

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.

- New This Issue**
- President Notes
 - Bird Sighting
 - Christmas Bird Count
 - GBBC
 - Wings Across The Sky



Highlighting our February 21 meeting is speaker Marco Restani. Marco describes himself as ‘a migrant worker’, in such demand that he divides his time between being a Professor of Wildlife Ecology at St. Cloud State University, MN and being in Red Lodge, MT. He attended the University of Montana (BS), Montana State University (MS), and Utah State University (PhD). For the past 25 years he has conducted wildlife research – mostly on raptors – in Australia, Greenland, and the US. He reports that he is married and childless, both happily, and has a parrotlet named Buzz. He enjoys pale ale, cheese-cake, and time with friends.....



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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, February 14, 6:00pm: Board Meeting

Monday, February 21, 7:00pm: General Membership Meeting

We will hold a YVAS fundraiser dinner at 5:45, before the membership meeting. Dinner donation: \$6. It will feature something special from Jeannette Davis. Please call her to contribute to dinner and/or for reservations at 656-7618.



☞ We're on the web! yellowstoneaudubon.org

THE PRESIDENT'S WINTER NOTES



Guest Speaker
Bob Landis

• While it seems that our Christmas Potluck and Fundraiser was long ago, this is the first opportunity to report to you the success it brought. It has typically been our largest fundraiser, and this year we earned a record amount of just under \$2000. The dinner prepared by the membership was delicious, as usual; Bob Landis's presentation was spectacular and inspiring as well as just plain fun. Thank you to all who made contributions and to those who bid on items in the silent auction. To each of you who worked to make the evening a success, thank you for your smiling and generous support. Special thanks to Lois Dalton who managed the dinner, to Robert Lubbers and the Board who managed the silent Auction and to a Helen Carlson for managing the raffle. Businesses who contributed auction items are listed below, and they deserve our thanks and support.

- We recently received the resignation of Board Vice President Dick Moore, who unfortunately for us, is soon moving to a new job in Minnesota. Dick has served in several capacities and will be missed. Whether it was working out a policy or procedure, drafting a position for us to take, setting up for the Potluck, representing the Chapter on the Audubon Conservation Education Center Advisory Council, or debating the merits of any action, Dick was a valued leader. Steve Regele will serve as interim Vice President for the remainder of Dick's term.
- It is time to think about volunteering or nominating someone to serve on the Chapter's Board of Directors for the coming year. Candidates for these leadership positions will be presented at the April meeting, so please approach the Nominations Chairperson, Rita Harding or Bernie Mowat

(Continued on page 3)

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, nancyhwiggins@hotmail.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, nancyhwiggins@hotmail.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.

to indicate your interest.

- We are preparing a training session for new and continuing Field Trip leaders and assistants. New recording procedures and all sorts of hints will be provided. Look for an announcement about this in the coming months. Be sure to check the YVAS Field Trip Schedule on the back page of the Flyer or on our website at yellowstonaudubon.org, to participate in upcoming YVAS activities. Thank you to Ruth Vanderhorst



YVAS would like to acknowledge the following individuals and businesses for their generous donations to the Christmas Fundraiser

Wal-Mart

Tractor Supply Company

Two Books with donor not listed

Falcon Fever and The American Kestrel

Simply Wine

PetSmart

Ace Hardware- Laurel

Thomas Books

Wild Birds Unlimited

Joy of Living Spa

Anytime Fitness

DXP Enterprises

Height Target Store

Ace Hardware- Billings Heights

Audubon Education Center

Montana Mills

Billings Army Navy

R&R Consulting

Gainans

Chuck Carlson

Rita Harding

Nancy Traeger

Jeanette Davis

Jeanette Tasey

Bernie Mowat

William Crain

Susan Newell

Deb & Steve Regele

Karen McBride

Bob Landis

Dave Torrence

Jerry Dalton

Feb 5 (Sat) WINTER WANDERERS FIELD TRIP

9 a.m. to dark. FUN-FUNDRAISER

RARE WINTER BIRDS. This is a progressive birding and eating day that provides breakfast, lunch and dessert stops as well as bird watching, and lots of good conversation and fun. Cost is a donation of \$15.00 or more. **Reservations required by Feb 3rd. Call Ruth at 245-5118.**



American Three-toed Woodpecker: Bird Sighting

While out on the first day of hunting October 23rd, I was watching over Rock Creek from a vantage point on Billie Hicks ranch and bird sanctuary; my hunting partner, with waders on, worked the 20 wood/swamp acres 50 feet below my perch, between two burned-out cottonwood trees. It came out of the tree on my right – and the second I saw it I knew it was not on our regular list. Black, with what appeared to be a white bow tie, he flew below from right to left– a woodpecker shape is all I had to go on. I was certain upon checking the books that it was the American Three-toed Woodpecker, and the next day I was treated to the male with its distinctive yellow crown.

