

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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MONITORING AVIAN PRODUCTIVITY AND SURVIVORSHIP

The MAPS program (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship) helps protect birds and their habitats across the Americas. It's a team effort, guided by the Institute for Bird Populations, composed of government agencies, NGOs, and individuals to assist the conservation of birds through standardized monitoring and banding. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is a partner in this effort and the newest study location is at Spring Meadow State Park in Helena. In coordination with Montana WILD's amazing education program, the banding station has been open to the public to share their fascination with birds. Coming into their fourth year of operation, with lots of volunteer help, they've banded over 700 birds of more than 40 different species.

With each banded bird, the MAPS program in Spring Meadow State Park learns more about their vital rates and contributes information to their continental status. Even more importantly, the banding station has taught hundreds of visitors about why bird conservation is important.



Allison holding a Chickadee



American Goldfinch Photo by Allison Begley

Allison Begley is an Avian Conservation Biologist with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks. In over 20 years with the department, this banding program has rapidly become her most fun fieldwork assignment. In addition to bird handling, she finds sharing the love of birds with the littlest of our citizens to be incredibly rewarding. When not talking about birds, Allison spends time ferrying her kids to their activities or camping with the whole family and their enormous Bernese Mountain Dog.

Submitted by Bruce Waage

On April 21st, YVAS will host a presentation featuring Allison Begley from the Montana FWP.

Coffee and cookies start at 6:30 p.m. at the Mayflower Congregational Church (corner of Rehberg and Poly). The evening's program begins at 7:00 p.m. YVAS programs are free and open to the public, held on the 3rd Monday of the month.

VISIT THE YVAS WEBSITE YVAUDUBON.ORG OR FACEBOOK.COM/YVAUDUBON



Chirps and Tweets



- **Earth Day at ZooMontana April 19:**

ZooMontana will celebrate Earth Day with a "Party for the Planet" event to promote sustainable living while raising awareness about conservation efforts that benefit our great state. YVAS will join other community groups in this event by hosting a table with information about all our birding activities and programs. We will include a display on the volunteer monitoring of Osprey reproduction along the Yellowstone River and the Mountain Bluebird Habitat Project. In addition, we will have some birdy games and challenges for all ages.

The Party for the Planet event takes place in ZooMontana on Saturday, April 19th from 10AM to 4PM.

- **The Big Sit**

On the initiative of Carolyn Jones, the Board has discussed the idea of a field trip limited to one spot, but with teams of bird watchers taking turns in relays of a couple hours or so. The goal would be to count as many species as possible in one favorable spot.

Some Audubon chapters have made a tradition of conducting a Big Sit every year near to Columbus Day in October. The [New Haven Bird Club website](#) mentions the idea of coordinating the Big Sit with International Migratory Bird Day that takes place the same weekend in October. Does the Big Sit idea appeal to you? Contact Carolyn with your thoughts at carolyn684@gmail.com.

- **YVAS Osprey Nest Monitoring Project**

Dr. Marco Restani will be holding this year's Osprey Orientation at the Billings Public Library on Saturday, March 29th, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. The program will review Osprey natural history and how to collect standardized data for the project. The orientation is required for new monitors and provides 'refresher' training for returning monitors. YVAS members and those interested in learning about Osprey nest monitoring are welcome. An RSVP is requested and can be sent to me at debregele@gmail.com.

This will be YVAS' 14th year of banding Osprey nestlings along the Yellowstone River between Gardiner and Miles City. We are currently looking for a few new monitors to observe nests in various locations along the Yellowstone River. If you are interested or have questions, please contact me.

Submitted by Deb Regele



Montana Audubon Center Events

Learn more about these and other activities on our website: mtaudubon.org/center

Looking ahead, we're gearing up for an exciting spring!

The much-anticipated **Master Naturalist Course** returns in April, offering an in-depth exploration of Montana's ecosystems. Registration opens in early March.

Summer Camp Registration is open! Center members enjoy early registration starting March 12th, with general registration opening on March 19th.

- **Native Plant Symposium March 29th**

9:00 am - 3:00 pm : Tickets \$10 to \$20 are now on sale.

Discover meaningful ways to make a difference for native plants at this year's Native Plant Symposium! Building on a legacy of community engagement and expert-led learning since 2016, our symposium offers an inspiring platform to explore the dynamic world of native plants and their vital role in our local ecosystems.

The morning session presentation topics are as follows:

- Pollinators and You, Planting for Success: A beginners Guide to Urban Planting by Nick Miller
- Passive Strategies of Native Seed Propagation by Kenda Herman
- Native Plants & the Bumble Bee Atlas: A Community Science Approach to Conservation by Michelle Toshack

In the afternoon, two workshops will allow participants to apply techniques in the field.

- Tracking Native Plants with iNaturalist: A Citizen Science Workshop by Jessica Callahan
- Vegetative Propagation of Native Plants by Eric Puetz and Danella Stapley

Registration and more information is available on the website: mtaudubon.org/center.

