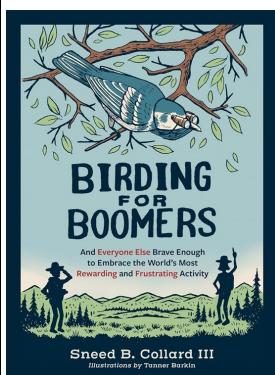


*Mission: Building on the tradition of special interest in birds, Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society is organized to promote enjoyment and protection of the natural environment through education, activism, and conservation of bird habitat.*

OCTOBER 2025

VOLUME 55, NUMBER 8

## Birding for Boomers



Sneed B. Collard III is the author of almost 100 children's books, including the 2024 Orbis Pictus and High Plains Book Award winner, *Border Crossings*. His books span all age groups and genres, from nonfiction picture books and older science books to middle-grade and YA fiction. More than a dozen of his books have been Junior Library Guild

selections, and his numerous other awards include the Subaru-AAAS-SB&F Prize for Excellence in Science Books, the Green Earth Book Award, and the Washington Post-Children's Book Guild Award for lifetime achievement. Sneed is also the author of several new books for adults including this year's popular High Plains Book Award finalist *Birding for Boomers—And Everyone Else Brave Enough to Embrace the World's Most Rewarding and Frustrating Activity*.

Sneed grew up with three (yes, three) biologists for parents and graduated with honors in marine biology from UC Berkeley. While forging his writing career, he earned a master's in scientific instrumentation from UC Santa Barbara and worked for several years as a computer consultant for scientists. His fascination with birds really took off when he began writing *Fire Birds: Valuing Natural Wildfires and*

*Burned Forests*, and he and his eleven-year-old son Braden began going out to look for birds and try to figure out what they were. Their interest quickly turned into an enduring passion, as described in Sneed's first book for adults, *Warblers and Woodpeckers: A Father-Son Big Year of Birding*.

Since that time, Sneed has undertaken birding expeditions all across the US, and to South America, Asia, and Europe—often in the company of Braden. He's written a number of children's books about birds and is a regular contributor to *BWD* (formerly *Bird Watcher's Digest*), *Montana Outdoors*, and other magazines. Sneed is a popular speaker and has visited more than 600 schools in the US and abroad. He has been invited as a keynote speaker and trip leader at birding festivals across the country, including Montana Audubon's annual festival, Wings Across the Big Sky.

Sneed lives in Missoula and may be contacted through his website or the blog he writes with his son, [FatherSonBirding.com](http://FatherSonBirding.com).

*Submitted by Sue Weinreis*



Sneed Collard with Lola

Acclaimed author Sneed B. Collard III will trace his path from budding biologist to book author to passionate Boomer Birder. After sharing how his son, Braden, and he first fell in love with birds and started learning about them, he'll share some of the joys and challenges of being a "birder of a certain age," and how all birders can overcome obstacles to enjoy the world's most rewarding and frustrating activity. Along the way, Collard will highlight recent birding adventures to the Middle East, Japan, Spain, Colombia and across the US. A book signing will follow the presentation.

Join us on Monday, Oct 20th for our next YVAS program featuring Sneed Collard. The program will be held at the Mayflower Church on Poly and Rehberg Lane. A social with coffee and cookies begins at 6:30 PM; the program begins at 7 PM.

## Swinger Reprobate or Father of the Year?

In his seventh year of monitoring nests as a volunteer in the Yellowstone Valley Audubon Osprey Nest Monitoring Project, Scott Montgomery observed a remarkable variation in the normal pattern of osprey monogamy. At the beginning of the breeding season when nest monitors take note of osprey copulation and nest making, Scott was watching two platform nests in Laurel, just half a mile apart: Ace Electric and Figgins Circle. By April 22<sup>nd</sup> he was able to read the band number of the male osprey on the Ace Electric nest: **00/M**. The female partner at Ace was unbanded. By early May, eggs had been laid and incubation was in progress at the Ace Electric and at the Figgins nests. On May 4<sup>th</sup> Scott posted this observation:



Female osprey eating a goldfish near Ace Electric  
Photo by Scott Montgomery

“The female was incubating on the Figgins when I got there. Another osprey landed on the platform. I drove closer and read the band number. It was 00/M, who for the last week or so I have been seeing on the Ace Electric nest. I watched him for a few minutes and then drove to Ace Electric.

The female on the Ace nest was incubating when I got there. An osprey flew to the nest with a partially eaten fish. The female took it and flew to a nearby pole. The osprey that brought the fish immediately began incubating. The female flew back to the nest and the other osprey lifted and landed on the pole forming the platform. I drove close and was able to read the number, it was 00/M who I had seen twenty minutes or so earlier on the Figgins nest.

