

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 3

MARCH 2011

New This Issue

- MA Birding Festival
- 'Nesting Material'
- Field Trip Reports
- Next BioBlitz
- Bird Sighting Data Training



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THE MONDAY, MARCH 21 YVAS MEETING will feature member George Mowat who will present a program on how to sharpen your skills to identify birds. George grew up in Hawaii and started birding in the 1940's, feeding and watching birds in his yard and observing an Elepaio (you'll have to look that up!). He is retired as a geologist with the U.S. Geological Survey and the Bureau of Land Management. George will use a legacy of birding slides bequeathed to YVAS by Theodora Smith,



who died on November 27, 2010 at the age of 95. Theodora was a long-time active member and leader of YVAS. She was a talented photographer and teacher who left the world richer with her contributions.

Theodora Smith(left) going to Glacier National Park in 1985 with YVAS friends.

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, March 14,, 6:00pm: Board Meeting

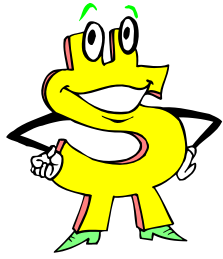
Monday, March 21, 7:00pm: General Membership Meeting

We will hold a YVAS fundraiser dinner at 5:45, before the membership meeting. Dinner donation : \$6. It will be hosted by Audrey Jurovich. Please call her to contribute to dinner and/or make reservations at 656-2748



☞ We're on the web! yvaudubon.org

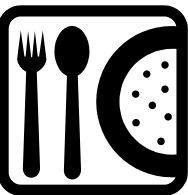
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YVAS CONSERVATION GRANT AWARDED

The Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society was pleased to award our 2011 Conservation Grant to Donna Pedrazzi, Administrator of the Lower Musselshell Conservation District. Her proposal entitled *Outdoor Classroom Birdhouse Project*, is an activity that would help the kids to identify local birds, to learn about nesting habits, and to construct bird houses to be placed along the River Walk. We look forward to a visit from the group to a YVAS membership meeting in the spring to let us know how the project turned out.

THE OSPREY PROJECT is still in full swing. Another grant has been sought from the National Audubon Society to help with funding. In addition, the long planned nest to be placed at the ACEC is, hopefully, to be built this spring. This will be a special nest that has a webcam attached to allow for study and research. We await news from Northwest Energy about the placement of the pole for the nest. The planned Birdathon this year will focus fundraising efforts to accomplish the ACEC



WINTER WANDERERS FIELD TRIP Saturday, February 5

The weather was mild and we all enjoyed getting outdoors! We saw a few birds and had a lot of fun visiting on the trip. The breakfast at Ruth Vanderhorst and Anne Cowan's home was very tasty! Then, we drove to Molt and checked out places we know such as the Shelter Belt and beyond. We saw a few prairie birds such as Horned Larks and a Cooper's Hawk, but no Snow Buntings. When we arrived for a delicious lunch at the Davis', we watched their feeders and saw several species including Black-capped Chickadees, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker and several Juncos. After a ride through Emerald Hills, we stopped at Helen Carlson's home for a piece of pie and close up views of her "Wild" Turkeys! Then we called it a day! Thank you to Bernie Mowat

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.



FIELD TRIP NOTES

FIELD TRIP DATA PROJECT

BIRD IDENTIFICATION AND BEHAVIOR INFORMATION

In 2010, Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society initiated a project to document and share field trip bird sighting information. This year we are expanding and improving the project by providing training on data collection to field trip leaders and assistants, by discussing options to increase field trips, and by exploring interest in integrating information from individual birders.

