

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 39, NUMBER 11/12

NOV/DEC 2009

New This Issue

- American Kestrel Profile
- Christmas Potluck
- Audubon Conservation Education Center Dedication
- Christmas Bird Count
- Donations to YVAS



Sage Grouse are a “Special Status Species.” Now What?

The one game bird identifiable with western states is the Sage Grouse. Yet, from the huge number—2 million-plus—of birds when farming and ranching settlers moved west, the birds now are in dramatic decline. Why? Try habitat loss: its fragmentation and, worse, its degradation. The “sage brush sea” no longer exists—anywhere! Before it’s too late for the grouse—now a “Special Status Species”—we need to ask, what is being done and who is doing it?

Among the who is the BLM’s Billings Field Office. A BLM position paper issued Sept. 1, 2009 announced that the BLM and partners are working on a Resource Management Plan (RMP) that addresses the grouse’s habitat issues for Montana and the Dakotas. The what comes down to objectives and priorities for sagebrush ecology programs emphasizing Sage Grouse conservation.

David Wood, a conservation biologist for the BLM, Montana State Office, responsible for providing long-range planning, will tell chapter members how it is being done at our Nov.16th meeting. (continued bottom of page 3)



Female Sage Grouse photo by Jeanette Tasey

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YVAS Meetings

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

Monday, Nov. 9th, 6:30pm: Board Meeting

Monday, Nov. 16th, 7:00pm: General Membership Meeting

We will be holding a YVAS fundraiser dinner before the general membership meeting. Dinner donation: \$6. Pat Larmoyeux has volunteered to organize November’s dinner: call her if you would like to bring food and for dinner reservations at 656-1723.

Note: dinners will now start at 5:45 so diners have enough time to turn in dishes to kitchen help by 6:30.



From the Editor

This issue of the flyer combines Nov/Dec. Note that you will find news about November's program as well as the December potluck fundraiser dinner. The potluck replaces the normal Dec. chapter meeting, and it is an event not to be missed. Also, there is no scheduled YVAS board meeting for Dec. Our next regular chapter and board meetings will resume in January, 2010.

The YVAS Board has instituted a student membership for a reduced rate of \$10. If you know of students who would like to join as supporting members of YVAS, please let them know about the new student rate. See page 7 under membership information. And speaking of membership, please welcome Joel Bowers as our new Membership Secretary. Thank you Joel for taking on this significant duty. I would also like to thank YVAS member Jeanette Tasey for sharing her lovely bird photos.

Happy Holidays! Look for the flyer to return in January, 2010. —Jeanne Olson



Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society recently received a \$500 donation from Payne Financial Group in the name of Sylvia Tilzey, to celebrate her 25 year anniversary with this company. Sylvia chose YVAS for her donation because "animals and birds have a special place in her world" and she is grateful for the work YVAS does in "protecting birds and their habitat as well as educating the community about the wonders of the bird world" We will put the generous donation into our McDonald-Norling Endowment Fund, which funds our conservation grants as well as other conservation projects.

Thank You Sylvia!

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society Officers:

President: Ruth Vanderhorst, 245-5118, acrv@bresnan.net

Vice-President: Dick Moore, 656-6241

Secretary: Jeanne Olson, 656-7278

Treasurer: George Mowat, 656-7467, gmowat@bresnan.net

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

Deb Regele: 962-3115, dregele@juno.com

Monty Sullins: 656-5242, ssullins@bresnan.net

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

Editor.....Jeanne Olson, editor@yellowstoneaudubon.org

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

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

Website:

Mark Gale, webmaster@yellowstoneaudubon.org

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 meeting are open to the public.

American Kestrel

The bird was sitting on a fence post about 30 feet away when I first noticed it. It seemed to have quite a bit of color, some of which came from a bloody mouse in its talons. I stopped the car and watched as the bird slowly devoured the mouse. When it finished eating, it stretched, tipped its tail, showing some reddish hues on its back as well as bluish ones. When I looked for the bird in my 1960s era Golden field guide, I saw the American Kestrel. I have never needed a field guide to aid in identifying that bird again; although, I have read a bit about the bird over the years.

Their colors, face markings, and stance when perched are easy ways of differentiating these birds from other falcons. They are the smallest falcon, about the size of a jay. The males have rusty heads, backs, and tails and bluish wings. Their undersides are whitish. They have dark face markings. Females are less colorful but their shape and stance when perching are a tipoff.

The American Kestrel, once called the Sparrow Hawk because it does dine on small birds occasionally, is actually a falcon and is widespread throughout North America. It most frequently occurs in open spaces and is often seen in Eastern Montana.



I have seen them singly and in groups, often hovering over a field before dropping to snare prey below. They can be seen perched on utility wires and elsewhere in open country. According to Sibley, Kestrels nest in tree cavities, though I have never observed that.