00/M was on both the Figgins and Ace Electric nests within thirty minutes of each other. Marco said he had heard of this happening before, but it is rare.”

The nest monitoring community was agog with this news of a male osprey with 2 nests. As the season progressed, Scott was able to observe two nestlings in each nest, and then two fledglings in each. So, it seems that 00/M was a good provider and partner at both Ace and Figgins, with successful offspring in each nest. Will he want to pull off that feat next year? Stay tuned!

*Submitted by Scott Montgomery and Kristin Neva*

## FIELD TRIPS COMING UP

Check the YVAudubon.org website, Facebook, and the Flyer for any schedule changes including times, cancellations, or impromptu trips. Contact Carolyn Jones at carolyn684@gmail.com to be included on the Bird Trip Notification List.

Date	Day of Week	Meeting Place	Description	Leaders
Oct 5	SUN	Riverfront Park during daylight hours. Preferably sign up for a time with Carolyn or just show up.	The Big Sit - Rotating watchers will bring a lawn chair to a marked circle near the main pavilion	Carolyn Jones
Nov 1	SAT	8AM Rocky/BST parking lot	Yellowtail Dam Afterbay	Ron Kuhler
Dec 20	SAT	Perkins for Breakfast, 7AM	Christmas Bird Count 2025	Jerry Dalton
Jan 1, 2026	THU	8AM Rocky/BST parking lot	Annual New Years Day Bird Trip, Yellowtail Dam Afterbay	Ron Kuhler
Jan 4, 2026	SUN	8AM Rocky/BST parking lot	Mid Winter Eagle Count	Mike Weber/ Ron Kuhler

## What Can Is This? More Recycling Hints



Since the August edition of the **Flyer**, where we featured Larry Handsaker's aluminum recycling program, the aluminum can contributions have grown about 50%. Thank you to all the new and continued recyclers! This program is a win-win for the environment and for Yellowstone Audubon.

A couple of reminders about recycling with this program:

While the various for-profit recycling programs in Billings may accept an assortment of metal cans, Larry's donated effort is **only for aluminum cans**. Metal cans that contain coffee, fruits and vegetables are typically made from tin-plated steel, and they cannot be included in the bags that are delivered to Larry Handsaker's driveway. Please teach your

family members how to tell the difference between aluminum and steel cans and check the bag contents at home before delivering it for recycling.

Aluminum and steel cans are made differently. Telling them apart is easy once you know the key features of each type of can.

1. Look at the bottom. Aluminum cans have a bottom that curves inward, while steel cans have a flat, even bottom with a seam around the edge.
2. Aluminum cans consist of a top and a body without any side seams, while steel cans have 3 parts and you can see a seam along the side.
3. Magnets will stick to steel cans but not to aluminum cans. A new use for your refrigerator magnets!

Information taken from <https://aluminiumloop.com/en/aluminium-cans-vs-steel-cans/>

## Montana Audubon Center Events

Learn more about these and other activities on our website: [mtaudubon.org/center](http://mtaudubon.org/center)

**Nature Nuts:** Every Tuesday, 10 AM – A fun-filled “Toddler and Me” program perfect for young nature enthusiasts.

**Morning Bird Stroll :** October 11th, 8:30AM

Registration and more information is available on the website: [mtaudubon.org/center](http://mtaudubon.org/center).

*Submitted by Emily Chilcoat*

## Montana Audubon News

The Audubon Conservation Ranching Program is a national initiative, facilitated by Montana Audubon in the state, aiming to halt declines in grassland bird populations, which have suffered over a 50% decline since the 1970s. The program works with private land ranchers to promote regenerative grazing practices that benefit both bird habitats and land stewardship. Watch a video at [Buzz on the Range](#), where Christian Meny highlights the benefits of certification, including marketing advantages, bird monitoring, and grant opportunities. He also details the positive impacts observed through the program, such as increased bird diversity, abundance, and overall ecosystem resilience.

*Submitted by Lauren Smith*



Acrylic and Collage by Mike Weber



## Listers: A Glimpse into Extreme Birdwatching (a review)

Fourteen years after *The Big Year*, another movie has come along to explore the subject of competitive birding.

Why this documentary? “Neither of us knew much about birds. And we didn’t know much about bird watchers... so we decided we’d try the most extreme form of bird watching because, well, cuz that’s a great



Instagram post - “halfway done - 49th in the country - 461 birds”

way to learn about something—to try to just do it at, like, the highest level.”

