



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 9

SEPTEMBER 2011

New This Issue

- Audubon Education and Conservation Center
- Field Trip Notes
- Yellowstone River Cleanup
- Nesting materials



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MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 19 MEMBERSHIP MEETING POTLUCK PICNIC AT THE AUDUBON CENTER 5:45PM

- **Bring a dish to share with your party, plus 6. If your last name begins with**
A...G — bring entree or side dish
H...M — bring salad
N...Z - bring dessert
- **Bring plates and utensils for personal use, insect repellent and binoculars. Coffee, Ice tea and water will be provided.**

Directions:

- Take Grand Ave. to 6th St W
- Turn south onto 6th St W; go under the underpass and continue .5 miles
- Turn left onto S. Billings Blvd. continue 5.5 miles to the Audubon Conservation Education Center on your right Look for a cream-colored sign, and turn right on the dirt road. **(before the entrance to Riverfront Park on the left)**. There is a parking lot at the Norm's Island Trailhead. Go up the driveway past a welcome kiosk on the north side of the parking lot (on the right as you drive in). You will see the Center, a large building with a green roof.

Carpool:

Depart from the Rocky Mountain College parking lot on Rimrock Road, adjacent to the Billings Studio Theater at 5:30.

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, September 12, 6:00pm: Board Meeting AT NANCY WIGGINS' HOUSE— 3016 BRENTWOOD LANE (1 mile west of Rocky Mountain College, north of Rimrock)

Monday, September 19, 5:45 pm: General Membership Meeting POT LUCK PICNIC AT THE AUDUBON CENTER. See this issue for details.



☞ We're on the web! yvaudubon.org

THIS FLYER IS PUBLISHED ON SFI CERTIFIED PRODUCT

A VISIT TO THE AUDUBON CENTER

For several years, under the guidance of dedicated teachers and community volunteers, students from local schools have been transforming a landscape from gravel pit to wildlife habitat. They have been restoring a tapped out piece of ground as an example to us all. They've been planting seeds and seedlings that are taking root in the land and in their minds. Through this process they are changing not only the place but themselves as well. And what is emerging along the Yellowstone River is a permanent place in the community for birds and wildlife and for people to learn and study and grow.



What has emerged is the dream of a program for conservation and education serving the south-central Yellowstone region for generations to come. The Audubon Education Conservation Center lies in the heart of the 72,000 square mile Yellowstone River Basin, within minutes of Billings. A partnership between the Yellowstone River Parks Association (YRPA), Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society (YVAS) and Montana Audubon has made the center possible. YRPA has led efforts to restore the site, and they have granted Montana Audubon a 99-year lease on the property for educational programs. The partners are cooperating to build a facility and endow programs. Local teachers continue to provide critical assistance with planning, implementation of school programs, and overall project development. Initially launched in 1998, an all-volunteer effort has planted more than 65,000 trees and shrubs for habitat restoration, engaged dozens of schools and local businesses, and built community support for a year-round center. Today, Montana Audubon and its partners are prepared to build on this foundation and establish the Center as a regional hub for place-based education, conservation/environmental research and monitoring, citizen science, and Yellowstone River Basin natural history. Local governance from an Audubon Center Advisory Council, strong community partnerships, and exceptional education programming are the pillars supporting the growth and development of this project. Beautifully situated along the Yellowstone River, the Audubon Center includes three ponds for scientific research and exploration, and connectivity to the growing greenbelt trail system, an island on the river, and city parks. The site anchors the growing Yellowstone Greenway public trail system. See the Center's upcoming events on page 6 or visit mtacec.org

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society Officers:

President: Bill DeMeyer, 671-7501, battie@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
 Jeanette Tasey, 669-3169, jtasey@gmail.com
 Nancy Wiggins: 651-0218, nwiggins83@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, 651-0218, nwiggins83@gmail.com
 Field Trip Chairs... George and Bernie Mowat, 656-7467,
gmowat@bresnan.net
 Greeters.....Phyllis Holt 252-7373
 Audrey Jurovich 656-2748
 Injured Raptors...Jeanette Tasey 669-3169,jtasey@gmail.com
 Membership Secretary.....Joel M. Bowers, 534-3672,
 cell: 591-5635, jmba@jmba.com
 Program Chair.....open
 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.



THE PRESIDENT'S PIECE

During the past couple of weeks it has been interesting to hear all the comments on the oil spill. Whether you are a fisherman, a hunter, boater or a birder, we all know our Yellowstone River will take a while to recover. I do feel our local Exxon people are going to try to do everything they can to help it recover. It will take time, but initially with the river being so high and flowing so rapidly, there was a great dispersion of the volatile oil evaporating into the air, thus the smell. Unfortunately, the heavier substances most likely settled in the slow moving pools of the river and will take time to break down. As we have seen in the news reports on the soil samples, they are starting to break down. Time will tell how these will all affect the river, surrounding areas and ecosystems long term. Keep up to date at <http://epa.gov/yellowstoneriverspill/>

I had the opportunity to do some back yard birding this past weekend. My wife and I had the pleasure of watching a chipmunk figure out how to get into our hanging bird feeder. With skill he leaped out, landed and immediately started to fill his cheeks. When he landed on the feeder, the Pine Siskins, Mountain and Black Capped Chickadees and Red Breasted Nuthatches left as they were somewhat afraid of him. I told Lisa that our local White Breasted Nuthatch would take care of him. Sure enough she showed up and immediately took notice of the intruder. She flared her tail and wings and lunged forward. On her third attempt with this display, the chipmunk bailed out and the chase was on. She kept him away for some time, much to the delight of the other birds.