It appears that this could be an 'interruption' of sorts; the species is listed on the Pryor Mountain bird list...and the distance from Pryor to Billie's is I'm guessing 70 miles. It is predictable that the species which nests in burned out trees is right at home on Billie's range, and hopefully will hang there for awhile; I did see them at her feeder a week later. Billie went down to the place where I saw the woodpeckers and confirmed them for herself. My hunting partner also saw them. Thank you to Will Crain



FIELD TRIP NOTES



DECEMBER 18 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

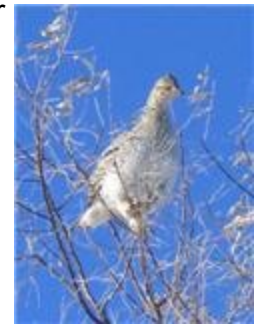
National Audubon and other organizations use data collected in the Christmas Bird Count (the longest-running wildlife census) to assess the health of bird populations, which in turn helps guide conservation action.

Have you ever considered helping with the Christmas Bird Count? All you will need is a pair of binoculars, appropriate shoes and clothing. A hat is a wise idea, along with gloves, a pencil and a bird book. Some 65 species are usually seen. If no one else spots something, you can be first to yell, "stop the car". The more people counting, the more apt we are to see a species or two that was missed by others. Keeping track of numbers of the winter birds is an important indication of areas where a one or more species is slowly diminishing, or another species is moving up from the south. It is a day to share bird watching with others, topped off with a potluck at Helen's house, chowing down on a choice of 3 soups while sharing goodies donated by those who came to hear what species were seen—and there are always some surprises! Our species numbers have been declining; perhaps if you join us next year, you might help bring the figures up. Age makes no difference, as long as you can identify some of the species, and it is fun to enjoy lunch in the good company of bird watchers. This year, 61 species and a total of 28,389 birds were recorded by the more than 30 participants in the official 'counting circle', who drove 334 miles. At least two groups, Tom and Jeannette Davis, and Jeanette Tasey also counted from their homes. Final data will be posted on the YVAS website at www.yellowstoneaudubon.org. Thank you to Billie Hicks and Helen Carlson for organizing the Christmas Bird Count and to all the participants who made it a success.

JANUARY 1ST AFTERBAY FIELD TRIP

Three of us, Helen Carlson, Dean DiTommaso, and George Mowat showed up for the field trip in spite of dire weather warnings. It was not nearly as cold in Billings as predicted, but on the freeway to Hardin the wind and blowing snow was daunting. In Hardin there was no wind and 16 degrees below zero. The wind came up on the way to the Afterbay, making getting out of the vehicle downright frigid. In spite of the conditions, the birds were very good at the Afterbay. The ducks included two Long-tailed Ducks, Northern Pintail, Lesser and Greater Scaup, Red-head, Ruddy Duck, Ring-necked Duck, Hooded and Common Merganser. It was a treat to see two Horned Grebe and three Western Grebe there. At the upper end of the Afterbay, the American Dipper was fairly close as well as a Townsend's Solitaire.

In the Bighorn Valley between Ft. Smith and St. Xavier, we observed a flock of ten Western Meadowlark, an uncommon winter sight; a flock of Sharp-tailed Grouse feeding in the Russian olive trees; and three Northern Shrike. Other birds worth noting on the trip were American Tree Sparrow (called out by Dean's pishing), a Merlin in St. Xavier, Wild Turkeys in Helen's yard, and many Rough-legged and Red-tailed Hawks including many dark-phased ones. A great day of birding! Thank you to George Mowat



SHARP-TAILED
GROUSE
GEORGE MOWAT



Is it time for you to become a Chapter Member or renew your Chapter Membership?