Brothers Owen and Quentin Reiser began a year-long quest on January 1, 2024, to see as many avian species as possible in the contiguous 48 states.

Their low-budget approach—traveling and living in a \$3,500 minivan and boondocking 42 nights

in Cracker Barrel parking lots, as well as scenic and rural sites—might remind you of Kenn Kaufman’s 1973 low-budget *Big Year*. Kaufman’s feat was accomplished largely by hitchhiking and is recounted in his book *Kingbird Highway*. Very unlike the 16-year-old Kaufman, the twenty-something Reisers began with minimal bird-identification skills. They did, however, have Merlin, eBird, and a good camera. They took “so many pictures of birds!” during the day and then spent nights in the van making identifications and reporting to eBird. In the process, they learned.

Why watch these sometimes-bumbling amateurs dive into the sport of extreme birding? Owen knows how to use a camera. The movie is interspersed with beautiful footage of birds. The documentary is entertaining, creative in its editing and occasional use of animation, sometimes very funny and irreverent, and graphic in depictions of the trials they experience. In two hours, they communicate the joy, frustration, hazards, competition, ethics, and controversies of the birding world. Along the way, they interview a wide variety of birders, including a roller-hockey player with a passion for hummingbirds, a field biologist with skepticism about the carbon footprint of those who chase rare birds, and some hyper-competitive listers.

In one of my favorite scenes, Robert Carter, a young Arizona birder, introduces the Reisers to the Rio Salado Habitat Restoration Area, a former dump that now provides habitat for over 200 species of birds and other animals just a mile from downtown Phoenix. Robert tells the brothers, “It’s great to go off chasing birds. But if we tell people that you have to go chasing stuff, we tell them birding’s not for them...you tell them where they live is not worthy of protection and care.” Earlier in the film Robert declares, “Everyone is a birder and they just don’t know it yet.”

*Listers* is available for free viewing via YouTube. Be warned that it might not be enjoyable for everyone. It meets the criteria for an R rating—profanity (plenty of F-bombs), a few references to drug use, and graphic seasickness. OK, so puking doesn’t count toward a rating, but I can’t unsee that scene, which is one of several grittier moments.



Screenshot of Quentin Reiser from *Listers* Video by Owen Reiser

Did the brothers succeed as competitive listers? No spoilers here; watch for yourself.

The documentary begins and ends with quotes from Kaufman’s *Kingbird Highway*, and so Kenn gets the final word: “Any day could be a special day, and probably will be, if we just go out and look.”

*Listers: A Glimpse Into Extreme Birdwatching.*  
Produced by Quentin and Owen Reiser. Directed, shot, and edited by Owen Reiser.  
Premiered August 2025. 2 hours.  
Available to view on YouTube at  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zl-wAqplQAO>

*Submitted by Ginny Waples*

## Stuff People Say on Hawk Watch

*Submitted by Ginny Waples, Sue Weinreis, Susan Hovde and Kristin Neva*

I see a hawk!  
 Where is it??  
 In the blue sky  
 Against the white cloud  
 In the sky, in the cloud, the white cloud.  
 Behind the burnt tree.  
 Above the finger. Not the middle finger.  
 Over the fish lip  
 Which fish lip—the top lip or the bottom?  
 In the curve of the mouth  
 More like a lizard to me  
 On the flat rock  
 You call it the flat rock? I think it's a square rock. And what part of the square rock?  
 Wait—not a bird, just my floaters.  
 Were any of you at my talk on Thursday?  
 What are the four types of wings?  
 No short-term memory in this bunch!  
 What color is the head?  
 Not white but *another* color?  
 Don't look into the sun!  
 Whoa, look at that! It's like the flying monkeys were released... one two three ... nine no ten!

### The Results:

The annual YVAS hawk watch took place on Sept. 20<sup>th</sup> led by Dr. Marco Restani on the Meeteetse Trail Road east of Red Lodge, a perfect spot to watch raptors as they soar over the Beartooth front. The team of 11, well prepped by attending the YVAS program on Raptor Identification, spotted **53 raptors of 11 species**, listed below. As Dr. Restani explained in the [Oct 2023 Flyer](#) article, the volume of migrants on any given day is related to season – some species migrate earlier or later during autumn than others – and includes variation shaped by weather.

