

*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.*

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AUGUST 2009

**New This Issue**

- Warbler Profile
- Yellowstone BioBlitz
- Field Trips Write-ups
- Upcoming Events and 2009-2010 Field Trip Schedule

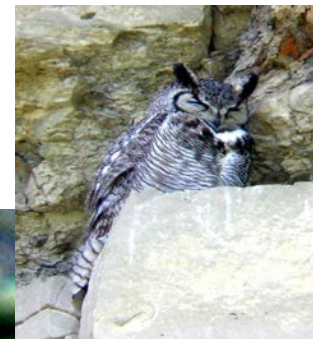


**Birds of Summer**  
*Courtesy of George Mowat*

Beautiful Male Bullock's Oriole



Great Horned Owl hiding behind a rock on the west side of Pompey's Pillar



Yellow-breasted Chat showing off in the sunshine



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**YVAS Meetings**

**All YVAS Meetings are at Mayflower Congregational Church, corner of Rehberg Lane and Poly Drive, unless otherwise noted.**

**August Board Meeting: Tuesday, August 11th, 6:00pm**

**We will resume our regular chapter meetings the third Monday in September, 7:00pm.**



### From the Editor

Summer is quickly passing by, and with the cool temperatures the last week of July, it certainly felt like “fall is in the air.” With the arrival of late summer comes a lot of new bird watching opportunities as birds begin to migrate back south. You will find that this month’s flyer includes the 2009-2010 YVAS Field Trip Schedule. Make sure you pull this out and keep it as a reference throughout the year. Of course, I will always reiterate and update those trips in each month’s flyer as well.

#### Following are other events that YVAS members will find of interest:

—There will be a brief ceremony honoring the late Jim Phelps later in August (date has not yet been determined). YVAS and Robert Lubbers have purchased a memorial rock honoring Jim Phelps, and it will be placed in Two Moon Park next to the Memorial Bench. Contact Robert Lubbers at 245-2970 or [rslubbers@q.com](mailto:rslubbers@q.com) for further information if you would like to be present, etc.

—Kayhan Ostovar will be heading up the 3rd annual Yellowstone River Cleanup in September. No date has been set yet, but watch next month’s flyer and contact Kayhan for further information.

—Oct. 17th will be the Grand Opening for the ACEC in Billings. This is sure to be a fun and informative event, so “save the date” and look for more information in upcoming flyers.

Always feel free to send me material about your birding adventures. Material for the flyer needs to be sent to [editor@yellowstoneaudubon.org](mailto:editor@yellowstoneaudubon.org) I need material by the 15th of the month for inclusion in the next month’s flyer.

—Jeanne Olson



#### Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society Officers:

**President:** Ruth Vanderhorst, 245-5118, [acr@bresnan.net](mailto:acr@bresnan.net)

**Vice-President:** Dick Moore, 656-6241

**Secretary:** Jeanne Olson, 656-7278

**Treasurer:** George Mowat, 656-7467, [gmowat@bresnan.net](mailto:gmowat@bresnan.net)

**Past-President:** Kayhan Ostovar, 256-7481, [kayhan@q.com](mailto:kayhan@q.com)

#### Board of Directors:

Rita Harding: 259-7586, [mtroses22@bresnan.net](mailto:mtroses22@bresnan.net)

Robert Lubbers: 245-2970, [rslubbers@q.com](mailto:rslubbers@q.com)

Deb Regele: 962-3115, [dregele@juno.com](mailto:dregele@juno.com)

Monty Sullins: 656-5242, [ssullins@bresnan.net](mailto:ssullins@bresnan.net)

Nancy Wiggins: 651-0218, [nancyhwiggins@hotmail.com](mailto:nancyhwiggins@hotmail.com)

**Website:** Mark Gale, [webmaster@yellowstoneaudubon.org](mailto:webmaster@yellowstoneaudubon.org)

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

- Board Meetings second Monday of each month at 7p.m. Board meetings are open to entire membership
- General Chapter Meetings third Monday of each month at 7p.m. (All meetings are open to the public)

#### Committees and Special Assignments:

Archives and History.....Theodora Smith 259-7679

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

Editor.....Jeanne Olson, [editor@yellowstoneaudubon.org](mailto:editor@yellowstoneaudubon.org)

Greeters.....Phyllis Holt 252-7373  
Audrey Jurovich 656-2748

Injured Raptors.....Robert Lubbers 245-2970

Membership Secretary.....Ruth Vanderhorst,  
245-5118, [acr@bresnan.net](mailto:acr@bresnan.net)