JANUARY 8TH EAGLE COUNT

Seven birders conducted the Eagle Count, which surveys the Yellowstone River from a point east of Two Moon Park to the Cemetery west of Columbus, MT. The weather was cloudy, but there was no wind in the morning. In the Two Moon Park area, a couple of immature Bald Eagles were spotted on an island to the east of the picnic area in the Yellowstone River. They were feeding on a carcass in the river. Then in a few minutes they were joined by an adult Bald Eagle and another immature. It sure helps to have food out for them. After checking the Eagle Cliff Manor area and picking up a couple more eagles, we drove by the Power Plant and on to the KOA campground. Next we checked out the river east of South Billings Blvd. A very white hawk in that area diverted our attention. After a discussion as to whether it might be an immature Ferruginous Hawk or a Krider's Red-tail Hawk, a patagial mark carried the day for the Red-tailed Hawk.

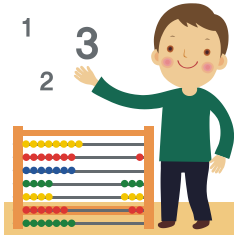


The wind came up when we went along South River Road west of Duck Creek. We watched the soaring Eagles and Rough-legged Hawks patrolling the bluffs and sparring with each other. Keeping track of how many there were was quite a chore. And then came the shout, "That's an immature Golden Eagle up there." We settled on 1 adult and 5 immature Bald Eagles on that stretch of river in addition to the Golden Eagle.

After a relaxing lunch at Sid's in Laurel and a flurry of snow, three of us finished the stretch of river to Columbus. That was not as productive as the areas before lunch, but we did end up with an "official" count of 17 Bald Eagles (7 adult and 10 immature) and 1 immature Golden Eagle. We also observed Common Raven, Black-billed Magpie, American Robin, Downy Woodpecker, Mallard, and Common Goldeneye. Thank you to George Mowat

Friday, February 18, through Monday, February 21.

The 2011 GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT



Mark your calendars! The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is a joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the Audubon Society. It 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. Anyone can participate, from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event. It's free, fun, and easy—and it helps the birds. Participants count birds anywhere, for as little or as long as they wish during the four-day period. They tally the highest number of birds of each species seen together at any one time. To enter the **PHOTO CONTEST**, report counts, and fill out an online checklist, visit the Great Backyard Bird Count website, BirdCount.org.

Your counts can help answer many questions:

- How will this winter's snow and cold temperatures influence bird populations?
- Where are winter finches and other "irruptive" species that appear in large numbers during some years but not others?
- How will the timing of birds' migrations compare with past years?
- How are bird diseases, such as West Nile virus, affecting birds in different regions?
- What kinds of differences in bird diversity are apparent in cities versus suburban, rural, and natural areas?
- Are any birds undergoing worrisome declines that point to the need for conservation attention?

AUDUBON CENTER ACTIVITIES

INTERN OPPORTUNITIES

Mentorship Program The ACEC will be recruiting 15 high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors to participate in a mentorship program, beginning March 15, 2011. The program will pair high school mentors with students in 4th – 6th grade afterschool programs at the Friendship House. Mentors will receive training prior to the start of the mentorship, and will then work on land restoration as well as outdoor, hands-on education projects one afternoon per week with the Friendship House students.

A Teacher Naturalist is being hired part-time through MSU-B's Campus Corps, an AmeriCorps program. Applicants must be a MSU-B student, currently enrolled for 6 or more credits per semester. The position will run from mid-May through mid-August, teaching natural history and leading outdoor adventures for youth next summer.

Naturalist in Training (NITs) Learn to be a naturalist in this internship program for teens. NITs help teach nature camp during the summer months. Applications for Summer 2011 will be available online April 2011. For more information, contact Education Director Heather Ristow at 406-294-5099.

SCHEDULED EVENTS

February 17 School break camp for 1st – 6th graders: Tricky Tracks - Students will learn to identify animal tracks, and then we'll wander through the woods, following the tracks of animals and discovering the wintertime world. Camp runs from 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM; cost is \$40. Register by calling the Parks and Recreation office at 657 - 8371 or online at www.prpl.info.

February 22 Free adult lecture at 7 – 8 PM: Geology by Harold Silkwood and Denece Lord. No registration required.

