

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 40, NUMBER 10

OCTOBER 2010

New This Issue

- **Field Trip Notes**
- **Yellowstone River Symposium**
- **Christmas Potluck**
- **Yellowstone River Clean-Up Float**



Inside this issue:

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

THE AMERICAN PRAIRIE FOUNDATION

Important Ideas About Our Vanishing Prairies



Burrowing owl

What remains of the great American prairies is not quite the same as what land hungry settlers found when they migrated westward after the American Civil War. Yet, remnants of that once great expanse remain and the American Prairie Foundation (APF)

has long range plans to not only preserve this disappearing piece of our history, but also restart the idea of conserving those diminishing prairies. Of particular interest to our Chapter, the Foundation hopes to create one of the most interesting wildlife experiences in the United States where birds, possibly bison and other wildlife will be able to roam and prosper here in Montana. The Foundation's Managing Director, Jeff Hagener, will speak to the Chapter about the mission, ideas and long range plans of the APF at our next meeting, Monday October 18. Thanks to Robert Lubbers, Program Chair

The APF mission 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. www.americanprairie.org

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, October 11, 6:00pm: Board Meeting at the ACEC

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

There will NOT be a fundraiser dinner before the membership meeting in October. Dinners will resume in November. Watch for details in the November FLYER.



 We're on the web! yellowstoneaudubon.org

THIS FLYER IS PUBLISHED ON SFI CERTIFIED PRODUCT



The **Yellowstone Valley Audubon Flyer** 's new look results from efforts to save time, money and the environment, in keeping with our mission. It is the 'signature' of YVAS ; we have changed the paper color in order to use a SFI certified product (Sustainable Forestry Initiative) – which means that filler used meets special requirements. SFI Inc., which began in the 1990's, is an independent, non-profit organization responsible for maintaining, overseeing and improving a sustainable forestry certification program. The continuous improvement of protection of water quality, prompt reforestation after harvest, promotion of wildlife conservation, and continuous improvement practices and forest management activities to ensure long-term forest productivity and usage are required. Working with a new printing company has also allowed us to directly print addresses on the Flyer, instead of preparing more costly and time-consuming labels, and it gave us very competitive pricing. Thanks to all the members who have generously donated their time to the publish the FLYER over the last long 35 years. Nancy Wiggins, Editor

MEMBERSHIP ALERT: The National Audubon Society bestows YVAS Chapter membership as a benefit when you join them. However, they do not provide monies to the Chapter that are sufficient to cover the costs of YVAS membership, so it is important that you purchase supporting chapter membership also. Check next to the address of your current issue of the Flyer. For example, if it reads 'YVAS' with a month and 2 digit year, YOU ARE A SUPPORTING CHAPTER MEMBER. (If the label reads YVAS JAN 11, it means your renewal is due by January 2011.) Please check to be sure YOU ARE A SUPPORTING CHAPTER MEMBER, and that your membership has not expired. You can complete and return the applications on the back page of this Flyer if it is time to join or renew. We appreciate your support!



A reminder that Tom Davis sells our donated aluminum cans to raise money for Audubon Adventures. Please sort aluminum cans from any other aluminum material before you bring them to Helen Carlson's house

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society Officers:

President: Ruth Vanderhorst, 245-5118, acrv@bresnan.net
Vice-President: Dick Moore, 656-6241
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
 Steve Regele: 962-3115, sregele@juno.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.....Robert Lubbers 245-2970
 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 6:30pm. 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

WESTBY AND NORTHEAST MONTANA

The August 26 – 29, 2010, field trip began on a day of record setting 100 degree+ temperatures and ended with a cold rain, topped off by hail. In a caravan of five vehicles, twelve enthusiastic birders led by Helen Carlson enjoyed the ups and downs of birding in northeastern Montana. The first day we drove to Plentywood, stopping on the way as birds appeared along the route, including a Red-Tailed Hawk. The first “real” stop was at Medicine Lake along the bridge where we saw Lesser Yellowlegs and a Ruddy Duck.

The second morning we headed for Westby Park. It was sunny and pleasant, and we set up our chairs and spread out the food and waited.....and waited, for visits by warblers, including Black-and-Whites and Wilson's.....and waited and waited to see an Ovenbird ducking in and out of the brush. It was very quiet, and local guide Ted said it had been that way, so we headed back to the Medicine Lake Preserve. We saw Double-crested Cormorant, American Coot and many Canada Geese and American White Pelicans. North of Westby we saw three species of Sandpiper: Least, Baird's and Semipalmated.

The next morning we went back to Westby to be greeted by the same scenario, so again we spent more time viewing the waterfowl at Medicine Lake.