Recycling (aluminum).....Tom Davis 656-7618

#### Montana's Congressional Delegation:

Sen. Max Baucus: U.S. Senate, Wash. D.C. 20510  
[max@baucus.senate.gov](mailto:max@baucus.senate.gov) 800-332-6106

Sen. Jon Tester: U.S. Senate, Wash. D.C. 20510  
[tester.senate.gov](mailto:tester.senate.gov) 800-344-1513

Rep. Dennis Rehberg: U.S. House of Rep, Wash. D.C.  
20515 [house.gov.rehberg](http://house.gov.rehberg) 202-225-3211

## Warblers

Each Spring, we wait to hear the “sweet-sweet-sweet” call telling us the Yellow Warbler has returned. This lemon-yellow bird is a good representative of the Wood Warblers as it is small, active, brightly colored, small billed. However, it is easy but misleading to stereotype warblers.

While many warblers are brightly colored, often in shades of yellow, others, such as the Black and White Warbler or the Lucy’s Warbler, are neither yellow nor bright. Waterthrushes and the Ovenbird often forage on the ground, quite different from the many warblers we see flitting around high in trees. The profile on the Yellow-breasted Chat in the previous flyer states that “it does not meet many standards of a Warbler, but it is classified as one.” Perhaps a good term to keep in mind when studying warblers is variety.

The breeding habitat for warblers is often wooded areas and forests or thick brushy spots. We can find warblers in riparian areas, in the mountain forests, and in our backyards. The rare Kirtland’s Warbler has very specific breeding habitat requirements—Jack Pine woods of 5-15 years, which has limited it to a small area in Michigan’s lower peninsula. The Common Yellowthroat, on the other hand, is found throughout the country in a variety of moist habitats.

Spring and Fall migration of warblers is a fascinating

event and is enjoyed by many bird-watchers in a variety of locales. Warblers migrate in large groups and are often highly predictable. They often fly during the night and use the day as refueling stops. Unfortunately, mortality is high during migration. Many warblers are killed in collisions with communication towers and tall buildings. Loss of critical refueling habitat also further endangers them.

Every year, at the end of August, YVAS takes a field trip to Westby, Montana, in the extreme northeast corner of the state. The city park in this tiny town is a key refueling stop for warblers during their fall migration, and a trip to Westby provides a unique opportunity to see warblers that may not be seen elsewhere in the state. Tennessee, Magnolia, Chestnut-Sided, Black and White, Bay-breasted, Wilson’s, Ovenbird, and Blackpoll are some of the warblers that can be seen.

**Come join YVAS this August 27-30th to see warblers and other birds in NE Montana. For more information and to sign up, call Helen Carlson at 248-8684. See the 2009-2010 field trip schedule as well as the schedule on back page of this flyer.**

### Montana Tops List of States for Number of Bird Watchers

In July the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service released “Birding in the United States: A Demographic and Economic Analysis”. This report, an addendum to the National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation presents data for 2006. The report states that one in five Americans watches birds, with about 48 million Americans identifying themselves as bird watchers. Participation rates in bird watching vary around the country; the greatest number of people engaged in the hobby are in the northern part of the country. The five top states with the greatest birding participation rates include **Montana (40 %)**, Maine (39%), Vermont (38%), Minnesota (33 %), and Iowa (33%). Bird watching is viewed as the second fastest growing hobby in the U.S. after gardening. The document also reports that bird watchers contributed \$36 billion to the U.S. economy in 2006.

This is all good news for communities engaged in identifying and preserving natural areas. The number of bird watchers and the money they spend can send a powerful message about the value individuals place on those natural areas.

To view the report, go to

[http://eidetrk.audubon.org/trk/r.emt?h=library.fws.gov/Pubs/birding\\_natsurvey06.pdf](http://eidetrk.audubon.org/trk/r.emt?h=library.fws.gov/Pubs/birding_natsurvey06.pdf)

## Pictograph Caves Field Trip

Pictograph Caves State Park was enjoyed by the members of YVAS who ventured there on May 26th. For three participants, it was their first visit to the park. The birds were not active, though 25 species were eventually identified, if the Co-burn Road access is included. The brightly colored Bullock's Oriole, Yellow-breasted Chat and Yellow Warbler pleased the eye as did the general ambience of the park. As we walked the trail to Ghost Cave, Kayhan spotted a Bull Snake slowly making its way up the back wall of the cave to the large round rocks that are embedded there. As we watched for several minutes, the snake disappeared behind one of the rocks high on the wall. We trudged on, looking in vain for the usual Rock and Canyon Wrens that inhabit

the area.

