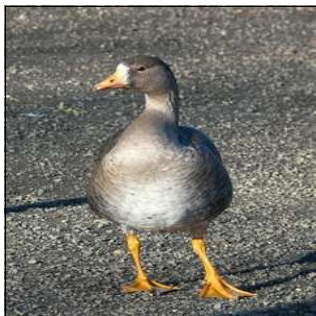
GALAPAGOS TRAVELS On February 23, we departed Billings on a “bucket list” adventure to the Galapagos National Park, an island group located 600 miles off the coast of Ecuador. Under the artful guidance of Dr. Jennifer Lyman, professor of environmental science, Rocky Mountain College, our multi-generational group included six students and nine other folks who quickly became great travel companions. We flew to Baltra Island where we met our guide, crossed the narrow channel to Santa Cruz Island, and rode across the island to Puerto Ayora (a town of about 9000) where we boarded pangas (rubber rafts that accommodated about 10 passengers) and were shuttled to our 16 passenger cruise boat. Our first bird sightings

were Brown Pelicans and Frigatebirds that dotted the skies over the bay and throughout the islands. We found the Frigatebirds particularly interesting; the males of the two species, Magnificent Frigatebird and Great Frigatebird, are distinguishable only by the sheen on their dorsal feathers – the Great Frigatebird with a greenish tint and the Magnificent Frigatebird with purple. Both species of females have white throats and the Great Frigatebird has a white chest. Weighing less than 3 pounds with wingspans of 6 to 8 feet, these birds soar for hours over the sea, watching for a chance to scoop up fish with their hooked beaks, while holding their wings high to keep them dry. Their feathers are not waterproof, thus they cannot land on water. A feeding behavior we did not get to observe is the grasping of another bird’s tail while in flight, shaking it about until it regurgitates its last meal, which the Frigatebird then swoops down to catch. On North Seymour Island, males were nesting in colonies on the saltbush. Many were engaged in attractant behavior, having inflated the large, red gular pouches on their throats and fluttering their huge wings as they created a gobbling sound, all to get the attention of one the females soaring overhead. Apparently many had been successful as several fluffy, white chicks were about, as well as white headed adolescents. Thank you to Nancy Downing

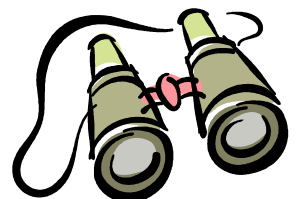
Birds on our travel list included:

Blue-footed Booby	Cactus Finch	Black-necked Stilt
Greater Flamingo	Galapagos Dove	Galapagos Hawk
Galapagos Mockingbird	Galapagos Penguin	Great Frigatebird
Great Blue Heron	Ground Finch	Lava Gull
Lava Heron	Magnificent Frigatebird	Nazca Booby
Brown Pelican	Ruddy Turnstone	Swallowtail Gull
Red-billed Tropicbird	Yellow Warbler	

BIRD SIGHTING On Sunday March 27 Mike Weber reported seeing two Greater White-Fronted Geese at the ponds to the east of 56th Street West. These ponds are between Danford Road to the south and Neibauer Road to the north. They were hiding in the vegetation near the ponds and appeared as he was leaving the area. On Monday, March 28 Jim and Nancy Wiggins and Mary Schvetz spotted 6 of the geese clustered on the east side of the pond.



Greater White-Fronted Geese johnrakestraw.net/





OSPREY OBSERVATION TIME

The Yellowstone Valley Audubon Chapter is about to begin its second year on their Osprey Project. The Osprey should be returning around the first of April. Part of the project consists of monitoring the Osprey nest sites for activity and determining how many young are produced. Chapter members and volunteers are assigned nest(s) and observe them throughout the spring and summer, recording any activity seen. The most important observations are shortly after the Osprey return and begin nesting activity – usually

April - and again in mid to late July to count the young Osprey before they fledge and leave the nest. Any other observations during the summer would be great too. If you would like to volunteer to help with these surveys or want more information, contact Monty Sullins at 652-3615 or 861-2442.

THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT RESULTS

Thanks to Billie Hicks and all who participated in the 2011 GBBC from Friday, February 18, through Monday, February 21. While neither Montana or Billings made any of the 'Top Ten Lists' in 2010, a total of 63,610 birds (15,000 were Canada Geese) and 119 species were reported in the state. Billings had 31 species and 2213 birds. Most common on everyone's list were: European Starling, American Robin, Common Grackle, Canada Goose, Red-winged Blackbird, Snow Goose, American Crow, American Goldfinch, Mallard and Dark-eyed Junco. To see the breakdown by year, state and city visit www.birdsource.org/gbbc.

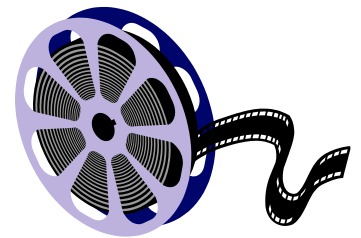
The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent.

More on ***NESTING MATERIALS***

- **EAGLES**: "THE MASTER OF THE SKIES" video

An incredible piece of work from PBS, this is an amazing 50 minutes of star-studded cinematography. The film studies various Eagles and they're carrion relatives. The Golden Eagle is found just about everywhere in one form or another with the most robust form being in Africa.