I do hope to see everyone at the September meeting at the Audubon Conservation and Education Center. The details are in this issue of the flyer on page 1. Bring your binoculars, check the flyer for what type of dish to bring, bring your plates and utensils and most of all come out and enjoy the birds and the company. Tour the grounds and visit the new Osprey nesting platform that YVAS sponsored with Northwestern Energy and the Audubon Center.

Don't forget the annual Yellowstone River clean-up is September 17th. Check the Flyer for more details. Also, a great supporter of ours, S Bar S, is having a promotion in their wild bird department September 24th. They are located at 2032 Old Hardin Road. I hope you find time to stop by and visit at their location. It will be a good time to see what products are available for our feathered friends.

Happy birding, Bill



FIELD TRIP NOTES

BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO SIGHTING On July 9, combining a birding and angling trip, Kayhan Ostevar and Jim Wiggins spotted a Black-billed Cuckoo on Pryor Creek Road. A common but secretive bird, it is heard far more often than seen. It is a medium cuckoo with brown upperparts, white underparts, red eye-ring, and a black decurved bill. The tail is long with faint white, dark-eyed spots underneath. It feeds primarily on caterpillars, also eating insects, small fish, mollusks and fruits. The Black-billed Cuckoo is listed as a High Priority concern on Audubon Watch Lists and because caterpillars are a main prey, they can be susceptible to pesticide use. Black-billed Cuckoos are also frequently felled by collisions with TV towers, tall buildings, and other structures during migration. Their populations fluctuate considerably from year to year as the birds move from place to place following outbreaks of prey. This variability makes it difficult to determine whether their overall numbers show a trend upward or downward. Several regional (statewide) estimates suggest that populations are declining, however.



Black-billed Cuckoo
Photo by Jim Wiggins

AUGUST 6 SHOREBIRDS, HAWKS & PRAIRIE

BIRDS Four of us, expertly lead by Mike Weber, adventured from Molt to Half-breed NWR. We recorded sightings of 41 different species. We encountered some of nature's finest along the way, but it wasn't all about birds this time... it turned out to be 'Day of the Toads'. Shortly after exiting Molt we discovered hundreds and hundreds of toads all hopping in the same direction, at us! It so happens that I caught a Great Plains Toad in my backyard two days earlier. This toad eruption is apparently genetic – see this link: [http://](http://amphibiaweb.org/cgi/amphib_query?where-genus=Bufo&where-species=cognatus)



Great Plains Toad
Photo by Will Crain



American Avocet
Photo by Will Crain

amphibiaweb.org/cgi/amphib_query?where-genus=Bufo&where-species=cognatus if you have any interest in critters of the region. Our bird sightings included Golden and Bald Eagles on wooden power poles; the sky seemed filled with Ferruginous Hawks for most of the day and the ground was hopping with Great Plains Toads wherever we went. We also recorded a Baird's Sandpiper, Western

Sandpiper and American Avocets who were putting on a great 'Look at me ~ I've got a broken wing' play. In this

same pond we saw Tiger Salamanders, surfacing and going back down to do what salamanders do in a drainage system that had been dry for 10 years. Further on we filled in a priority species for the adventure, Burrowing Owls who were bobbing up and down from their holes in the ground surrounded by rather large colonies of Prairie Dogs.

With all this water, a variety of tall grasses and lots of shore line, you'd think we'd be eaten alive by mosquitoes but no; we were surrounded by Dragonflies and Damselflies everywhere, and they like to dine on skito larva, not humans. I don't think anyone of us put on repellent!

As the day closed we came to the climax of the show. Off in the distance from our position on a road that probably no one had been on for 10 years, we could see a line of 'white' across the horizon... a cluster(?) of 175 - 200 American White Pelicans all bunched up. Thanks to George Mowat for arranging this beautiful day in a beautiful place which left us with some beautiful memories. Thanks to Will Crain



American White Pelicans
Photo by Will Crain

AUGUST 25 TO 28 Helen Carlson received news from Ted Nordhagen in Westby, MT that the Park in Westby has had trees and bushes cut down, and he recommended that Westby would not be worth visiting this year. Therefore, the Field Trip was cancelled.

In addition, obtaining lodging in Plentywood would be extremely difficult due to the demand of oil workers employed in the oil boom in that area.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR



SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 17TH

Annual Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society River Cleanup. In conjunction with the Rocky Mountain College environmental science program and the Montana Audubon Conservation Education Center, this is the 5th year we will float through the city of Billings working to make our community a cleaner and healthier place to live.