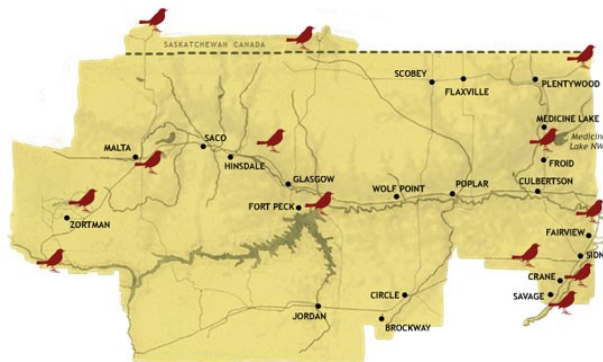
The third morning we headed toward Fort Peck, where Helen had arranged a real treat for us. We visited the Carlson's (no relation, but great friends of Helen) who invited us into their home which is set up to view their spectacular backyard through ample windows. The backyard is set up to be a haven for birds with dripping and misting water and lots of feeders and bird baths. We saw a Baltimore Oriole and Blue Jays, as well as Red-breasted Nuthatch and Clay-colored Sparrows, to name a few. Along the way, we heard that a rare (in Montana) Costa's Hummingbird had been sighted in the area. The Carlson's directed us to Saco, and the home of Don and Holly Minarath's, and they were gracious to welcome our group with very little notice. They have a wide porch that goes all along their house where we sat and watched their fabulous backyard with fruit and other trees and shrubbery all designed to delight the birds. Holly used the old, huge satellite dishes for bird baths, and there were feeders and huge sunflowers everywhere. But no Costa's Hummingbird, although he had been seen there recently. We finally all trooped into the house (it was impossible to have quiet with twelve enthusiasts) and he appeared! It is only the second sighting of this species in Montana and a first for Helen's list of Montana birds! It was pretty exciting!



COSTA'S
HUMMING BIRD

From there we went to Malta and headed south the next morning. It had rained all night, and it was muddy and chilly, so we decided not to go to Bowdoin Park, although one brave birder decided to go on her own and has not been heard from since. We stopped at the camp ground outside of Zortman, one of the most delightful campgrounds I have ever seen. With the cold and drizzle, we did not see much so we kept driving through park and on south. We had a number of good sightings on highway, including a pair of Sandhill Cranes very close to the road. There were a number of Raptors, including Swainson's, Red-tailed and Ferruginous Hawks as well as a Raven, Great Blue Heron and many smaller birds. We saw 90 species. It was a wonderful trip with good birders and friends.

Thanks to Dorothy Bartlett



The grass was the country, as the water is the sea." -Willa Cather

MONTANA'S NORTH-EASTERN PLAINS BIRDING TRAIL showcases 3 National Wildlife Refuges, two campground/recreation areas, several Wildlife Management Areas, one National Historic Site, one National Park, one city park, and numerous tracts of public lands. Each location provides a unique combination of habitat, offering a wide variety of birds to be observed.

CLARK'S FORK AND PRYOR MOUNTAINS

"Bird Watching in the Pryors" field trip departed on September 4, 2010, from guide Billie Hicks' home in Silesia and headed South-west along the skirts of the unglaciated Pryor Mountains. With the weather being as dicey as it has been, we got very lucky and it was PERFECT. Great dramatic skies, warm, with a gentle breeze that covered the farm lands to our final destination atop the myriad of eco jewels/niches of the Pryor Mountains.

A highpoint of our travels was finding the Williamson's Sapsucker. The books don't show it crossing the WY border, so I sense it's either shifting its movements "wandering" or branching out for new nesting areas. The eight of us talked about these shifting patterns at one of the perfect stops along the way. If you want to find the Williamson Sapsucker: From the sign that says 'Bridger' one way and 'BIG ICE CAVES' the other, take the road behind you and go down till you come to the second place to turn out and to a visibly tangent road... (Black Currants are plentiful here)... walk up the road most parallel to the main gravel road—but above—for 300 yards.

The Williamson Sapsucker is noted for its extreme sexual dimorphism. I saw for sure the male and a glimpse of the female – at first I thought two very different birds – a pair near the top of an unusual bare pine in a quite healthy forest.