One of my most exciting observations of Kestrels is watching their courtship behavior is early spring when

they do aerial acrobatics and long graceful dives. I observed that behavior first in Southeast Arizona one Spring and several times in Montana. It is beautiful to watch. If I were a Kestrel, I'd be interested. Both parents feed the young even after they have fledged. The young disperse after they have learned to hunt, several weeks after fledging, according to Sibley.

Northern birds may migrate though not all do. I find them less often in winter. These birds are thrilling to see. When the sunlight catches them in flight they are truly gorgeous. Their beauty stays with the viewer.

Enjoy these beauties.

Reference: Sibley, David Allen, *The Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior*. Alfred A Knopf 2001 pp 225-229.

—Ruth Vanderhorst



American Kestrel photos by Jeanette Tasey

Sage Grouse (continued)

David started in his position in July after moving to Billings from Las Vegas, Nevada. In Las Vegas, David worked as a BLM Program Manager for the Southern Nevada Public Management Act. His position focused on landscape level restoration across varied jurisdictions in Northwestern and Eastern Nevada. David has an MA degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences from the University of Arizona, Tucson.

—Robert Lubbers



YVAS Annual Christmas Potluck Dinner and Fundraiser
Monday, Dec. 7th 2009—6:00pm
at Billings Masonic Center, 1101 Broadwater Ave.

It is time again for our annual Christmas Potluck dinner. This is YVAS's most important annual fundraising event, and we invite you to join us for an evening of good conversation, great food and wildlife entertainment.

ADMISSION: \$5 per person (which covers coffee, punch, rolls and building rental).

FOOD: Bring your favorite dish to share, enough for your party +6. To make sure we have enough of a variety of foods, use the following guide:

If your last name begins with A—G bring a dessert to share.

If your last name begins with H—N bring a salad or side dish to share.

If your last name begins with O—Z bring an entrée to share.

RESERVATIONS: Call or email Rita Harding at 259-7586 or mtroses@bresnan.net to make reservations. Tell her the number in your party, your name and what type of dish you are bringing.

SILENT AUCTION: Robert Lubbers is in charge of the silent auction. He is asking for quality items, the kind of things you would bid on yourself. To donate items/baked goods for the silent auction, contact Robert at 245-2970 or rslubbers@q-com

RAFFLE: Helen Carlson is in charge of the raffle. She will be collecting raffle items and selling raffle tickets (6 for \$5) at the Nov. chapter meeting. To buy raffle tickets or donate raffle items after the Nov. meeting, contact Helen at 248-8684.

PROGRAM: Bob Landis will again be entertaining us this year with his wonderful and often humorous wildlife photography taken in Yellowstone National Park.

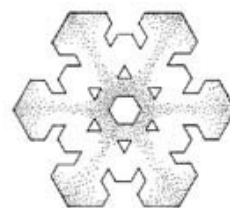
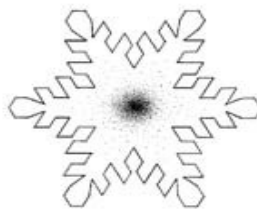
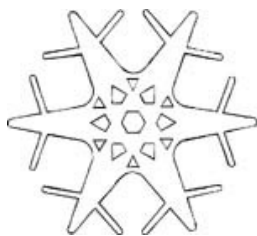
Come early to browse the silent auction and raffle tables.

Don't forget to make your reservations.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED: The Christmas Potluck would not be possible without the assistance of volunteers willing to help with food setup and dining room setup/cleanup.

Lois Dalton is in charge of food set up and needs volunteers to help in the kitchen. Call Lois at 656-3656.

Dick Moore is in charge of dining hall setup and cleanup. To volunteer, call Dick at 656-6241 or show up early, at 5:00pm, to help setup.



Norm Schoenthal Field Lab Opens at the Audubon Conservation Education Center

On Saturday, October 17 representatives from Montana Audubon, Yellowstone River Parks Association, and Yellowstone Valley Audubon, along with business leaders, friends and family, volunteers, and donors gathered to dedicate a new facility at the Audubon Conservation Education Center (ACEC) in honor of founder and leader Norm Schoenthal.

The Norm Schoenthal Field Lab is a critical addition to the rapidly developing ACEC education programs and facilities that now serve over 2,000 students each year, and the restoration program that has resulted in over 30,000 native trees and shrubs established on the site. The Yellowstone River Parks Association (YRPA) began construction of the field lab in April 2008. The facility provides bathrooms, water, storage for education and restoration equipment and supplies, offices for Montana Audubon staff, and a 1,000 square foot “wet lab” to be used for school programs, workshops and other events such as lectures and meetings.

The vision for the facility was first established more than a decade ago by Norm Schoenthal and several local educators who realized the need for a year-round conservation education center at the 27-acre site. For the past five years Montana Audubon and YRPA, with notable support from Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society, have worked hard to expand education programs and build the ACEC infrastructure with interpretive signs, memorial benches and other restoration activities.

Two weeks after the dedication, on Saturday, Oct. 31st, ACEC Director Paul Belanger and Senior Naturalist Heather Ristow hosted an open house for YVAS members to tour the Norm Schoenthal Field Lab and learn more about the educational programs and future plans of the ACEC.