February 27 Free family program from 1:30 – 3 PM: 'Whose Clues Tracking Adventure' - Discover the fine art of animal tracking. Learn how to tell the difference between a cat and dog track, or a rabbit and weasel. Pre-register by calling 294-5099.



Chestnut-collared
Longspur

June 3-5, 2011 Cottonwood Inn in Glasgow Audubon's Wings Across the Big Sky Bird Festival

Festival activities will begin Friday, June 3rd, and extend through Sunday, June 5th. We are adding full-day pre-festival workshops on Friday, June 3rd. Montana Audubon and Glasgow's Feather Fest Committee are developing two opportunities to explore the conservation of key bird habitats within critical prairie grasslands and sagebrush-dominated lands. Northeastern Montana has the three largest Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Montana; these are outstanding habitats for the conservation of native grassland and shrubland birds like Long-billed Curlew, Greater Sage-Grouse, Mountain Plover, Ferruginous Hawk, and more. We encourage you to join us for these field excursions to learn about opportunities to protect and enhance habitats for many rare and declining birds inhabiting the region.

It's not too early to reserve your campground/RV spot. Glasgow has *Cottonwood RV* to consider, located at the heart of bird festival activities on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Fort Peck is a short 15 – 20-minute drive to and from Glasgow and is an extraordinary historical and summer hotspot. The Fort Peck Interpretive Center and Museum, as well as the Fort Peck Dam are two of the biggest attractions to the area. Adjacent to the Center is the *Downstream Campground*—a great family location along the Missouri River next to the Interpretive Trail. Moreover, Family Day, Saturday, June 4th, will include a field trip along the Interpretive Trail. If you wish to include cultural/art experiences before or after your birding weekend extravaganza, consider Fort Peck's popular summer theatre and other nearby attractions. If camping is not your style, we will have information on hotels—the *Cottonwood Inn* will be our primary location, with rooms reserved for festival attendees. For more about the birds of the area, the IBAs worth visiting, and camping/RV information, go to Montana Audubon's home page at www.mtaudubon.org and click on the festival link (look for the Long-billed Curlew). **Contact: Larissa Berry, lberry@mtaudubon.org 406-443-3949.** Also visit mtaudubon.org for information about birding tours and about political issues that affect wildlife in our state.



Theodora Smith died on Nov 27, 2010 at the age of 95. A long-time active member and leader of YVAS, she managed the archives and history for as long as anyone can remember. She was a talented photographer, dedicated birder and teacher

who left a legacy of experiences, pictures and records which we treasure. Few gifts are as lasting as that gift that supports preservation of Montana birds and their habitat. Special thanks to those who recently gave a gift in Theodora's memory.

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 bottom application form on the right to join as Supporting Chapter Member or to renew your chapter member.

1. An application for *initial* membership in the National Audubon Society (NAS) is included in YVAS Flyer (see form on top right). If you are NOT a member of the NAS and wish to be, please use this form to join and send it, with the fee, to the address provided. Our chapter will then receive payment for recruiting a new member.
2. **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.
3. 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

National Audubon Society
 Recruitment Code: COZN500Z
 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: COZN500Z
 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



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.



Feb 5 (Sat) WINTER WANDERERS FIELD TRIP 9 a.m. to dark. FUNDRAISER—Rare winter birds. Progressive birding and eating day that provides breakfast, lunch and dessert stops as well as bird watching and lots of good conversation and fun. Cost is a donation of \$ 15.00 or more. **Reservations required by Feb 3rd. Call Ruth at 245-5118.**

- **Feb 18-21** is the **GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT**. Details available at the Chapter meeting in Feb., in the Flyer on page 5, or at www.BirdCount.org.



!! NEW!! Feb 19 (Sat) SPECIAL WINTER TRIP. 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Leaders: Bernie Mowat and Jeanette Tasey. Bring your camera! Call Bernie (656-7467) for questions.

- **April 16 (Sat) EXXON PONDS AND EMERALD HILLS.** 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
One mile walk. Bring a sack lunch
- **May 7 (Sat) LAKE BASIN (West and Northwest of Molt)** 8 a.m. Bring a sack Lunch. Mike Weber, leader.
- **May 14 (Sat) MEET AT RIVERFRONT PARK at 8 a.m.** George and Bernie Mowat, leaders.



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