Submitted by Emily Chilcoat

Montana Audubon Center	Office: (406) 294-5099
7026 South Billings Blvd.	Cell: (406) 794-8095
Billings, MT 59101	

YVAS Birding Field Trips

Contact Carolyn Jones at carolyn684@gmail.com to be included on the Bird Trip Notification List. The people on the Notification List will receive email notification of any impromptu trips or schedule changes such as times, meeting place, or cancellations.

Check the yvaudubon.org website, Facebook page, or the YVAS Flyer for upcoming trips.

Field trips depart by car from Rocky Mountain College parking lot at Billings Studio Theater on Rimrock Road at 8AM, unless noted otherwise in the specific trip description. **DO NOT BRING PETS. PASSENGERS SHARE GAS COSTS WITH THE DRIVER.**

Date	Day of Week	Meeting Place	Description	Leaders
3/30/2025	SUN	8AM Rocky/ BST parking lot	Big Lake, migrating swans, sandhills, etc.	Mike Weber
4/12/2025	SAT	7:30 Bridger Park, end of town	Pryor Mountains, search for sagebrush sparrows	Stan Heath and Susan Hovde
4/26/2025	SAT	Phipps Park 8AM	BLUEBIRDS AND BLOOMS, steep hike to top, hiking poles recommended	Carolyn Jones & Sue Weinreis
5/4/2025	SUN	Two Moon Park 8 AM	Hike Two Moon Park	Mike Weber
5/10/2025	SAT	8AM Rocky/ BST parking lot	Broadview Ponds	Carolyn Jones
5/17/2025	SAT	Itch-Kep-Pe Park, Columbus, near	Bridger Creek	Stan Heath and Susan
5/27/2025	TUE	Parking area to the right at entrance, meet at 5 PM	Riverfront evening stroll, mosquito repellent advised	Cathy Breeding
5/31/2025	SAT	Itch-Kep-Pe Park, Columbus, near restrooms, 8 AM	Stillwater River/Woodbine area	Carolyn Jones
6/7/2025	SAT	7:30 Rocky or 8AM Bundy fishing access	Pompey's Pillar and Bundy access	Carolyn Jones
6/10/2025	TUE	8:30 Red Lodge Town Pump	Red Lodge area	Stan Heath and Susan

Registration Now Open for the Wings Across the Big Sky Festival



Registration is now open for the 2025 Wings Across the Big Sky Birding Festival organized by Montana Audubon in partnership with the Five Valleys Audubon Society. Join us this summer in Missoula, May 30- June 1, for a weekend filled with birds, nature, and community. For more information and a link to registration, visit the Festival website: <https://mtaudubon.org/events/wings/>

Erick Greene, Professor Emeritus at the University of Montana, will present the keynote speech Friday night on a long-term study of heavy metals in the Ospreys of western Montana conducted by the Raptor View Research Institute.

Saturday and Sunday will feature an amazing choice of field trips. A highlight of the field experience will be Bird Banding with the University of Montana Bird Ecology Lab. Join the University of Montana Bird Ecology Lab (UMBEL) staff for a unique songbird banding experience. We will see birds up close during capture and learn about species ID, plumage, molt, breeding biology, and survival of songbirds at the Five Valleys Land Trust Confluence Property at Rock Creek. There's a 15-minute, fairly flat walk along the Clark Fork River to the netting site.

Submitted by Lauren Smith, lauren@mtaudubon.org

Greater Short-Horned Lizard BioBlitz

June 21-28, 2025

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) and local partners will be joining in with the Horned Lizard Conservation Society’s fifth, annual Horned Lizard Bioblitz to increase observational data for Greater short-horned lizards (GSHL) in Montana. BioBlitzes involve a diverse group of people, including scientists, naturalists, park staff, students, families, and other members of the public, working collaboratively to collect data. There is anecdotal evidence of significant declines for this species, likely from habitat loss through lands use changes or collection as pets. It faces threats from continued habitat loss and invasion of non-native plant species.

Greater short-horned lizards are found across much of eastern and central Montana with isolated observations in Silver Bow County outside of Butte, MT. FWP has been conducting structured surveys for GSHLs since 2016. Detectability has been low during structured surveys, though incidental observations reported by members of the public have proven valuable in increasing observations statewide.

If you are interested in participating in the structured BioBlitz, discussing GSHLs in general or reporting an observation (old or new) please contact FWP, Megan O’Reilly 406-794-6154 or Daniel Johnson 406-876-4025.

The Greater short-horned Lizard (*Phrynosoma hernandesi*) is often called “horny toad” or “horned toad” because of its round, flattened body shape and the row of spines along the back. It has a heart-shaped head.

Information Needed for reporting:

- Date of sighting
- GPS coordinates (if unavailable please contact FWP staff to share location directly)
- Photos
- Email for follow up if needed



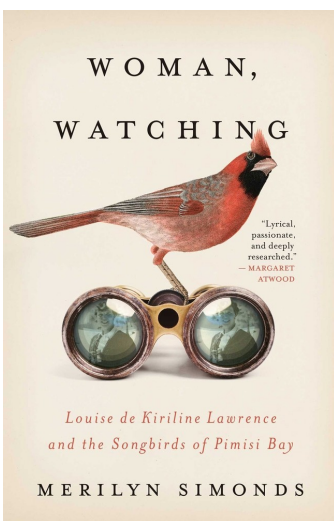
Greater Short-horned lizards: adult, juvenile and young of the year.