What we are doing:

- Recording field trip bird sighting data
- Sharing data with agencies and organizations that study bird distribution:
 - Montana Natural Heritage Program, Bureau of Land Management, State Trust Land, County Planning Groups, Montana Fish, Wildlife, Parks, Others
- Helping impact important decisions about land use, habitat, wildlife, resource management

The process is simple. Trip leaders and assistants keep a list of birds seen on field trips. This information includes common bird name, numbers, location, and simple breeding and wintering behaviors. Participation in the project is of course voluntary. Those who have participated thus far find it simple and fun. Our data will be included in the next edition of PD Skaar's *Montana Bird Distributionok*. If you have any questions about the project or if you would like to participate, contact Rita Harding, mtroses22@bresnan.net or 406-259-7586.

SPECIAL WINTER TRIP Saturday Feb 19, Cold and Rosy-Finches

A cold morning greeted our field trip group of eleven birders, which was especially hard after a week of beautiful weather. We were hopeful, however, that the cold would bring out flocks of Rosy-Finches. Upon arriving at Jeanette Tasey's house, a flock of Pine Siskins took off from the nearest tree, and four Wild Turkeys made their way towards the trees. It was a small preview of what we would see for the next three hours.

From the warmth of the house we were greeted by the very bird we were hoping to see—about 100 Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches descended from the roof to snatch up the sunflower seeds Jeanette put out. The flock ate, spooked, took off, returned and took off again. They would be back, but our focus turned to the Wild Turkeys. We had seen several coming up the driveway, but out in the yard were dozens more. Jeannette scattered corn around the yard, and even more appeared. They ate their fill, and filed off along the rim rocks and disappeared into the trees. Other



birds made their appearance between descents of Rosy-Finches: Pinyon Jays gobbled up peanuts and flew off to nearby ponderosas, a Hairy Wood-

GRAY-CROWNED ROSY-FINCHES Mary Schvetz

pecker and Red-breasted Nuthatch pecked at the suet feeders, and Siskins, House Finches, a few Blacked-capped Chickadees, and one American Goldfinch flocked in the front yard. Helen even spotted a single Black Rosy-finch amid the hundreds of Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches! The numbers of birds, and how close we were able to see them at was incredible. The time and effort Jeanette puts into making sure the birds are fed and watered made for a memorable morning of bird viewing, and left us all a little jealous of what Jeanette gets to see every day. Many thanks to Jeannette and Bernie for a great new field trip! Thank you to Mary Schvetz

HAPPENING AT MONTANA AUDUBON (MA)

SOME BILLS before the legislature are unbelievable in their attack on the things we hold dear. We alert our YVAS members to the need to be politically active and sign up at mtaudubon.org, issues and action/armchair activist, to inform themselves about the issues.

- SB 233: Revise environmental impact laws **MA**: Save the Montana Environmental Policy Act:
- HB 321: Nullify the Endangered Species Act **MA**: Under Attack: Montana's Constitution & the Endangered Species Act
- SB 164: Legacy River Conservation **MA**: Support Rivers

Montana Audubon's *Wings Across the Big Sky* Bird Festival

Cottonwood Inn Glasgow, Montana June 3-5, 2011

Pre-Festival Friday Bird Ecology and Conservation Workshops. Registration brochures will arrive in mail boxes mid-March; at that point you'll be able to sign up (first-come, first-served basis). Workshops will be held Friday, June 3rd (7 A.M.–3:00 P.M.). We have room for only 20 participants in each workshop!



- Grassland Bird Conservation Workshop
- Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Workshop

Both workshops will include a series of talks by biologists with expertise in grasslands or sage-grouse and sage-steppe conservation. The cost for each of these unique workshops is only \$30, which includes transportation and a sack lunch.

Keynote Speaker: This year we welcome nationally renowned writer Gary Ferguson as our lunchtime keynote speaker. His talk, *Gifts from the Sky: How Birds Shaped American Conservation*, will be a mix of lore, history, and science—and celebrates our long-standing love affair with birds.

Field Trips

Saturday and Sunday, June 4th and 5th

- Fort Peck
- North Valley County 1 & 2
- South Valley County 1 & 2
- Missouri River Float/Canoe Trip
- Bird Banding .