Here's what we saw on the way there and back, American Goldfinches, Cat Bird, Yellow Warbler, Song Sparrow, Black-headed Grosbeak, Red-winged Blackbirds, Marsh Wren, Pied-billed Grebe, Turkey Vultures, European Starlings, Red-tailed hawks!!! A Wilson's Phalarope, Brewer's Sparrow, Ring-necked Pheasant, Western Wood-Pewee, Brewers Blackbird, Eastern Kingbird, American Kestrel (Sparrow Hawk), Barn Swallows, Mourning Doves, Sage Thrasher, American Crows, Ravens, Vesper Sparrows, Lark Sparrows, Cedar Waxwings, Rock Wrens, Clark's Nutcrackers; Red Crossbills—also highly sexually dimorphic and very different they are; Mountain Chickadees, White-breasted Nuthatch, Pileated Woodpecker – RARE, and Sandhill Cranes, Greater Sage-Grouse, 3 Antelope, one mule deer, a chipmunk and a bunch of road kill. It was a beautiful, rewarding, educational, relaxing day. Many, many thanks to our guide, Billie Hicks and to the Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society for the use of the imperative Walkie... bring it on back 'Rubber Duckie'



© Denny Mallory/CLO

WILLIAMSON'S SAPSUCKER



PRYOR MOUNTAINS BIRDING Photo by Will Crane ...Talkies. Thanks to Will Crane.

MEMORIAL



Barbara Jaquith, long-time YVAS member and expert leader of many field trips to the Pryor Mountains and to the Red Lodge area, died on September 7. We share our sympathy with Jake and her family. Many persons have mentioned the trips she led into the Pryors as 'standouts'; specific birds such as the Williamson's Sapsucker and the Sage Thrasher were first seen by some birders with her guidance. Barbara was devoted to learning as much about birds as she could. Her work studying Sage Grouse truly qualified her as a "citizen scientist". While we are saddened by her loss, let us celebrate Barbara's gifts to us as birders and advocates for birds. YVAS appreciates contributions that have been made in memory of Barb; memorials are added to the Endowment Fund.



Road Building into the Meeteeste Spires

MEETEESTE SPIRES HAWK WATCH

On Saturday, September 25, Jerry Dalton skillfully led our little band of birders along challenging roads to the Meeteetse Spires Hawk Watch. The day was picture-perfect and we were rewarded with seeing more than 40 species of birds, including large numbers of Clark's Nutcrackers, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Cedar Waxwings, a

This BLM area is located along the eastern slopes of the Beartooth Mountains, about six miles south of Red Lodge, MT, and features a rich variety of natural and cultural resources. In addition to being a flyway for migrating hawks, it is home to a rare flowering plant, the *Shoshonea pulvinata*, which exists in only three locations in Montana and fewer than 12 locations globally.

Junco, Pine Siskins,

Cassin's Finch, Wilson's Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warblers, White-crowned Sparrows, Townsend's Solitaires, Northern Flickers. Our mission of course was to observe migrating hawks in the area, and we were not at all disappointed in the collection that showed up. Appearing for us to view from our lawn-chair perches under the Spires

were several Golden Eagles, Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks, Northern Harriers, an American Kestrel, Red-tailed Hawks, Ferruginous Hawks, and numerous Turkey Vultures. We also got to see a Broad-winged Hawk, a medium-sized hawk, with stout body and broad pale wings with a dark trailing edge; it has a dark face, white throat, a tail with one thick white band in middle, and one thinner near tail base and tip and reddish chest with reddish barring along the sides.



BROAD-WINGED HAWK



CASSIN'S FINCH Photo by George Mowat

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

COMING UP AT THE ACEC



This year the Audubon Conservation Education Center will be decorating a tree at the Moss Mansion for the holiday season Festival of Trees. They have a ten-foot tall tree in the Mansion's conservatory, and are hoping YVAS members can loan them bird or other nature-related ornaments to decorate the tree. They would also like to use 'orphan' bird nests that you might find blown out of another tree, to hold ornaments. If you have any nests or decorations that you are willing to lend for the holiday season, please label them with your name and bring them to the YVAS meeting on October

18th. If you prefer to drop them off at another time, please contact Helen Carlson at 248-8684. Be sure to visit the Moss Mansion to check out the festival of trees in November or December.



YVAS Christmas Potluck and Fundraiser

Date: Monday, Dec. 6, 2010, 6 p.m. Dinner (come early and browse the Silent Auction & Raffle) . Think about doing your Christmas shopping on this night. Bob Landis will again share his wonderful and often humorous photography taken in Yellowstone National Park.

Place: Masonic Center, 1101 Broadwater. Check the November Flyer for more details.

OUR YELLOWSTONE RIVER IS A GLOBAL RESOURCE!

If anyone asks how much water it takes to grow a pound of hamburger, the answer is 3,000 gallons! That's a quote by Fred Pearce in his keynote address "Why Rivers Run Dry" at the Yellowstone River Symposium held in Billings in late August.