We did get to see the nearly completed Visitor Center that is constructed to blend into the natural architecture of the place and learn from the Park Naturalist, Darla Bruner, that the building will be open later in the summer. It was decided, after several years of later migration to the park, to request a later date for this field trip next year.

—Ruth Vanderhorst

[editor's note: The 2009-2010 field trip schedule included with this flyer schedules this field trip a bit later in the spring for 2010]

## Stillwater—Woodbine Trip

It was Saturday, May 30th, a day designed for birding when our YVAS group headed for the Stillwater River. The group included Ruth Vanderhorst, our leader, Pat Larmoyeux, Nancy Traeger, Anne Cowan, Jean Olson, Jeanne Olson, and me.

After encountering some of the usual suspects, we arrived at the ponds between Billings and Laurel. There we chalked up Blue-winged Teal, Cinnamon Teal, Mallard, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Killdeer and Spotted Sandpiper. We then took back roads to Columbus with a brief stop at the Laurel ponds to pick up a Caspian Tern and Bald Eagle, sitting on a fence post. By the time we arrived in Columbus, we had added Red-tailed Hawk, Brown-headed Cowbird, American Kestrel, American White Pelican, Mountain Bluebird, Great Blue Heron, and Turkey Vulture to our list.

On our stop at the Columbus Ich-Kep-pe Park, we added 11 more species, highlighted for me by the Red-eyed Vireo and Black-headed Grosbeak. After a short stop at shady Fireman's Point, we passed through Absarokee and were almost to Fishtail when we breezed by some Sandhill Cranes and had to do a U-e. They were calling, and our close view made it well worth going back.

Everyone was hungry by now, and it seemed a good time to go to Woodbine campground for lunch. Ruth picked the right spot to eat because we ended up having lunch with a Red-naped Sapsucker. We were lucky enough to get close views of MacGillivray's Warbler, two Western Tanagers and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet (my first).

After a good walk through the campground, we decided to head for home via the Beehive road. We stopped at Castle Rock fishing access and it took less than a minute to locate our first Calliope Hummingbird. It seemed a little strange that our only two birds at this stop were a very small hummingbird and a very large Wild Turkey.

After we arrived home, I tried to determine what I would remember most. Was it the "66" bird species? The beautiful scenery? Ice cream at the DDI (Dew Drop Inn)? Or was it the people I was with? The people I think!

—Phil McBride

**Flyaway: How a Wild Bird Rehabber Sought Adventure and Found Her Wings” by Suzie Gilbert** published March 2009 by HarperCollins is a personal account of a wild bird rehabilitator. Gilbert has been helping injured birds for 20 years, first at a large raptor center and later opening her home as a songbird clinic. The author’s goal is to “show what wild birds are really like—from close, day-to-day observations that reveal both their inner and outer lives.” Gilbert also includes suggestions for improving bird habitat as well as support for Audubon and Open Space Organizations.

For more information about *Flyaway*, to order a copy, or to view video of Gilbert and her feathered friends, go to

[www.suziegilbert.com](http://www.suziegilbert.com)



## Helen Carlson’s 33rd Annual Bird Class

Helen Carlson’s 33rd Annual Bird Identification Class was a huge success. Helen had 20 students, and she says “it was great having repeaters and super having new people. I hope they all enjoyed it.” Our resounding response: “Thank you Helen. We had a great time!”

The class travelled to Two Moon Park and Riverfront Park the first day, Molt and Broadview Ponds the second day, and Pictograph Caves and back to Riverfront Park/Norm’s Island the third day. All together students saw 98 species, and highlights include Avocets and Black-necked Stilts, the Canyon Wren, Lazuli Buntings, an American Redstart and the ever present Yellow-breasted Chat.

Helen donated all proceeds to Audubon Adventures, and she says that “if all goes ok, she will be back for 34 years next May.” Helen wishes to thank Georgia Frazier, Phil McBride, Billie Hicks and George and Bernie Mowat for their invaluable help.



George Mowat and students checking out the prairie fields near Molt.

Helen, Bernie Mowat, and students looking skyward for birds in flight.



## Birding from Billings to Pompey's Pillar

Spring bird watching was excellent along the Yellowstone River east of Billings on May 23rd. Starting at Billings the caravan of vehicles under the leadership of Ruth Vanderhorst traveled along highway 312 and country roads to get to three bird watching destinations.