Submitted by Megan O’Reilly

Woman, Watching: Louise de Kiriline Lawrence and the Songbirds of Pimisi Bay

By Marilyn Simonds published in 2022. ECW Press, Toronto, CA.

In **Woman, Watching**, Marilyn Simonds shares the true story of Louise de Kiriline Lawrence, a self-taught ornithologist who lived in Northern Ontario.



Louise was born a Swedish aristocrat who later trained to be a nurse with the Red Cross during the war. She fell in love with a Russian POW, and they were later married. Their dream was to someday move to Canada and homestead in a remote cabin.

Jumping ahead, Louise finds herself in Canada in her 30’s, working again as a nurse for the famous Dionne Quintuplets. This was a very interesting time of Louise’s life. She excels in her nursing duties but is also kept busy running her household inside and out. It isn’t until this time in her life that she starts to notice the birds around her.

Louise started keeping detailed records of certain birds on her morning walks. I imagine that her nursing background helped in this area. Soon, she started communicating with friends and college professors when she had questions about birds. It wasn’t long before she even started a banding program. The stories of her observing a nest of birds for 6 hours were incredible. Her quest for knowledge over weighed any discomfort she might have had.

The extent of Louise’s career is impressive, and I can’t possibly touch on all her achievements. Not only did she publish books, but she wrote many papers and delivered talks to scientific colleagues at ornithology gatherings. She was very determined, but most

importantly, she left behind boxes of letters and journals that allowed Marilyn Simonds to piece her life together so that we might know this amazing woman a bit better.

Submitted by Kris Decker

YVAS MEETINGS & PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Next Board of Directors Meeting: April 14, 2025 —The YVAS meeting of the Board of Directors will be held from 4pm to 6pm. Board of Directors meetings are held the second Monday of the month. Board meetings are open to all members.

In-Person Program: April 21, 2025. Programs will be held on the third Monday of the month at the Mayflower Church on the corner of Rehberg Lane and Poly Drive in Billings. Doors open at 6:30 for coffee and cookies; the program begins at 7:00 pm.

Board of Directors

President: Steve McConnell smc571@msn.com
Vice President: Vacant
Secretary: Sue Weinreis granpeak47@gmail.com
Treasurer: Pam Pipal ppipal@charter.net

Board Members

Kris Decker krisdecker4@gmail.com
Carolyn Jones carolyn684@gmail.com
Kristin Neva ksneva@gmail.com
Deb Regele debregele@gmail.com
Bruce Waage bruce.waage@outlook.com
Ginny Waples waplesv@gmail.com

Committees and Assignments

Christmas Bird Count: Jerry Dalton jerrydalton96@gmail.com
Facebook: Ginny Waples waplesv@gmail.com

(Committees, continued)

Field Trip Chair: Carolyn Jones carolyn684@gmail.com
Flyer Editor: Kristin Neva yvasflyer@gmail.com
Injured Raptors: Montana Raptor Conservation Center 406-585-1211
Membership Data: Deb Regele debregele@gmail.com
Mt Bluebird Habitat Project: Carolyn Jones carolyn684@gmail.com, and Sue Weinreis granpeak47@gmail.com
Osprey Nest Monitor Coordinator: Deb Regele debregele@gmail.com
Osprey Research Coordinator: Marco Restani restani@stcloudstate.edu
Program Committee: YVAS Board of Directors
Publicity: YVAS Board of Directors
Recycling (aluminum): Larry Handsaker 918 Ave C, Billings
Website: Deb Regele debregele@gmail.com

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society
Application for New & Renewal Membership



Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Our federal tax ID number is 51-0206955.

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 family Chapter benefits. Make check payable to Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society for \$25. If applying for a new or renewing student membership, make check for \$15 and indicate academic affiliation.

Name _____
Address _____
City _____
State _____ Zip _____
Email _____

Do you want to receive the YVAS Flyer electronically?
___ YES ___ NO

Send this application and your check to:
Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society
P.O. Box 1075
Billings, MT 59103-1075



**YELLOWSTONE VALLEY
AUDUBON FLYER**
P.O. Box 1075
Billings, MT 59103-1075

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Yellow-headed Blackbird by Mike Weber
Palette knife acrylic on canvas.

*** Membership Updates ***

In an effort to keep our members advised of their membership status, members within the renewal period will be printed at the back of each Flyer. A renewal reminder will also be sent by email or USPS. YVAS now has a 60-day grace period for renewals.

Your memberships help to provide for speakers at YVAS monthly meetings, the YVAS newsletter the Flyer, bird studies and conservation efforts. YVAS is affiliated with the National Audubon Society. We do not share your membership information including your address, phone or email address with any other organization.



April renewals: Jim & Virginia Court, Chris Miller, Pat & Scott Vandell.

March renewals: Lois Gorseth, Kathie & Steve Shandera, Nicholas Wright.

February renewal: Barbara Garrett.

If you have any questions regarding your membership, please contact the Membership Administrator at YVAS.membership.data@gmail.com or 406-780-0810.