However, the Wedge-tailed Eagle in Australia is able to take Kangaroos, and the Bald Eagle of Alaska are more than I imagined. Free at the Parmly. (submitted by Will Crain)



- **WWW.CUSTERCOUNTRY.COM/BIRDING** 'CUSTER COUNTRY'S SOUTHEASTERN MONTANA BIRDING TRAIL' guide and map are now available. The pocket-sized fold-out map contains information about 15 different locations in Custer Country that provide some of the best opportunities for observing birds in the wild. From Roundup to Ekalaka, the sites include the Roundup River Walk Heritage Trail, three locations in Billings and others in or near Pryor, Hysam, Miles City, Glendive and Otter."
- **WWW.MEIC.ORG**. Capitol Monitor a publication of the Montana Environmental Information Center designed to keep members informed about environmental issues at the Montana legislature.



THE AMERICAN BIRD CONSERVANCY "GUIDE TO BIRD CONSERVATION" University of Chicago Press, 2010

Hands down, this is the most important book of the year, one every birdwatcher should own. It provides distribution, threats, and conservation status for all 212 Watch List species in the United States. It describes the habitats all birds rely on. It analyzes the human causes of bird mortality. And most important, it lays out an achievable plan of action for safeguarding our country's rich birdlife and how you can help." (Birder's World) The particular beauty of this book is that it's not just another shout of crisis. It also lays out a concrete and achievable plan of long-term action to safeguard our country's rich bird life. (Jonathan Franzen)

Startling books often are controversial. Often, such books are written just to be controversial, yet, relevancy and controversy create readers and this is a book everyone-- birdwatchers especially -- should read. Its relevancy is certainly beyond question and if this book creates controversy, it might be that birds will be better for it. Authors Daniel I. Lobbing, Michael I. Parr and George Fenwick have long and distinguished careers, and alarms are sounded throughout the book. The numbers say it: millions of bird deaths yearly through all kinds of human interaction, activity and "the destruction, degradation, and fragmentation of habitats"! How more plainly can it be said? Beginning on page 278, Chapter 3 defines and accounts for "Threats" general and specific to all birds. Of interest to Montanans, sections on Agriculture, Mining, and Development speak loud and clear. Habitat description maps with beautifully detailed artwork showing what birds to expect in them for all sections of the US, broken into segments as Important Bird Areas (IBAs), tell you what birds you will see and generally, how to get to see them. The dark litany of what is happening to many bird species can lead one to believe that much is being lost, which seems to be a conclusion this book almost certifies. Yet, if you get over the disturbingly low numbers for the Piping Plover (8,000 remain) and the Mountain Plover (9,000), or the Clark's Grebe(11-12,000) found in the Upper Souris NWR in North Dakota--there is something of a bright side if there is a collected will to do it. For example, conservation action has some notable successes including the slow but steady recovery of species such as the Bald Eagle, Brown Pelican, Whooping Crane and Peregrine Falcon. Reviewed by Robert Lubbers

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



There are several bills before the legislature that will impact the Audubon environment in the state..

- SB 306 (Sen. Terry Murphy, R-Cardwell) will circumvent the citizen-passed initiative that halted new cyanide heap-leach mines in Montana.

There are two bills that will radically alter the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA):

- SB 317 (Sen. Chas Vincent, R-Libby) will completely rewrite MEPA. It will change MEPA's purpose from analyzing environmental impacts and providing an opportunity for public involvement to encouraging natural resource development. It will eliminate the consideration of alternatives, restrict the review of environmental impacts, limit the analysis of global warming impacts, and much more.
- SB 233 (Sen. Jim Keane, D-Butte) will make MEPA meaningless. It will allow the construction of a project (e.g., a mine or power plant) to go forward even if a State agency failed to comply with MEPA or did an inadequate job in its environmental review. It will also prohibit the State from considering most regional, national, and global impacts of a project.

You can make a difference by writing a Letter to the Editor of your local paper opposing the bills. You can contact Gov. Brian Schweitzer and ask him to veto the bills

Telephone: (406)444-3111 E-mail: governor@mt.gov On-line message form: governor.mt.gov/contact/commentsform.asp

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
 Recruitment Code: C0ZN500Z
 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 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 _____

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 EXPIRES IN JANUARY 2012. IF YOU ARE NOT A 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
AUDUBON FLYER**

**Non-Profit Organization
PRST STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BILLINGS, MT
PERMIT NO. 27**

P.O. Box 1075
Billings, MT 59103-1075

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. 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.

- **Apr 16 (Fri) EARTH DAY** See Newsletter for details

NOTE CHANGE IN DATE FROM APRIL 16 TO: Apr 23 (Sat) EXXON PONDS AND EMERALD HILLS. 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sack lunch. **One Mile Walk.** Ron Kuhler, leader .

- **May 7 (Sat) LAKE BASIN (WEST AND NORTHWEST OF Molt)** 8 a.m. Sack Lunch. Mike Weber, leader.
- **May 14 (Sat) MEET AT RIVERFRONT PARK** at 8 a.m. George and Bernie Mowat, leaders.
- **May 19 (Thur) MEET AT RIVERFRONT PARK** at 5:30 p.m. Mike Weber, leader.
- **May 21 (Sat) STILLWATER AND WOODBINE AREAS.** 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sack lunch. Ruth Vanderhorst, leader

Field Trip Chairs: George and Bernie Mowat, 656-7467