With the finishing touches being completed at the new facility, Montana Audubon has started a 2-year project to establish native plant “Habitat Gardens” and an outdoor amphitheater that will surround the building. This landscaped area will include plants that attract wildlife, use less water, herbicides and pesticides, and require less annual maintenance. The outdoor Amphitheater encompasses approximately 8,000 square feet of level ground that will be used for education programs and special events at the ACEC.

To learn more about the ACEC visit the Montana Audubon website at www.mtaudubon.org. And Paul encourages YVAS members to stop by the facility for an informal tour. Staff is on-site most weekdays.

Funds Available for Wildlife Projects

Montana Audubon will offer grant money totaling more than \$1,400 to fund projects that benefit wildlife. Preference will be given to research and/or education projects that focus on nongame wildlife and their habitats. The funds may be used for mileage, supplies, equipment, printing, and communications.

Last year Montana Audubon funded Flammulated Owl research in western Montana, resurveying of historic pika locations in Southwestern Montana to determine population persistence in the face of climate change, a native habitat for field studies at Glacier High School in Kalispell, and development of a nature trail along the Milk River in Malta.

Applications must be postmarked on or before December 15, 2009. Grant winners will be notified by February 1, 2010. Audubon Wildlife Fund guidelines can be requested by mail (Montana Audubon, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624), phone (406-443-3949), or downloaded from our website (www.mtaudubon.org).

Christmas Bird Count

Yellowstone Valley Audubon will once again be taking part in Audubon's Annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC). This year marks the 110th CBC, which is one of Audubon's premier citizen science events. Results from the CBC are invaluable to Audubon and other organizations that use the data collected to determine the health of bird populations, which in turn helps guide conservation efforts.

YVAS will be meeting on **Saturday, Dec. 19th** to participate in the Christmas Bird Count. If you would like to take part, contact Helen Carlson at 248-8684. She will sign you up and provide you with necessary information about your route, group, etc.

Participants will meet at 7:00am at Denny's (501 N. 27th St. in downtown Billings) unless otherwise notified by their section leader. The bird count is an all day activity with lunch as desired by individual groups.

At the end of the birding day, participants congregate for a soup supper at Helen's house (519 Highland Park Drive, Billings) where they will tally the birds they have seen. Our data will then be sent on to join the nationwide count. Please plan on joining YVAS for this important and fun event collecting bird data.

YVAS Receives Gift Book Set from Jerry Jacobs. Jerry Jacobs, a former YVAS board member, has offered Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society a 4-volume set of bird biology books from the home study bird biology course he took through the Cornell Ornithology Department. Jerry says the book set is "one of the finest collections of correspondence and reference materials on bird biology that I am aware of." The contents of this collection includes "Evolution of Birds," "Bird Behavior," "Breeding Biology," "Ecology," "The World of Birds," "Bird Brains," "Nests and Building," "How to Identify Birds," "Migration" along with many other bird-related topics.

Jerry would like the books to be made available as reference material, and he says he "can't think of a better organization to donate this material to than the Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society." The YVAS board has agreed to accept Jerry's generous donation, and we will be placing the books in the YVAS archives for all to use. The YVAS archives can be found in the Montana Room, on the second floor of the Parnly Billings Library, downtown Billings.

Thank You Jerry!

"Climate Change – A Positive Point of View"
Presented by Linda Dismore Swift, PhD
Thursday, November 12th, 2009 at 10:30 AM
Lecture Room LI 148
Montana State University – Billings

Dr. Linda Swift was born and raised in Great Falls and has a BA in History and an MS and PhD in Geology from the University of Washington. She recently retired from Chevron, after 23 years working in planning, mergers and acquisitions, exploration, overseas ventures, minerals exploration and finally as General Manager of Integrated Laboratory Technologies. Dr. Swift also worked underground as a geologist for Stillwater Mining Company and as planning advisor for the Pittsburg and Midway Coal Company. Her work experience gives her a unique and particular point-of-view in discussing climate change.

After retiring from Chevron, Dr. Swift decided to search beyond the media hype about climate change and study the scientific data. "The more I studied, the more complicated I found the subject," she says. "Some aspects were indeed beyond doubt, while others are still poorly understood."

Dr. Swift's lecture is free and open to the public

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. 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



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National Audubon Society
 Recruitment Code: C9ZN500Z
 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. 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 FLYER

P.O. Box 1075
Billings, MT 59103-1075

**Non-Profit Organization
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ADDRESS SERVICES 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.

Dec. 19th (Sat) Christmas Bird Count: See page 6 of this flyer for more information. Call Helen Carlson at 248-8684 to sign up.

Jan. 1st (Fri) New Year's Day Field Trip to Yellowtail Dam Afterbay. 8:00am-6:00pm. Leader: Helen Carlson. Bring a sack lunch.

Fieldtrip Chairs: George and Bernie Mowat, 656-7467