Mr. Pearce, author and journalist from London, warned the 160 Symposium attendees that the looming problem facing the world's 8-plus billion people is not so much feeding them as making sure there is water for them and their crops. He said a pound of rice takes 650 gallons to grow, noting generally that 90-percent of the world's water is used for agriculture. The two-day Symposium, sponsored by the Yellowstone River Conservation District Council, formed in 1999, drew local and national experts who addressed the theme, "The Yellowstone River in the 21st Century, Planning for a Sustainable Future."

As bleak and sobering as statistics concerning water use and availability seem to be--rivers like the Nile, Colorado, and Rio Grande no longer flow into the sea-- Mr. Pearce said that "few rivers are as un-dammed as the Yellowstone" and "it is remarkably undamaged as well," which bodes well for Montana and its predominant world class agricultural production system. Because it is such a valuable resource, Mr. Pearce said, "water is also a commodity, and a communal system is essential to ensure that everyone has a supply." Mr. Pearce concluded with the important generalization that "water harvesting" is also essential. We need to change, he noted, "the inefficient way we capture rainfall."

Other notable speakers including Dr. Susan Gilbertz, who addressed our Chapter on "The Yellowstone Cultural Inventory" in 2008, said that Native Americans have a holistic view of the river which means they "separate water from its importance" and "that water is everything and interconnects with everything."

Don Youngbauer, YRCDC Chairman, who last year spoke to our chapter, welcomed the Symposium with another sobering reality, "we are universally and extremely lucky, here in the Yellowstone River Valley...because a thirsty, dusty planet is hard to deal with," and concluded with, "there is a need to raise the level of public understanding of and about the Yellowstone." The Symposium's speakers all concurred in the general idea that we need to dedicate attention to the future of the Yellowstone and help shape the future of this globally important resource.

YVAS was well represented by Board members Deb and Steve Regele, Kayhan Ostovar, and Robert Lubbers. Montana Audubon Society's Executive Director Steve Hoffman, also attended the Symposium. Thank you to Robert Lubbers



YELLOWSTONE RIVER CLEAN-UP FLOAT

YVAS is again sponsoring a 'Clean-Up Float' along the Yellowstone River, for which we are seeking volunteers to help with the following:

- Area of Coverage: Duck Creek to Coulson Park
- Date: **Oct 23** unless we have bad weather, then **Oct 30** as a backup date
- Wanted: People with drift boats and other watercraft to help out - other "teams" can walk sections of shoreline
- Contact: Kayhan if you are interested for more info. 657-1175

Membership Information

- As many of you know, we offer membership in YVAS as Supporting Chapter Members for \$20.00 per year. We do this to help pay the costs of membership. Although the National Audubon Society gives complimentary membership in our chapter as a benefit, no dues come to us. Therefore, we strongly encourage you to join our chapter as Supporting Chapter Members. Use the bottom application form on the right to join as Supporting Chapter Members or to renew your chapter member.
- An application for *initial* membership in the National Audubon Society is also printed in each YVAS Flyer (see application 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, along with the fee, to the address provided. Our chapter will then receive payment for recruiting a new member.
- Please note the address label on your issue of the Yellowstone Valley Flyer. If your label has a date on the top, you are a National Audubon Member. If your label has YVAS and a 2 digit year and month, you are a Supporting Chapter Member (or both). For example, if your address label reads [YVAS JAN 10*] this means your renewal is due by January of 2010. If there is a [*] symbol, it indicates an expired local membership. Please renew chapter memberships when due using the form in the Flyer. Renewal of NAS membership is NOT handled by the chapter. You should renew directly with the NAS.
- Moving??? Please 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.
- 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, please make sure you leave a note for the membership secretary indicating your academic affiliation.

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



**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.

- **Oct 2 (Sat) STILLWATER AND COONEY DAM.** 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Bring a sack lunch. Helen Carlson, leader.
- **NOTE CHANGE IN THE FOLLOWING DATE FROM NOVEMBER 6 TO Nov 13 (Sat) YELLOWTAIL DAM AFTERBAY.** 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Bring a sack lunch. George Mowat, leader.
- **Dec 18 (Sat) ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT.** More details will be announced in the FLYER
- **Jan 1 (Sat) NEW YEARS FIELD TRIP.** 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Bring a sack lunch. Yellowtail Dam Afterbay. Helen Carlson, leader.
- **Feb 5 (Sat) WINTER WANDERERS FIELD TRIP**—Rare winter birds. Progressive birding and eating. 9 a.m. to dark. FUNDRAISER. Reservations required by Feb 3rd. See Flyer for more details.



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