The Yellowstone River is the longest free-flowing river in the United States. We need your help to make sure it remains clean. Volunteers are needed to help float the river or walk sections of shoreline. Much of the section that we float was impacted by the oil spill in Laurel. This year we will be making a special effort to document any visible signs of oil as well as using GPS technology to map out large trash items that will take heavier equipment to move. While we can't remove these items at this time, we hope to in the near future. This project directly relates to the Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society osprey monitoring project, as we can scout for new nests from the river. We also use our time on the water to document all birds observed. This will allow us to gather long term data on some of the bird populations in the area.

Sponsors: Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks, Billings Clinic Foundation, Exxon-Mobil, Wal-mart, Rocky Mountain College Environmental Science Program, and the National Audubon Together Green Program with Toyota.

When: Sat September 17th, 9:00am. We start at Duck Creek Bridge for the River Float Crew. Other teams will be walking sections of river shoreline and cleaning up Two Moon Park, Mystic Park, Riverfront Park and Norm's Island. We will float to Coulson Park, stopping to clean up sections along the way. The city of Billings helps us haul away what we collect at each location as it is literally mountains of trash.



Contact: Kayhan Ostovar 657-1175, kayhan.ostovar@rocky.edu



EVENTS AT THE AUDUBON CONSERVATION EDUCATION CENTER

7026 South Billings Blvd, Billings, MT, 59101406-294-5099 www.mtacec.org

September 1 Registration opens for the Audubon Center's Adventures in Nature Afterschool and School Break Camps, Hands-on Home School Science classes, and Nature Nuts Pre-school program. Classes begin the weeks of September 12th & 19th. For more info, visit www.mtacec.org. Call 294-5099 to register.

September 17 Adult Workshop on Native Plants, 9:30 – 11:30 AM at the Audubon Center. Program will be led by Dr. Jennifer Lyman, professor of Environmental Science at Rocky Mtn College. Participants will learn about native plants and their uses during this hands-on, outdoor presentation. Call 294 – 5099 to register. Fee is \$10 per participant.

September 23 Nature Night at the Audubon Center! Drop your child off for an evening of outdoor adventures with our Teacher Naturalists. Program is open to 1st – 6th grade students, and runs from 6 – 8 PM. Fee is \$10 per child. Call 294 – 5099 to register.

September 25 Free Weekend Wonders family program from 1:30 – 3 at the Audubon Center. Learn about insects and spiders while you capture and examine them in the field. Open to all ages;

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

Call 2 94-5099 to register.

September 27 Free evening lecture from 7 – 8 PM at the Audubon Center with Bob Greene, General Manager for Sustainable Development and External Relations with Cloud Peak Energy. Mr. Greene will speak about Cloud Peak Energy's ecological approach to post-mining land reclamation. No registration required.

MONTANA



STATE BIRD: WESTERN
MEADOWLARK

STATE FLOWER: BITTE-
ROOT

NESTING MATERIALS

Need help in identifying your backyard birds and bird sounds??

These are REALLY helpful websites. Go to:

- www.AudubonBirds.org
- www.whatbird.com
- www.allaboutbirds.org



KNOW YOUR BIRD WORDS

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| - bevy of quail, swans | - murder of crows |
| - brace of ducks | - muster of peafowl |
| - brood of chicks | - nest, nide of pheasants |
| - cast of hawks | - sedge or siege of cranes |
| - charm of goldfinches | - skein of geese |
| - clutch of chicks | - spring of teals |
| - congregation of plovers | - team of ducks |
| - covey of quail, partridge | - volery of birds |
| - exaltation of larks | - watch of nightingales |
| - flight of birds | - wing of plovers |
| - lock of sheep, geese | |
| - gaggle of geese | |

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.

- **Sept 8 (Thur) MEET AT RIVERFRONT PARK at 5 p.m. Fall Migrants. Mike Weber, leader.**
- **Sept 10 (Sat) CLARK'S FORK AND PRYOR MOUNTAINS. Meet at 8 a.m. at Rockvale (parking lot at southwest end of Rockvale farthest from Billings and closest to Red Lodge). Bring Sack Lunch and water. Billie Hicks, leader. Reservations required. Phone Billie at 962-3798 by Sept. 8th. Red Lodge members and guests are encouraged to attend.**
- **Sept 24 (Sat) MEETEETSE SPIRES HAWK WATCH. 8 a.m. Bring a sack lunch. Jerry Dalton, leader.**
- **Oct 1 (Sat) STILLWATER AND COONEY DAM. 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sack lunch. Helen Carlson, leader.**
- **Nov 5 (Sat) YELLOWTAIL DAM AFTERBAY. 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sack lunch. George Mowat, leader.**
- **Dec 17 (Sat) ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT. More details will be in the FLYER.**



FIELD TRIP CHAIRS: George and Bernie Mowat 656-7467