Sunday only, June 5th

- Bowdoin National Wildlife Refuge
- Manning Lake Tribal Wildlife Refuge



Volunteers are needed to help with transportation, tours, registration and more

For all the details about the Festival, visit mtaudubon.org/bird_watching/festival.html

Contact: Larissa Berry, lberry@mtaudubon.org or call 406-443-3949

ACEC Events at the Audubon Conservation Education Center 7026 South Billings Blvd, Billings, MT, 59101 Call 406-294-5099 or visit www.mtacec.org for details.

March 22 Free adult lecture at 7 – 8 PM: Native American History. Oly Hugs. No registration required.

March 27 Free family program from 1:30 – 3 PM: Recycled Art - turn a milk carton into a bird feeder and make paper out of newspaper and glue as we turn our trash into amazing treasures. Pre-register by calling 294-5099.



YVAS member Will Crain has offered the following review of birding opportunities available around the clock, even when it is 10 degrees outside.

NESTING MATERIAL — Birding videos, books and websites

At Parmly Billings Library: Some of many videos

- The Life of Birds is a not to be missed BBC production narrated by David Attenborough, which studies the evolution and habits of birds. Each of the ten 50-minute episodes discusses how the huge variety of birds in the world deal with a different aspect of their day-to-day existence.
- The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill is a 2005 documentary film directed, produced, and edited by Judy Irving. It chronicles the relationship between an unemployed musician who is living rent-free in a cabin in Telegraph Hill in San Francisco, California, and a flock of feral parrots (cherry-headed and two blue-crowned conures) that he feeds and interacts with.
- Better Bird Watching in Idaho and Montana 90 min of video and audio of 145 birds commonly found in Idaho and Montana. Ideal for beginners!

In Cyberspace: some websites

- <http://blog.locustfork.net/2011/02/earth-day-2009-a-bluebird-feeding-show/> some fine pix of Eastern Blue Birds feeding the brood in Birmingham, Alabama
- www.Pryormountains.org Sponsored by the Pryors Coalition, it highlights the Pryor Mountains as a small and vulnerable area, a treasure for people in surrounding communities, and encourages preservation of their natural beauty and quiet. Wonderful photos!
- [www.sportsmansparadiseonline.com/Oceanside Barn Owls.html](http://www.sportsmansparadiseonline.com/Oceanside_Barn_Owls.html) Live Wildlife Cam of a mating pair of barn owls located in Oceanside, California. This owl box is 16ft above the ground in a back yard which is near acres of open wilderness, providing for plenty of hunting grounds. There are owlets in the nest. This is fabulous!
- www.wildbirdmagazine.com Includes stories on Birder of the Year; Birding Adventures, 'how to', and more.
- www.abcbirds.org/index.html The American Bird Conservancy is very informative – interactive, current, upbeat, dedicated. A link worth having.



On Paper

Feb issue of "**Nat'l Geographic**", has a story with recent finds and evidence on the history of the Feather – tracing it back before the dinosaurs – quoting a leading expert Ken Dial, U of M Missoula.

"Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder"

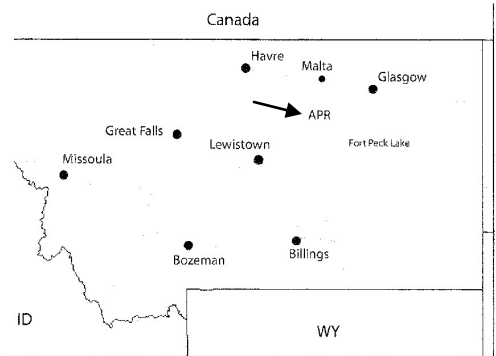
In this influential work about the staggering divide between children and the outdoors, child advocacy expert Richard Louv directly links the lack of nature in the lives of today's wired generation—he calls it nature-deficit—to some of the most disturbing childhood trends, such as the rises in obesity, attention disorders, and depression. It is the first book to bring together a growing body of research indicating that direct exposure to nature is essential for healthy childhood development and for the physical and emotional health of children and adults. It includes: 100 actions you can take to create change in your community, school, and family, 35 discussion points to inspire people of all ages to talk about the importance of nature in their lives. And new and updated research confirming that direct exposure to nature is essential for the physical and emotional health of children and adults.