Broad-winged Hawk – 18

Red-tailed Hawk – 9

Sharp-shinned Hawk – 7

Golden Eagle – 4

Cooper's Hawk – 3

American Kestrel – 3

Northern Harrier – 2

Merlin - 1

Bald Eagle - 1

Prairie Falcon -1

Peregrine Falcon -1

and 3 Not Identified



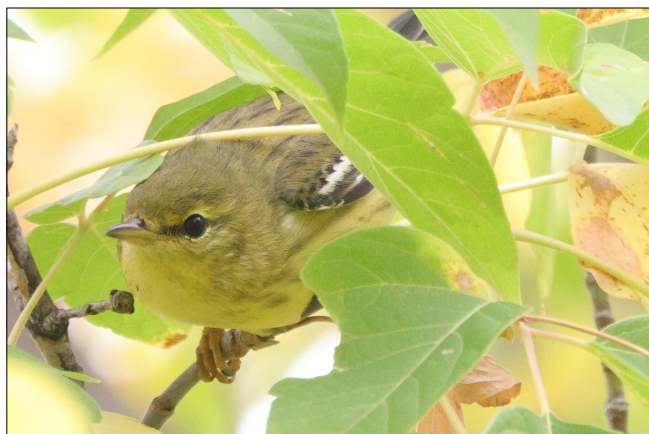
Red-tailed Hawk Photo by Dušan Brinkhuizen Macauley 204888591



## Warblers, Willets and Wood Ducks, OH MY!

Friday, September 12, an intrepid band of 6 birders arrived in Malta to look for migrants passing through. We started with pre-supper birding around Trafton Park where the ever-present European Starling dominated the list every day with an estimated 75 count.

Another treat in the park were the Wood Ducks who we not only spotted but heard calling. Juvenile Mourning Doves were about, and we saw one being fed in the nest as well as a "gang" of 6 walking the trail in front of us, apparently not having learned to fear humans yet.



Blackpoll Warbler Photo by Susan Hovde

Thanks to Susan Hovde who, in addition to her expert bird ID's, also supplied us with dinners as well as breakfasts.

Saturday, we went to nearby Bowdoin NWP and spent most of the day traveling around the lake which was extremely low. Had we let him, I am sure Stan would have tried to wade out into the extensive mud flats to get closer looks at the shore birds! Here is a partial list of what we saw: 43 American Avocets, 53 Marbled Godwits, 20 Red Necked Phalaropes, and Sandpipers: Solitary, Stilt,



The omnipresent Orange-crowned Warbler  
Photo by Susan Hovde



Bowdoin Viewing Pond Photo by Susan Hovde

Baird's, Least, Pectoral, Western and Semipalmated. Warbler of the weekend: Yellow- Rumped (Myrtle).

Many thanks to Stan and Susan for their expert tutoring on shore birds. This was a great experience, and I would recommend that others consider this trip for next year.

Noted: Stan Heath will probably be designated Montana Birder of The Year. In addition, he is still aiming for 300 birds in 2025. Good Luck!

*Submitted by Carolyn Jones*

## YVAS MEETINGS &amp; PUBLIC PROGRAMS

**Next Board of Directors Meeting: Oct 13, 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: Monday, Oct 20, 2025.** Programs are held on the third Monday of the month at the Mayflower Church on the corner of Rehberg Lane and Poly Drive in Billings. YVAS programs are free and open to the public. Doors open at 6:30 for coffee and cookies; the program begins at 7:00 pm.

**Board of Directors**

President: Open

Vice President: Open

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

Field Trip Chair: Carolyn Jones carolyn684@gmail.com

Flyer Editor: Kristin Neva yvasflyer@gmail.com

**(Committees, continued)**

Injured Raptors: Montana Raptor Conservation Center  
406-585-1211

Membership Data Admin: Kris Decker  
YVAS.membership.data@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 larryhandsaker@gmail.com;  
drop off at 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. YVAS cooperates with the Montana Audubon Center in some projects, but membership is separate.

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 \_\_\_\_\_

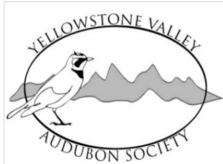
Do you want to receive the YVAS Flyer electronically?

☐ 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



Eating cake, watching hawks Photo by Kristin Neva

## Membership Updates



**August reminders:** Mary & Bob Francis

**September renewals:** Emily Chilcoat

**October renewals:** Peter Cummins, Mary Davis, Deb Drain, Beth Horn, Steve Linder, Robin Manfredi, John Scheuering, Mary Ellen Schlosser, Raylene Wall

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 membership helps 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.

If you have any questions regarding your membership, please contact the Membership Administrator at [YVAS.membership.data@gmail.com](mailto:YVAS.membership.data@gmail.com).