The first was Gritty Stone fishing access near Worden. This riparian area had birds in all directions. Song birds, especially warblers and flycatchers, flitted through bushes and trees and filled the air with calls and songs as Bald Eagles viewed the scene from a rocky cliff across the river. Yellow-breasted Chats were particularly numerous.

At the second stop, Pompey's Pillar, with cottonwood dominated forest and its rocky monolith, had song birds in bushes, Ospreys nesting atop Bundy Bridge, while swifts and swallows and Great Horned Owls made use of the pillar. Some of the birdwatchers saw waxwings disassembling two oriole nests.

After lunch the group traveled to Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks' new park, Yellowstone Wildlife Management Area and Yellowstone River State Park. Its entrance is atop the rims north of the river and east of Pompey's Pillar via Bozeman Trail Road. Walking from the parking area surrounded by grassland to a narrow steep dirt road that cuts its way down an eroded area from the rim top toward the bottom land, dry land species were seen and/or heard. Listening to a Canyon Wren was a great way to conclude the day.

—Lois Dalton

## Yellowstone National Park Bioblitz

“The concept of a BioBlitz was first developed by Harvard biologist, E.O. Wilson to catalog organisms around Walden Pond. Many states and other countries have now conducted their own similar events.” In 2007, YVAS President Kayhan Ostovar spearheaded the successful Yellowstone River Bioblitz along the river in Billings. Now he is working with Greater Yellowstone Science Learning Center to conduct the **first ever BioBlitz to be held in Yellowstone National Park, August 28th-29th.**

There are opportunities for bird watchers and general volunteers to help out with logistics and other scientific surveys. The YNP Bioblitz is also open to the public on the 29th from 12:00noon-3:00pm. You are encouraged to attend. Check out the following websites, and if you have further questions, contact Kayhan at 256-7481 or [kayhan@q.com](mailto:kayhan@q.com)

<http://www.greateryellowstonescience.org/getinvolved/outreach/bioblitz/yellowstone>

<http://www.greateryellowstonescience.org/getinvolved/outreach/bioblitz>

## Join HawkWatch International for one of the “greatest migration spectacles in the world” on their 2009 River of Raptors Ecotour to Vera Cruz, Mexico

Tour dates are Oct. 10-18, 2009 with an optional 3 day extension (Oct. 19-21)

For more information, contact Nikki at 1-800-726-HAWK ex.101

or visit [www.hawkwatch.org](http://www.hawkwatch.org)

### Membership Information

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Please note the address label on your issue of the Yellowstone Valley Flyer. The date your membership *expires* is listed on the top right line of the label. 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.
4. Moving??? Please let us know as early as possible since the Post Office does not forward the Flyer. They send it back to us for a fee of up to \$2.00. So, please let us know when you plan to move. Include your old address as well as your new address so we can track you. You may write, call, or email the information.
5. Do you receive more than one copy of the Flyer? If so, it is unintentional. Please let us know so we can prevent that from happening.
6. If you have questions or problems related to membership, let me know either by phone or email: 245-5118 or acrv@bresnan.net.

—Ruth Vanderhorst, Membership Secretary



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National Audubon Society

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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
- \$15 Initial membership for Senior and Students

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: C9ZN500Z

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.

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 FLYER

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### 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.*

**August 8th (Sat)** Shorebirds, Hawks and Prairie Birds. **8:00am.** Leader: Mike Weber. Sack Lunch

**August 27th—30th (Thur—Sun) Westby and Northeast Montana.** Observe migrating birds including warblers found in Northeast Montana. Leader: Helen Carlson. **Call Helen at 248-8684 for information.** Make your own reservations for two nights at the Sherwood Inn in Plentywood, MT, 406-765-2810 and one night at the Maltana Motel in Malta, MT, 406-654-2610

**Sept 5th (Sat) Clark's Fork and Pryor Mountains. Meet at 8:00am at Rockvale** (parking lot at southwest end of Rockvale, farthest from Billings and closest to Red Lodge). Leader: Billie Hicks. **Reservations Required: call Billie at 962-3798 by Sept. 3rd.** Bring sack lunch and water. Red Lodge members and guests are encourage to attend.

**Sept 10th (Thur) Meet at Riverfront Park at 5:00pm.** Fall Migrants. Leader: Mike Weber

**Fieldtrip Chairs: George and Bernie Mowat, 656-7467**