Invitation for Audubon to join BioBlitz on American Prairie Foundation land near the Charles M. Russell Wildlife Refuge. June 23-26

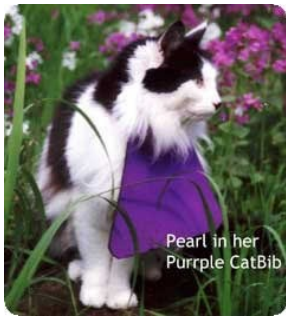
2011 Applications will be available soon for members of the Audubon community to apply to join researchers from across the country in an effort to document species diversity on American Prairie Foundation land, south of Malta and north of Fort Peck Lake. Watch the APF website for more info soon. <http://www.americanprairie.org>

The mission of American Prairie Foundation is to create and manage a prairie-based wildlife reserve that, when combined with public lands already devoted to wildlife, will protect a unique natural habitat, provide lasting economic benefits, and improve public access to and enjoyment of the prairie landscape.

This landscape is some of the most intact prairie lands left in North America and contains herds of elk, Sharp-tailed and Sage-Grouse leks, Mountain Plovers, prairie dogs and black footed ferrets. Most recently APF reintroduced bison back on their property. This BioBlitz will be an important opportunity to capture baseline data about the current status of species at the beginning of the effort to return bison to a landscape that evolved with bison. If you are interested in joining or leading a birding team please contact Kayhan Ostovar at kayhan.ostovar@rocky.edu, 657-1175



CONSERVATION ISSUES: Many communities struggle with balancing the needs of bird and feline populations. The **American Bird Conservancy (ABC)**, a non-profit membership organization with



the mission of conserving native birds and their habitats throughout the Americas, has launched a citizen education and action campaign to end the massive and unnecessary loss of birds and other wildlife to predation by domestic cats. Scientists estimate that free-roaming cats (owned, stray, and feral) kill hundreds of millions of birds and possibly more than a billion small mammals in the U.S. each year. Not only are birds and other wildlife at risk, but cats who roam free often lead short and painful lives, living on average less than 5 years, whereas indoor cats often live to 17 or more years of age. The American Bird Conservancy has prepared informative educational materials on the impact of cats on birds, including documentation on cat predation, health hazards, and other dangers associated with free-roaming cats, legislative solutions, and practical advice on how to convert an outdoor cat into a contented indoor pet. These materials, prepared with the assistance of a technical advisory committee with representatives from the animal welfare, conservation (including National Audubon Society), veterinary, and scientific communities, are available at their website abcbirds.org

In addition, the Jan-Feb 2008 issue of Audubon Magazine at audubonmagazine.org features a device called a CatBib, suggesting that, "Wearing a bib....would be good for the estimated millions of birds and other animals killed each year by domestic cats." The CatBib gently interferes with a cat's hunting skills, without interfering with any other activities. It acts as a barrier, coming between the cat and the bird the cat is after. It gets in the way just as the cat strikes out for the bird. Additionally, because birds see in color, it also functions as a colorful visual warning to the birds. The birds are more apt to see the cat, before the cat gets close enough to attack. Cats can run, jump, climb trees, eat, and drink, in the CatBibs. The actions a cat uses to make that final lunge at a bird is what activates the CatBib to work only when it's attempting to catch a bird. More information is available at Catbib.com.au.

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

Membership Information

The National Audubon Society gives complimentary membership in our chapter as a benefit, but 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 Members 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: 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



**YELLOWSTONE VALLEY
AUDUBON NEWSLETTER**

**Non-Profit Organization
PRST STD
U.S. POSTAGE
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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.

- **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. 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
- **May 28 (Sat) POMPEY'S PILLAR.** 7 a.m. to early afternoon. Sack lunch optional. Ruth Vanderhorst, leader



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